LEIDEN UNIVERSITY, MA MODERN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

ARMS IN THE GULF: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE OF CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN, IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA FROM 1991 UNTIL TODAY

Nick Chatzistavrou, Student Number: s1757857

Thesis Supervisor Dr. Maaike Warnaar

1/8/2016

Universiteit Leiden

Table of Contents:

Introduction

It would be expected that by the end of the Cold War and subsequently the end of bipolarity between the two superpowers and the turn of the century, the world could slowly move towards a more peaceful future. [1] In truth however, not only has the arms trade managed to even out some of its losses in the immediate period after the end of Cold War, but it even increased its value in the last eight years. The comparison between the peak arms sales during the Cold War and 2013 serves as a good example. Cold War arms sales in 1982 were valued at $45 billion.[2] In 2013, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the total value of global arms trade amounted to about $76 billion,[3] with the possibility of the actual figures being even higher. When put into contrast with other sectors, such as oil and gas, whose estimated worth in 2007 was $1.7 trillion, the difference between sizes is immense, even taking into account that 2007 was a year of very high oil prices. [4] The value of the arms trade and, more specifically, the uncontrolled one, lays not that much in its incomes, but rather in the ways it can influence the economies themselves, promote or threaten security and stabilize or destabilize political regimes.[5] In relatively unstable and fragile areas like the Middle East, many countries appear to be greatly increasing their expenditure in the military sector and in arms imports.[6]

Many measures have been taken towards restricting the arms trade focused on nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, but when it comes to the trade of conventional weapons, little attention and ineffective measures seem to characterize it.[7] It has been observed that in recent years global military expenditure, and in

---

1Robert. E. Harkavy "The Changing International System and the Arms Trade." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 535, The Arms Trade: Problems and Prospects in the Post-Cold War World* 535 (1994), 20.

2Suzette Grillot and Rachel Stohl *The International Arms Trade.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009) 17.

3*"The financial value of the global arms trade".* SIPRI, accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/transfers/measuring/financial_values

4Grillot and Stohl, *The International Arms Trade*, 4.

5Ibid, 5.

6Sam Perlo-Freeman, *Arms Transfers to the Middle East.* Background Paper (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2009), 1. More specifically, arms expenditure rose by 34% in the Middle East in the years 1999-2008

7Grillot and Stohl, The *International Arms Trade*, 5.

connection to the arms trade, seem to be declining, albeit marginally (0.4% losses – $1776 billion when compared to 2013). [8] Countries like the oil-rich Gulf states are capable of using their revenues to import cutting edge weapons systems in large quantities (mostly from the US). [9] In fact, they can be counted among the biggest weapons importers in the world. Saudi Arabia was the world's fourth biggest spender in weapons for 2014 and the United Arab Emirates accounted for 29.6% of the regional total during the period 2004-2008.[10] With the exception of Israel (11th largest arms exporter in the world) and Turkey, which are the only arms producing countries in the region, there are no other domestic arms producers in the Middle East. [11] Therefore, it should be safe to assume that the majority of expenditures were focused in arms imports. The fact that the Middle East had a much higher volume of arms deliveries – 20% higher in the period 2004–2008 than in the period 1999–2003 –helps in underlining the close connection between the Middle East and the global arms trade. [12] Particularly in recent years, this fact can in turn be traced in the political and economic connections between suppliers and supplied states. Such numbers further portray that the need for even larger arms imports is closely linked to the insecurity due to the turmoil in the region.

The results of the unrest and insecurity in the region are not only restricted to the Middle East but appear to be having even global repercussions. A recent example is the Syrian refugee crisis, which started in 2011 owing to the Syrian civil war and later the expansion of the Islamic State. Currently, there are almost 4.8 million Syrian refugees, with hundreds of thousands of them moving towards Europe in search of a better and more peaceful life. [13] Arms, their supply and their usage, play a crucial role in the creation of such situations. The continuous weapon proliferation in the Middle East appears to be only exacerbating the issue.

---

8 Sam Perlo-Freeman, Aude Fleurant, Pieter d. Wezeman and Siemon t. Wezeman, *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2014.* Fact Sheet (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2015) 1.

9 Carina Solmirano and Pieter D. Wezeman, *Military Spending and Arms Procurement in the Gulf States.* Fact Sheet (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2010), 3.

10 Perlo-Freeman, *Arms Transfers to the Middle East*, 2.

11 Ibid, 4.

12 Ibid, 2.

13 *"Syria Regional Refugee Response"*. UN Refugee Agency, accessed July 30, 2015, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php .

I. Research Question and Core Argument

With the above facts in mind, this thesis will focus on how the international arms trade in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia has influenced the dynamics of strategic rivalry between them. In order to accomplish this, it will examine the arms transfers to Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran in the years leading up to the Second Gulf War; followed by the period until the Third Gulf War; the post-war situation; and two of the more recent conflicts involving the states under examination and organizations that are connected to them – Hezbollah and the Yemen Civil War. These topics will serve as the key points of this thesis and as the basis for the analysis with a focus on how the weapons circulation has impacted the stability in the region.

The main argument of this thesis is that for the past few decades, the international arms trade has provided the aforementioned states with conventional weapons that can inherently be considered destabilizing. A side argument is also presented:small arms and light weapons have a potentially destabilizing character which is often overlooked. It is this destabilizing factor that has further impacted some of the conflicts in the region and influenced the regional relations, with implications stretching as far as today.

In order to cement this argument, the first step will be to present and analyze the historical background of this process in chronological order. The choice of a chronological presentation of events will make it more apparent that the role of arms buildups and the evolution of arms transfers has been influenced by historical events. Otherwise, it will not be visible that the role of arms transfers in regional relations has deep roots in the region examined. It would not be of benefit to this thesisthe thesis, by way of illustrative example, to begin the analysis about the Second Gulf War in 1991 without first observing the arms buildup in Iraq due to the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).

The choice of this timeframe, area and events is based on two reasons. First of all, all the states examined are oil rich with their oil exports forming the bulk of their economies. Such incomes allow for bigger arms imports and assist in making more visible how extended conventional weapons proliferation can become. Secondly, the Second Gulf War was the beginning of development on a framework regarding arms transfer regulations. The Saddam regime had managed through arms trading to amass a modern arsenal, the usage of which certainly had an impact on the Iran-Iraq War and later the Kuwait invasion (1990).

With regards to the timing of the events examined, it coincides with the end of the Cold War. While many states were disarming, the Gulf region, and states like Saudi Arabia in particular, started spending heavily on security. The end of the Cold War

surfaced a phenomenon whereby states, in their effort to disarm, were selling surplus stock. That was more so the case in the former Warsaw Pact states. Ergo, there existed a large amount of weapons which found their way into many Middle Eastern countries.

The Third Gulf War forms the next major chronological point for a different set of reasons. While as an event, it is not directly tied with arms transfers – Iraq, by that time, was under strict sanctions – it signals a turning point in the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The US occupation of Iraq (a long standing ally of Saudi Arabia) paired with the Anti-Americanism prevalent in Iran had a certain influence on the dynamics. The sanctions imposed on Iran due to its nuclear program and its potential military applications have further exacerbated the situation. In turn, this background would play its role in their arms transfers, as it will be observed in later chapters.

Finally, "proxy wars" or the support – often in the form of weapons – provided by some of the examined states to third parties, participating in conflicts in the region, have been selected as the last focal point of this analysis. This is due to the fact that they take place in a post-Third Gulf War environment. Hezbollah, founded in 1985, has been involved in various conflicts, with the 2006 Lebanon War being a recent example. Additionally, these types of conflicts are characterized by a unique feature that is often overlooked: the arms support in the form of small arms and light weapons.

II. Difficulties and Limitations in the Thesis

Inevitably, this effort encounters certain limitations which will have an impact as to the exhaustiveness of this thesis. First of all, the arms trade itself is a secretive business sector. Many governments, even the ones characterized by transparency, classify their arms transactions in order to protect their political and security interests. This holds especially true for the Middle Eastern countries that are found in turmoil, partly as a consequence of the Arab Spring revolts, and partly due to the boycott implemented by most Arab states towards the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). Since 1998, only Israel, Jordan and Turkey have provided data detailing their imports and exports of major conventional weapons. It is the belief that boycotting Arab states that UNROCA should not only contain information on transfers of major conventional weapons, but also include information on weapons of mass destruction and on arms holdings.[14] These factors render even more difficult the obtention of precise information regarding weapons imports and transfers in the Middle East.

14 Perlo-Freeman, *Arms Transfers to the Middle East*, 7.

Another factor to consider is the Arab-Israeli conflict and how this could have also affected arms imports in the specific countries examined. Especially in states such as Iraq which attacked Israel during the Second Gulf War with missiles or Iran which has a very strong Anti-Israeli rhetoric and has supplied arms to militant organizations against Israel, this may indeed prove problematic. However, there will not be an analysis of Israel through an arms trading perspective for a couple of reasons. First of all, assessing Israel from an arms transfers perspective could warrant a whole thesis by itself. The country is not only one of the biggest spenders in arms imports, but is also a world leader in arms exports and military technology. Secondly, most of the research and the conflicts are centered on the Gulf. With the exception of the case of Hezbollah as an organization supported through arms transfers by Iran, all the other examples and studies are focused on the Gulf instead of the whole Middle East. The threat of Israel may indeed influence armament choices; however, this specific paper is related in the regional relations between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

III. Sources and Methodology

A variety of sources will have to be used throughout this thesis. In order to provide the historical background of certain events, books with a historical focus have been used, mostly regarding the Second and the Third Gulf War. Furthermore, in order to judge how arms transfers can be destabilizing for regional relations, bibliography focused on arms proliferation and power relations has been essential. Various articles with a more regional focus have also assisted towards this goal, particularly for the case of Iranian-Saudi Arabian relations. Finally, in order to be able to present certain facts regarding the extent of arms transfers and the uniqueness in each researched state's expenditure in arms acquirement, tables adapted and based on trade registers and military expenditure databases provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) – one of the most trustworthy and independent organizations with a focus on armaments – have been included.

Regarding the methodology, emphasis is given on the data analysis of the abovementioned information, which is provided by the SIPRI trade registers, in order to better portray the process of arms buildup and regional competition. This data analysis will be further linked to a theory suggesting the destabilizing factor of conventional weapons, also applicable in the case studies therein. Finally, theories on conventional weapons proliferation and the conditions for an arms race will be developed. In this way, it will be determined whether during the examined timeframe such phenomena took place, and whether certain key points can be observed regarding arms transfers and regional relations for the case studies.

IV. Definition of Conventional Weapons Categories

One of the key points that will be useful for a reader of this thesis is the categorization of the weapons that are discussed. The UN Registry for conventional arms distinguishes between seven categories of weapons. These categories contain battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery over a certain caliber, aircraft, helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.[15] Weapons belonging to these designations are commonly named as major conventional weapons. Furthermore, the UN Registry discerns another category that concerns small arms and light weapons, which will be the subject of further analysis of a specific chapter. These two categories, major conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons, will be encountered often in this thesis and will be important in determining certain trends connected to their trade and regional relations.

V. The Role of the Cold War and Conceptions of Power Relations

While the starting point of this thesis is 1991 and the Second Gulf War, it is important to understand how the arms trade functioned in the Middle East in general during the Cold War for a variety of reasons. The first reason has something to do with the characteristics of the arms trade itself regarding orders and deliveries. Most weapons orders are not placed overnight and are certainly not delivered fast. Big orders containing major conventional weapons such as aircraft and tanks can take years to be fully delivered, since most arms deals include the transfer and the assembly of the weapons systems as well. Therefore, therein lies the possibility that an order made in 1990 for example would be scheduled to have completed deliveries by 1996, thus falling within the timeframe examined in this thesis. Furthermore, as we will see, the Iran-Iraq War has played its own role in arming Iraq with a modern and extended arsenal by the standards of the region. A wealth of literature exists regarding the Cold War period and the relations between the Arab states as well as Israel, but also their connections with the Western and Eastern power blocs. The region's geopolitical importance, the discovery of major oil reserves in the Gulf area, the birth of the state of Israel and the rise of Arab nationalism were all factors that made the area an important arena of the Cold War rivalry. Both the Western and the Eastern Blocs, in order to gain influence or provide support to their allies, engaged in major arms transfers in the region. Those arms flows impacted all the conflicts during this period – in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict – and further contributed to the instability of the region when the end of Cold War brought with it the end of bipolarity. It is no exaggeration to say that the Cold War helped in shaping the Middle East, as it did with other regions as well.

In addition, many of the weapons that found their way into the arsenals of Middle Eastern states or militants of the area are used in many conflicts dating back to the

15 UN-Register, "Categories of Conventional Arms," 2013, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.un-register.org/Background/Index.aspx.

Cold War era. Weapons, such as the more than half a century old Kalashnikov assault rifle line and its offshoots or the RPG anti-tank and anti-personnel launchers, have become so associated with the classic image of the Arab militant. Theycould have easily been produced thirty or forty years ago in an Eastern Bloc country and then supplied to a Middle Eastern client state. These weapons are widespread and are still being used in conflicts in the region. Even state of the art weapons systems such as the M1 Abrams tank or the F-15 aircraft that are used by the Saudi Air Force, by way of example, were produced during the Cold War.

Since the impact of the Cold War, arms transfers will have to be taken into account in certain parts of this thesis, a usual misconception regarding power relations during that period has to be addressed. As Ṣāyiġ and Shlaim discern in the introduction of *The Cold War and the Middle East,*[16] there are differing views among scholars regarding power relations between Middle Eastern countries and the two superpower blocs during the Cold War. On one hand, the most prevalent view which is considered "conventional" assumes that regional forces in the Middle East were simply pawns to the two opposing superpowers and did not have an actual influence on the superpowers they sided with. On the other hand, there is an assertion that local forces had much more freedom and power than recognized and were able to manipulate, and be manipulated by, external forces.

None of the above views can be characterized as entirely correct, but they are of importance when analyzing arms transfers during that period. Hussein's Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War saw a cooling of relations with the Soviet Union, one of its erstwhile primary arms suppliers, in order to avoid any further influence of the Soviet Bloc in the country. This is an example of how the "conventional" point of view did not apply, and a regional force was able to dictate its terms to a bigger external power. In the same case, however, when later during the war Iraq found itself in a difficult position due to the military successes of Iran, Hussein started again buying weapons from the Soviet Union in order to avoid defeat. What can be concluded by this case is that while Middle Eastern countries certainly had some freedom of movement in their dealings with one of the superpowers, they certainly were not as independent as believed by the supporters of the theory that regional forces were equally influential.

What can be understood is that in order to obtain the best depiction of the Middle East during the Cold War and be more capable of observing its role in our contemporary sphere, there is a need not to align completely to any of the two opinions as set out above. This need becomes even more evident considering that arms supplies were one of the major policy tools used by both Great Powers to lure and influence regional forces. It is therefore as easy to adopt a "conventional view",

16 Yazīd Ṣāyiġ and Avi Shlaim, "Introduction," in *The Cold War in the Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 3.

as it is to have a regional heavy one when trying to describe the historical context of the arms trade in the Middle East. Both can lead to wrong assumptions when analyzing the contemporary arms trade in the region. As it will be observed throughout this thesis, what is examined is the capability of the states such as Iraq before the Second Gulf War to be fairly independent when it comes to arms trade, but even more so in the decades after the Cold War with the end of the "bipolar" system.

The end of the Cold War brought up another issue when examining the post-Cold War Gulf region under the prism of arms trade and transfers. The end of bipolarity between the two opposing superpowers and the use of the recent notions of "unipolarity"[17] and "multipolarity"[18] to describe international relations have only managed to "muddy the waters" and make regional and international relations in the Middle East more complex. Nowadays, there are many suppliers in the arms trade that are not that much restricted by the agendas of some superpower, and therefore have larger margins of movement. What this thesis will pursue is to examine how this new environment has influenced Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, their regional relations and the intensity of the conflicts some of them participated in or even fueled. It will be based on an analysis of their individual cases and of the support they have provided to third parties, in a period spanning from a few years before the Second Gulf War until the Third War and even expand to more recent years.

To better accomplish such an analysis, this thesis will be comprised of chapters presented in chronological order as established before. The first will provide insight on how the arms trade functions economically, and sheds light on the ways states, such as Iraq, at the onset of the Second Gulf War, were able to pay for their arms and amass such extended arsenals. It will explain how some of the unique forms of transaction in the arms trade can lead to transfers of military technology and give countries the capability to domestically produce arms. The second chapter concerns the Second Gulf War, the arms buildup in arms transfers before its outbreak, the conflict itself as well as the situation immediately after the war. An extensive part of this chapter will also be devoted on the "intermission" period between the Second and the Third Gulf War; on how the 1991 conflict affected arms transfers among the researched countries and the relations between them during that period. The Third Gulf War will be the subject of the third chapter, dealing briefly with the conflict and providing the necessary historical background on the region. The fourth chapter will examine the conventional weapons proliferation in the time period that is being

17Robert Jervis, "Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective." *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (: January 2009): 191.

18*Encyclopedia of United States National Security* (2006), s.v "Multipolarity" by Richard J. Samuels 482-83.

researched and tries to discern whether there was such an extensive antagonism as to be called an “arms race” in the region. It further analyses the destabilizing role that certain kinds of weapons can have. A fifth chapter is devoted to some of the organizations taking part in recent intrastate conflicts and proxy wars in the area and are supported – often in the form of small arms and light weapons – by third parties; i.e. Hezbollah in Lebanon as supported by Iran or opposing sides in the Yemen Civil War assisted by Saudi Arabia and Iran. Taking this as a starting point, focus will also be given to a relatively overlooked aspect of the arms trade that can be potentially destabilizing: the impact of small arms and light weapons in conflicts such as the ones described in this chapter, and in particular in the escalation of conflicts. Finally, the conclusion will address whether the research question has been sufficiently answered and makes an effort to consider what the future could spell for the region.

Chapter 1

The Second Gulf War: The background on the Buildup in Arms Transfers and the Conflict

Kuwait is a small country situated in the north of the Persian Gulf and sits on top of about 6% of the crude oil reserves of the world. Its relations with Iraq have gone through various crises. In fact, the August 1990 crisis that would trigger the events leading to the Second Gulf War was the third in the century between the two states.[19] The reasoning behind Iraq’s aggression towards Kuwait is based on a series of reasons. First of all, there existed the belief that since historically Kuwait was a part of Ottoman-era Iraq, a part of the Basra province should belong to the latter.[20] However, such an explanation could only be superficial. Kuwait’s location, which limited Iraq’s coastline to a narrow corridor with only one important port, Umm Qasr, has also played its role in influencing Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. A more important reason behind the invasion of Kuwait is actually of economic nature. More specifically, Iraq accused Kuwait of wrongly exploiting the Rumeila oil field, which caused annual losses to Iraq of about $2.4 billion in oil.[21] Furthermore, Iraq was heavily in debt to many Gulf states because of the financial support it was given during the Iran-Iraq War. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were owed close to $60 billion.[22]

---

19 Dilip Hiro, *Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War* (London: Paladin, 1992), 11

20 Ibid, 12.

21 William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 4th ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 479.

22 Ibid, 479.

With the above considerations in mind, it is evident why Iraq would invade and annex Kuwait and thus trigger the Second Gulf War. This event was paramount in changing the regional balances. The war had also an international impact when it came to the regulation of conventional weapons. After the Second Gulf War, in October 1991, the five permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council – all of them arms suppliers to Iraq before the war – agreed on a set of rules before taking any arms sales decisions. The goal was to regulate the arms market and avoid another "Iraq situation". Two months after this agreement, the international community voted for the creation of a conventional arms register under UN supervision.[23]

This chapter will be devoted to understanding how the international arms trade allowed Iraq to possess a relatively modern arsenal capable of offensive operations waged through conventional means. At the same time it will focus on how Saudi Arabia was capable of providing the Coalition with the facilities and logistical support for operations of such a scale and of having a fairly modern, albeit limited arsenal. The understanding of the extent to which the actors under examination have armed themselves will facilitate the observation of the connections between the arms trade and its influence in conflicts, but also its impact on determining strategic regional dynamics. In the case of Iraq, the buildup in arms transfers did not begin in 1991; rather, it had its roots in the Iran-Iraq War between 1982 and 1988 and the regional turbulence – a consequence of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

1.1 Iraq and the Quest for Arms

Since the 1970s, Ba'athist Iraq was constantly on the lookout to secure deals with various arms exporters and to differentiate its arms imports. The underlying reason was the belief of Saddam Hussein that the Soviet Union – at that time the biggest supplier of arms to Iraq – would keep on increasing its influence in domestic matters and issues of foreign policy. In the process of diversifying its arms imports, Iraq and Saddam Hussein would slowly but steadily steer towards the West.[24] The historical events in the Middle East during the late 70s certainly helped Iraq in increasingly acquiring arms from the West. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 tipped the regional balance, since Iran along with Saudi Arabia was the most important Arab ally for the Western bloc at the time. The threat Iran posed for the strategic dynamics and the crumbling of the Twin Pillars policy that the US wanted to implement in the region,[25] facilitated Western arms deals with Iraq. A new power was needed to balance out the loss of a major ally in the region. The fact that Iraq would also pay for its weapons

23David G. Anderson, "*The International Arms Trade: Regulating Conventional Arms Transfers in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*." American University Journal of International Law and Policy 7, 1992, 753.

24Kenneth R. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996.), 54

either with oil or in cash transformed it into an even more inviting client to arms suppliers.

The best way to secure a partner during that period was to provide them with the weapons needed, without necessarily meaning the supplies were directly provided by the US or that the process was instant. Egypt, for example, after aligning itself with the US in 1979, sold a large part of its stockpile – created through Soviet arms imports in the 60s and 70s – to Iraq for $1 billion.[26] At the same time, France, the prime importer of Iraqi oil, provided the latter with some of its latest weapons systems, such as the Mirage F1 fighter, the Roland anti-aircraft system and various armoured vehicles such as the AMX-30 main battle tank.[27]

The Iran-Iraq War which began after an attack without warning to Iran was instigated by Saddam's desire to make Iraq the biggest regional power in the Gulf. Ironically, it would also help facilitate arms transfers to Iraq from both superpower blocs. The Western Bloc, afraid of an Iranian victory that would deteriorate more its regional position, supplied Iraq with advanced weaponry. At that time, the Soviet Union, even being on bad terms with Iraq, did not wish for an Iraqi defeat either; it rather preferred an Iraq being in need so that it could dictate its terms for any material support.[28] In the words of Iranian analyst Shahram Chubin, "[…] not supplying arms to a signatory of a Treaty of Friendship was one thing, but permitting that signatory to be invaded and toppled would be quite another".[29] Iraq faced with defeat found itself having French airplanes, artillery and anti-aircraft systems and was receiving at the same time T-55 and T-72 tanks provided by the Soviets.[30]

---

25 Majid Behestani and Mehdi Hedayati Shahidani, "Twin Pillars Policy: Engagement of US-Iran Foreign Affairs during the Last Two Decades of Pahlavi Dynasty." *Asian Social Science* 12, no. 5 (December 20, 2014), 27. doi:10.5539/ass.v11n2p20.

26 Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, 86.

27 SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iraq: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1980 to 1991*, accessed April 25 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

28 Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, 121.

29 Shahram Chubin, *Soviet Policy Towards Iran and the Gulf*, Adelphi Papers 157 (London: IISS, 1984), 27.

30 SIPRI trade register: *Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iraq, 1980 -1991.*

As the war progressed, Iraq continued acquiring arms from a variety of sources, with exporters ranging from South African companies supplying Iraq with munitions and artillery pieces to Italian firms retrofitting helicopters provided by the Soviet Union with Western electronic systems. While Washington did not want to be seen selling weapons systems of potential offensive use directly to Iraq – in particular after the Irangate scandal – it assisted in different ways. It approved loan requests, it helped Iraq conclude deals with the other Western powers and secured a deal for grain, since Iraq had a shortage in agricultural goods.[31] In some cases, however, the US assumed a more direct role, while taking measures to cover its intervention.[32] By way of example, the United States sold Iraq a large number of Hughes light helicopters, which while officially sold for transport and reconnaissance missions, could be retrofitted for antitank purposes.[33]

With such widespread support and in possession of an extended arsenal, Iraq was capable of countering Iran's advantage in troops especially in the later years of the war and practically destroying the Iranian army by the summer of 1988. Ironically, Kuwait helped in this process, as many Gulf states did, by providing billions of dollars in support of Iraq's effort in the war. With the war ending in a stalemate and a failure to achieve its objectives, Iraq still emerged from the war in a much stronger position. By 1991, it had the fourth largest army in the world and was in possession of an extensive arsenal consisting of approximately 5700 armoured vehicles and 915 aircrafts. It follows logically why it was being regarded as the strongest Arab military power in the Middle East at the onset of the Second Gulf War in relation to conventional weapons, aside from any chemical warfare capabilities it had. Interestingly enough, by the end of the Second Gulf War, it lost the majority of this arsenal.

Iraq's rise into a sizable regional power would not have been possible without arms transfers. Had Saddam Hussein not received support from both superpower blocs, there exists the possibility that the Iran-Iraq War would have been lost for Iraq as early as 1982 because of the massive Iranian offensive.[34] The capability of the country

---

31 Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, 226.

32 "US Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War Against Iran," New York Times, January 26, 1992, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all.

33 Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, 122.

34 "Iran-Iraq War." Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Iraq-War.

to acquire arms either by paying in cash – something not that common in the arms industry – or readily supply oil as part of arms deals also played an important role in the search for arms suppliers.

Inevitably the question follows: what amount of military equipment and from which suppliers did Iraq receive from the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War up until the Second Gulf War? Table 1.0 tries to answer that question to a certain extent. Certain limitations exist, such as the quality of the delivered weapons, ranging from very low to comparable to any Western country's arsenal. Moreover, any black market transactions that probably took place are almost impossible to trace as such data does not exist. What we can safely assume from the table is the extent of Iraq's armament and the ease with which 28 states, ranging from Brazil to the U.S., readily provided the Saddam regime with a variety of weapons systems, a big portion of which was also used in the Second Gulf War.

Table 1.0
Transfers of select major conventional weapons to Iraq.
Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1980 to 1991 (figures without taking into account any battlefield losses during Iran-Iraq War).

Type of weapons system	**Total number ordered**	**Total number delivered (approximately)**	**Suppliers**	**Biggest Suppliers**
Tanks	6400	5650-6700	China, Egypt, Poland, Romania, East Germany, Soviet Union	Egypt, China, Soviet Union
IFV(Infantry Fighting Vehicle)	1060	1060	France, Soviet Union	
APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier)	2215	2215	Brazil, China, Czechoslovakia, Hungary Egypt, France, Soviet Union	China, Soviet Union
Armoured cars	600	600	Brazil, France	
ARV(Armoured Recovery Vehicle)	34	34	France, United Kingdom	
Tank destroyers	200	200	France, Soviet Union	
Artillery (towed guns, self-propelled guns, multiple rocket launchers)	3682	3872	Austria, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, S. Africa, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Spain	Austria, S. Africa, Soviet Union, Egypt
Mobile Surface to Surface Missile Launchers	10	10	Soviet Union	

Surface to Air Missile Systems(incl. portable, mobile)	12102	12106	China, France, Soviet Union	Soviet Union
Radars (air search, ground surveillance, height finding, artillery locating)	65	65	Brazil, China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom	France, Brazil
Combat helicopters	52	52	Soviet Union	
Helicopters	53	53	France, United States, Jordan	United States
Light helicopters	249	252	France, West Germany, Soviet Union, United States, Italy	United States, Germany
Transport helicopters	179	179	France, Italy, Soviet Union	France, Soviet Union
Trainer aircraft	259	269	Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Brazil	Switzerland, Brazil
FGA (Fighter-ground attack) aircraft	289	289	France, Soviet Union	
Fighter aircraft	157	157	China, Soviet Union	
Reconnaissance aircraft	8	8	Soviet Union	
Bomber aircraft	29	29	China, Soviet Union	
Ground attack aircraft	84	84	Soviet Union	
Transport aircraft	35	35	Soviet Union, Switzerland	Soviet Union

SOURCE: Adapted Trade Register generated from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute arms transfers database for time period 1980 to 1991, accessed 30.07.2016, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

1.2 Saudi Arabia and Petrodollars at Work

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been a prominent power in the Gulf since its formation in 1932, especially after the discovery of oil in 1938. Since then it has become the biggest exporter of oil in the world and possesses the world's second largest oil reserves. Its importance for the global economic system and its friendly relations with many Western countries certainly underline its influential role in regional and global events. In relation to the Second Gulf War, Saudi Arabia made the biggest contribution to the Coalition after the US It did not only convince other Arab states like Egypt and Syria to participate in the war, but also financed their expenses

and those of other Coalition members. It spent $48 billion for that purpose, while $16.5 billion of this amount was for US expenses alone.[35]

However, these are not the only contributions of Saudi Arabia in the conflict. The investments made in previous years on military equipment supplied by the West are just a part of this effort. The massive spending on bases, infrastructure, supplies and logistic support played a critical role in the success of the operation "Desert Storm" and the liberation of Kuwait. The ability to house approximately 700.000 personnel and troops, along with their supplies and equipment; the existence of enough air bases to station 1.736 combat aircrafts with their personnel; or its ability to provide them munitions and facilities for repairs and maintenance, is something phenomenal that definitely affected the efficiency and level of the operations.[36] In parallel, it facilitated the buildup in Coalition forces, especially during operation "Desert Shield".

Saudi Arabia did not possess an arsenal as advanced as the one it acquired in the years following the war, as it will be further discussed in this thesis. However, its close relations with the West assisted the acquisition of an adequate arsenal in order to build a competitive and fairly modern army, well-suited for defensive purposes. With regards to offensive operations, such capabilities were limited. As Sir Peter de la Billiere, commander of the UK force that participated in the Coalition, wrote in his memoirs "[t]he inadequacies of their army did not reflect the incompetence of any individuals, rather they exposed the general local belief […] that the army was unlikely to have to fight a major war […]. The army was there, more than anything else, for the defense of the Kingdom […]".[37]

In the beginning of the Second Gulf War, the Saudi army numbered no more than 50.000 troops and as portrayed above while plagued by a mostly defensive doctrine and qualitative problems, its military equipment in general was relatively advanced, thanks to arms transfers from the West. Notwithstanding its armoured forces, in particular the M-60 and AMX-30 main battle tanks that formed the spearhead of the Saudi army, were barely adequate at the time to deal with the T-62 and T-72 tanks that the Iraqi army fielded. The deliveries of the modern M-1A2 Abrams tanks that Saudi Arabia had ordered in 1989 had not started yet.[38] The Saudi army nevertheless had a wide array of advanced weaponry: small arms, light weapons, anti-tank weapons,

35 Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War. IV: The Gulf War* (Westview Press: 1996.), 174.

36 Cordesman and Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War,* 136.

37 Cordesman and Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War,* 177.

artillery and air defense systems, most of which were acquired through trade either with the US or France.[39]

The sector of the Saudi army that possessed an arsenal equally advanced to be comparable in terms of quality to a Western state was the air force. The Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) played an important role during "Desert Shield" and "Desert Storm" operations and was able to field and utilize in good effect modern aircraft. RSAF had purchased the Panavia Tornado fighter and ground attack aircraft, a product of cooperation between aerospace companies based in the U.K., West Germany and Italy. It also bought from the US the F-5 fighter and ground attack aircraft and the F-15 in its fighter variant. Moreover, RSAF fielded modern AWACS (airborne warning and control system) aircraft in addition to refueling and support. The existence of such specialized aircraft was highly unusual in a Third World country air force.[40]

As described above, the outbreak of the Second Gulf War found Saudi Arabia equipped with a fairly modern army, able to participate in the air and ground operations (to a certain extent) and to accomplish the very important goal of providing the staging areas for the offensive to liberate Kuwait. In the following years and due to security fears in the region, Saudi Arabia would spend until 1996 at least $50 billion in improving its military equipment as a consequence of the Second Gulf War.

The case of Saudi Arabia is different than Iraq, but is equally helpful in discerning trends regarding the arms it acquired during the examined timeframe and the kind of support it received from international actors. While the arms transfers to Saudi Arabia were of a considerable size, they could not be compared to the quantity delivered to Iraq. The quantitative difference was owed to a variety of reasons such as the increased arms transfers necessitated by the Iran-Iraq War, or the ambitions of Saddam Hussein for Iraq to become a strong regional power based on military strength.

Based on the data below, it can be ascertained that while the Saudi Arabian army was fairly well equipped for the regional standards due to Western support, it lacked any extensive offensive capabilities because of the limited quantities it possessed. Such a conclusion can be also drawn from the assistance that Saudi Arabia received at the onset of the Second Gulf War in order to guarantee the safety of the country. Finally,

38 SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Saudi Arabia: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2003*, accessed July 25 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

39 Ibid.

40 Cordesman and Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War,* 189.

this table can be useful for the next chapter in order to better illustrate the pre-Second Gulf War armaments, in contrast to the situation after the war. This overview in turn will make more apparent how the fear of repetition of the invasion of Kuwait and the country's inability to properly guarantee its sovereignty fueled further arms investments.

Table 1.1
Transfers of select major conventional weapons to Saudi Arabia. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1980 to 1991.

Type of weapons system	**Total number ordered**	**Total number delivered (approximately)**	**Suppliers**	**Biggest Suppliers**
Tanks	398	398	France, United States	France
IFV(Infantry Fighting Vehicle)	493	493	France, United States	France
APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier)	1861	1861	France, West Germany, Spain, Switzerland, United States	France, United States
ARV(Armoured Recovery Vehicle)	74	74	France, United States	
Tank destroyers	224	225	Italy	
Artillery (towed guns, self-propelled guns, multiple rocket launchers)	342	342	Austria, Brazil, France United Kingdom, United States	France, United Kingdom, United States
Surface to Air Missile System (portable, mobile)	1684	1684	France, United States	
Radars (air search, fire control, ground surveillance, height finding, artillery locating)	117	117	France, United States	
Combat helicopters	15	15	United States	
Helicopters	50	50	Italy, United States	
ASW(anti-submarine warfare) helicopters	32	32	France	
Airborne early warning and control aircraft	5	5	United States	
Trainer aircraft	30	30	United Kingdom	
FGA (Fighter-ground attack) aircraft	113	113	United Kingdom, United States	

Fighter aircraft	24	24	United Kingdom
Tanker aircraft	10	10	United States
Transport aircraft	22	22	Spain, United Kingdom, United States United States

SOURCE: Adapted Trade Register generated from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute arms transfers database for time period 1980 to 1991, accessed 30.07.2016, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

1.3 The Second Gulf War

"The Mother of Battles will be our battle of victory and martyrdom."

President Saddam Hussein, 21 February 1991[41]

The Second Gulf War, more widely known as the Gulf War, was a very important chapter in the history of the Middle East and its regional and international repercussions are still felt today. Iraq, after attaining an elevated position due to its success in the later years of the Iran-Iraq War, was in possession of one of the strongest, if not the strongest arsenal in the Middle East – leaving any NBC capabilities aside. As explained previously, the importance of an expanded coastline, the presence of oil fields, as well as the historical claims of the Iraqi regime that Kuwait was an organic part the country certainly influenced Saddam Hussein to turn against a country that had actually supported financially his regime during the Iran-Iraq War. The initial operations on 2 August 1990 were conducted in less than a day, with the Kuwaiti army giving only token resistance and the country being formally annexed in 8 August 1990.[42]

The reaction of the international community was immediate with the UN Security Council passing on the same day a resolution demanding that Iraq pull off its troops from the country. The uproar was even bigger among regional forces. In particular, Saudi Arabia was deeply concerned that it would be the next target of Iraq. Satellite imagery showing Iraqi forces moving towards the Saudi border, confirmed its fear. In the following weeks US troops had arrived in Saudi Arabia, 50 warships from many states were approaching the Gulf, and the UN Security Council passed Resolution 661 invoking economic sanctions against Iraq and calling for a ban on their oil exports

41"Saddam Hussein's Broadcast, February 22, 1991", Los Angeles Times, accessed July 25, 2016. http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-22/news/mn-1740_1_saddam-hussein.

42Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v "Persian Gulf War." accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/event/Persian-Gulf-War.

globally.[43] The situation quickly turned into a confrontation between the U.S., which had sent its troops to Saudi Arabia in order to protect the interests and security of the latter, and Iraq. Each side was trying to resolve the crisis through diplomatic means or by taking hostages as a form of negotiating card in the case of Iraq, and in the meantime amassing military assets in the area.

During this time, Iraq was also negotiating with its erstwhile enemy Iran, if not for an alliance at least for a neutral stance during the whole crisis. Iran, due to its anti-Western and anti-American viewpoint, was positive towards such an approach and agreed to resume diplomatic relations with its former enemy.[44] While Iraq was negotiating with Iran, the Coalition kept swelling in size as part of the defensive operation of the campaign. Codenamed Desert Shield, Coalition forces had by November in the region close to 1,800 aircraft and helicopters, as well as 70 naval ships that were enforcing Resolution 661 and blockading any goods directed to Iraq via shipping lanes. Diplomatic methods for a potential peaceful solution to the crisis were considered as far as January 1991. However, they were met with failure due to the uncompromising positions of both sides, in addition to the immense buildup in armed forces on the Kuwaiti borders. The crisis would be resolved only through military means.

At the onset of operation Desert Storm, Iraqi troops in Kuwait and South Iraq reached an approximate of 590,000 at the highest estimate, along with 700 aircraft, 5,750 tanks and 15 warships. Pitted against them, the Coalition forces numbered 700,000 troops, 1,746 aircraft, 3,673 tanks and 149 warships.[45] The Coalition offensive was split into two parts: Desert Storm being the codename for the air campaign and commencing at the night of 16-17 January 1991; and Desert Sabre for the ground offensive. While the air campaign was initially expected to last few days, it ended up going on for more than six weeks.[46] In contrast, the ground offensive which was supposed to last for some weeks ended in four days. The main objectives of the air campaign were the destruction of the majority of Iraq's Air Force and airfields in order for the Coalition Air Forces to achieve air superiority. The success of this objective would facilitate the ground operations, the disruption of any large army concentrations, and the destruction of Iraqi food, fuel and electricity supplies. Despite

43"UN Resolution 661." UN Arms Embargoes, accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/iraq/661.

44Hiro, *Second Gulf War*, 180.

45Hiro, *Second Gulf War*, 316.

46Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 484.

the fact that the operation was the most intensive aerial bombing in history, the poor results in relation to the first two objectives at the beginning of Desert Storm was one of the reasons behind the prolonging of the air campaign and the decision to proceed to operation Desert Sabre not sooner than on 24th February 1991. The Coalition forces initiated their attack at about 04.00 GMT and managed by noon to achieve their day one objectives in half the time. The Iraqi side quickly tried to withdraw its troops from Kuwait to the relative safety of Iraq. The repeated attacks of Coalition aircraft and the speed of the ground forces soon turned this withdrawal to a retreat.

By 28 February 1991, all Iraqi troops had been pulled out of Kuwait and a temporary ceasefire had been agreed, ending the crisis and the war.[47] The UN, being on the winners' side, with Resolution 687 imposed strict conditions and sanctions to Iraq in order to eliminate the extended arsenal that the latter possessed such as chemical weapons, long range ballistic missiles and advanced research on nuclear technology. The sanctions were not restricted to weaponry, but also on imports and exports, especially on oil. Iraq by that point was an outcast to the outside world, and any possibility of it attaining the armory it had at the onset of the Second Gulf War became minimal, as it will be observed later. Saudi Arabia, after the success of the operations and not wanting any repetition of the invasion of Kuwait, invested even more in arms transfers and high technology weapons systems. Billions of its petrodollars were spent for that purpose each year. The regional tension, however, did not end, but rather reached new heights with the Iraq War and the subsequent conflicts and rivalries that have sprung after the elimination of one of the key regional powers.

Chapter 2

The "Intermission" Between the Two Gulf Wars and the Events of the Third One

By the end of February 1991, the balance of regional power in the Gulf region had radically changed. Iraq was utterly defeated, and even though in the end Saddam Hussein was not deposed, Iraq's capability for offensive wars or aggressive expansion towards its neighbors – like Kuwait – was diminished. Additionally, the state was plagued by a Shia rebellion on 2 March 1991,[48] which was violently put down, but most importantly by Resolution 687. The Resolution not only ensured that the state would destroy or halt development of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and dispose of any ballistic missile systems, but also restricted oil sales and even imports

47Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v "Persian Gulf War."

48Hiro, *Second Gulf War*, 400.

of basic goods. The latter restrictions had dire consequences on the population. [49] The Resolution practically lasted from 1991 until 2003 and the invasion of Iraq. As Saddam Hussein himself admitted during one of his interrogations in 2004, the sanctions enforced to the state in order to limit arms transfers and possession and development of WMDs were highly successful.[50] As a result, arms transfers to Iraq were practically nonexistent during this period. There were a small number of arms and spare parts for repairing damaged equipment smuggled to the country, along with an effort to transfer military technology in order to create a domestic arms industry. Apart from that, the arms embargo was total,[51] and it would play a role in the future in relation to the ease with which the Iraqi army was defeated in 2003.

2.1 Saudi Arabia and the Post-War Armament Bonanza

Whereas Iraq was severely weakened by the Gulf War, the situation with Saudi Arabia and its arms transfers was completely different. Despite the global disarmament, due to the end of the Cold War, and the fact that Iraq was considered an international pariah after the Second Gulf War, Saudi Arabia increased even more the investments on weapons systems. The root cause could possibly be the reliance on external powers in order to safeguard the integrity of the Kingdom – which prompted a wide Muslim outcry on the existence of non-Muslim troops on holy grounds –and the fear of even more regional instability in the future. [52] These reasons led Riyadh to procure even bigger amounts of military hardware, pairing such moves with an increase in the number of its armed forces as well. From 1991 until 2003, the state has been spending from $19.5 to $32 billion annually in military expenditure, including arms transfers. Compared with other militarily strong countries such as Turkey or Israel – the first having a population of 51 million and the latter being embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict – Saudi Arabia has by far been the biggest spender in the Middle East as Table 1.2 portrays.

---

49 While opinions vary, the number of children deaths under five years old for 1991-1998 periods is considered to range from 170,000 to 500,000.

50 *February 13 2004 interview of High Value Detainee #1 (Saddam Hussein) by the FBI*, accessed July 30 2016 http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/05.pdf .

51 Anthony H Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Forces: 1988-1993*, CSIS Middle East Dynamic Net Assessment, (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 75.

52 Clive Jones, "Saudi Arabia After the Gulf War: The Internal-External Security Dilemma." *International Relations* 12, no. 6 (January 12, 1995): 31-51. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/004711789501200602 .

Table 1.2
Saudi military expenditure for years 1991-2003 compared to Israel and Turkey.
Numbers in constant 2014 US$ millions.

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
S.Arabia	25870	24314	25769	22242	19606	19575	26583	30704	27331	30123	32083	28166	28374
Israel	18479	13962	15438	14507	13460	13785	13834	13651	13367	14168	14704	16445	16839
Turkey	13169	13852	15315	14973	15382	17221	17942	18800	20758	20089	18416	19595	17685

SOURCE: Adapted from SIPRI Military Expenditure Database for time period 1988-2015, accessed 30.07.2016, http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database.

Furthermore, the Kingdom benefitted from its good relations with major international actors, such as the US and the UK. They were amongst its more important arms suppliers and provided Saudi Arabia with an extended arsenal, certainly the most technologically advanced in the region. During 1991-2003, the Saudi Arabian Ground Forces received approximately 450 tanks from the US including the state of the art M1A2 Abrams MBT, and 3,069 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) and Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFV) from Canada, Switzerland and the US.[53] In addition, the Air Force was boosted even further by the purchase of 48 Tornado fighter aircraft from the UK, as well as 84 F-15 fighter aircraft in various variants.[54] Of interest is also the manner in which Saudi Arabia acquired its Abrams tanks, since the deal included offsets in the form of US investments in the Saudi domestic arms industry and the production of some components of the tank.[55] Even after 9/11 and the suspicions that existed, due to the fact that many of the hijackers were Saudi Arabian, the good relations with the US and in general the West still remained regarding arms transfers; a sign of long and good customer relations.

2.2 Iran's Effort to Rebuild

The period between the Second and Third Gulf War was crucial for another important regional actor, Iran. The state, having been defeated a few years before the Second Gulf War – in the Iran-Iraq War – faced an international embargo and was not

53SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Saudi Arabia: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2003.* Accessed July 30 2016, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

54Ibid.

55SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Saudi Arabia, 1991-2003*.

able to actively participate in the conflict. Its neutrality during that war and the condemnation for the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq – expressed both by the President of Iran Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the state – certainly helped Tehran to avoid any further problems that could have arisen from a pro-Iraqi intervention, as many hardliners within the Iranian government supported.[56] In fact, this stance assisted Iran in the following years, with the Second Gulf War being used as an example of Saddam's aggression destabilizing the region, in contrast to Iranian practices. The announcement by the UN that Iraq was the aggressor in the Iran-Iraq War further improved the image of Iran in the view of the West and more importantly the Gulf states. Such an improved image resulted in Saudi Arabia and Iran reinstating diplomatic relations and seeking solutions to mutual problems in the region in the immediate years after the Second Gulf War.[57] There existed some relaxed restrictions on the Iranian hajj, otherwise very closely regulated due to the number of Shias comprising it while visiting Saudi Arabia. There were even talks at the time about Iran joining GCC as well.[58] These good relations with Saudi Arabia compared to the post-Revolution period would arrive to an end soon. Due to the 9/11 and the famous "axis of evil" speech, Iran was branded as a terrorist state and threat to global security. While the relations between the two states were at least maintained even after these events, from 2005 onwards, regional rivalry would begin to resurface.[59] The strict sanctions imposed by the UN in 2006 with Resolution 1696 in order to restrict the possible development of any nuclear weapons further alienated the state from the West and Saudi Arabia.

The above described events affected the image of Iran and the arms transfers were also influenced. The Iranian Army at the time was struggling to restore its losses during the Iran-Iraq War and was also afflicted by antiquated or poorly maintained equipment, due to the lack of repair parts because of the embargo. To solve this issue, Iran turned to various arms suppliers, with the most important being China, Russia and North Korea. While some of this equipment is in itself obsolete, and certainly of lower quality than Western weaponry, it has certainly assisted the state in rebuilding

56Amiri Reza Ekhtiari and Fakhreddin Soltani. "Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait as Turning Point in Iran-Saudi Relationship." *Journal of Politics and Law* 4, no. 1 (March 2011): 191.

57Ekhtiari and Soltani, "Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait", 192.

58Ben Rich, "Gulf War 4.0: Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Complexification of the Persian Gulf Equation." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 23, no. 4 (2012): 474 doi:10.1080/09596410.2012.712453.

59Ibid, 474.

its armed forces, as Table 1.3, based on SIPRI data for the time period 1991-2003 suggests.

Firstly, the data on the trade register shows that some of the equipment was either licensed or included as part of the deal assembly of the weapons system in Iran, especially on sensitive technologies such as Surface to Surface Missiles (SSMs).[60] This could be explained as an Iranian effort to develop a domestic arms industry, in light of the US and later UN sanctions and of all the developments they could bring into arms imports.

Similarly, the acquisition of fast attack craft (FAC) and a modern submarine[61] possibly portray the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf for Iran during that period, and the measures it took in order to improve its navy. The fact that most of the FACs use anti-ship missiles[62] also hints to a potential ship and tanker disruption role,[63] effectively blocking commercial shipping in the Gulf and probably constitutes a result of the lessons learned from the "Tanker War" during the Iran-Iraq War. [64]

The procurement of SSMs and SSM launchers could indicate the search for an alternative to counterbalance Iran's difficulties in procuring bigger and diversified quantities of major conventional weapons.[65] The relative success of SSM attacks to Iraq during the conflict between the two states could have highlighted the capability of these systems and provided an alternate way of posing a major threat in the Middle East. The fact that many of such missiles could contain nuclear, biological or chemical warheads certainly added a new dimension in Iran's military capabilities and

60SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iran: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2003,* accessed July 30 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

61SIPRI trade register: *Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iran, 1991 -2003*.

62Ibid.

63"The Conventional Military," United States Institute of Peace: The Iran Primer, 2010, accessed July 30, 2016, http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/conventional-military.

64The name given to a series of operations from 1984 till 1988 during the Iran-Iraq War in the Gulf, with Iraq trying to disrupt Iranian tankers and oil producing facilities, and Iran attacking tankers and ships belonging to neutral countries that were supporting Iraq.

65Anthony H Cordesman, *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, (Westport: Praeger, 1999.), 222.

threat level to regional powers. [66] In addition, it is believed that by 1999, Iran had received enough technology to be able to manufacture by itself Scud B SSMs, except for some of the more complex technological components.[67] The observation that Iran in later years has managed to domestically produce SSMs based on imported SSMs such as the Scud B attests to that.[68] This capability paired with the ability to attack distant targets without having to use the air forces – compared to other regional rivals that were antiquated or in need of modernization– could give Iran a much needed edge in any potential future conflict. As it will be observed, especially after the deterioration of Iran-Saudi relations, Iran's extended arsenal of SSMs and ballistic missiles would become one of the focal points of that rivalry.

Moreover, some of the differences between the equipment ordered and that delivered, particularly in the case of Russia may have been caused by the US pressure on the former to cut back its arms sales to Iran.[69] While there are beliefs that many of these cutbacks are circumvented with deals under the table, the phenomenon serves as an indicator of some of the issues that Iran faced during that period and would also face in a post Third Gulf War environment.[70]

Table 1.3
Transfers of select major conventional weapons to Iran.
Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2003.

Type of weapons System	Total number ordered	Total number delivered (approximately)	Suppliers	Biggest Suppliers
Tanks	1191	563	Belarus, Poland, Russia	Russia

66Of course with the latest Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed between Iran, the European Union and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany that signaled the lifting of the sanctions, the possibilities of nuclear capabilities in SSM systems are severely diminished.

67Cordesman, Iran's Military Forces, 224.

68"The Conventional Military," United States Institute of Peace: The Iran Primer.

69Cordesman, Iran's Military Forces, 67.

70Ibid, 67.

IFV(Infantry Fighting Vehicle)	1500	413	Russia	
APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier)	150	150	China	
Artillery (towed guns, self-propelled guns, multiple rocket launchers)	321	200	Russia, North Korea, China	China
Surface to Air Missile System (portable, mobile)	1488	1488	China, Russia, Soviet Union, Ukraine	China, Russia
SSM launchers (Surface to Surface Missile System)	40	40	China, North Korea	China
SSMs (Surface to Surface Missiles)	370	370	China, North Korea	China
FAC (Fast Attack Craft)	40	40	China, North Korea	North Korea
Submarines	1(Kilo Class Diesel Sub)	1	Russia	
Fighter aircraft	41	41	China, Soviet Union	China

SOURCE: Adapted Trade Register generated from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute arms transfers database for time period 1980 to 1991, accessed 30.07.2016, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

As observed, during the time period between the Second and the Third Gulf War, the most important powers in the Gulf region tried to enhance their arsenal, for different reasons in each case; with the exception or Iraq due to the strict embargo. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia invested in high tech military technology and the modernization of its ground and air forces in order to be able to better protect its interests in the region without any extended Western assistance, such as the one during the Second Gulf War. To that extent, it utilized its petrodollars in acquiring cutting edge weapons systems.

On the other hand, Iran pursued arms transfers in order to restore its losses during the Iran-Iraq War and to ensure its important role in the region. Due to the limitations in arms transfers and the hostile relations during most of that time with the West and in particular with the US, it had to turn towards the East and Russia. The strategic focus of the state also switched to weapons such as SSMs to balance any limited capabilities it had in other conventional weapons.

The relations between Tehran and Riyadh were improved however during that period as seen above, partly due to Saddam Hussein still remaining in power and posing the most important threat to regional security. The situation would change dramatically in the beginning of the new millennium with 9/11; Iran being branded a state that is a threat to all mankind; and the Third Gulf War removing Iraq from the equation. These events slowly led to the resurfacing of regional rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and this would be also mirrored in their strategic planning and in arms transfers.

2.3 The Third Gulf War, its Impact on Security and Arms Transfers

The new millennium brought a torrent of changes and turmoil in the Middle East. 9/11 and the commencement of the "war on terror"; the invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001; the "axis of evil" speech; and the invasion of Iraq, were events that certainly tipped the balance in the Middle East and especially in the Gulf region. While all these events are of particular importance, this thesis is focused on the impact of 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is these two incidents that affected more directly the regional order under examination, and in turn the arms flows to the states researched.

As it has been addressed above, after 9/11, the 2002 "axis of evil" speech and the decline of any existing relations between US and Iran as well as Iran and Saudi Arabia,[71] Tehran had once again attained the status of international pariah. The embargo imposed on the state was further extended later in 2006, while further sanctions were enforced by the UN Security Council to force Iran to abandon its nuclear program. All these restrictions affected Iran as a whole. The utter deterioration of Iran-Saudi relations after a period of cooperation, the reappearance of their regional rivalry and the threat of the US forced in a way the state to further import or produce weapons systems that would give it an edge in a regional conflict.

However, the most important change in the region was the Iraq War; the invasion of the country in 2003 by US/UK forces and its occupation until 2011. While this event is not tied directly with arms transfers and the international arms trade that are the main points of this thesis, it had a severe impact geopolitically. As it will be seen, it affected the other regional powers and created a new period of instability in the region. The removal of Iraq out of the regional "equation" later led to polarization between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and constitutes the reason why it has to be examined for the purposes of this thesis. The Iraq War followed by the US occupation contributed in the further deterioration of their previously amicable relationship. This deterioration is visible through their arms transfers as well.

Since there is abundant literature on the reasoning behind the attack on Iraq, the scope of this chapter is not to examine these reasons, but rather to set the background. The official explanation in the words of US President George Bush was "to disarm

71Rich, "Gulf War 4.0", 474.

Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people". Some of the reasons provided certainly contained a nugget of truth. United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) had as its goal to disarm Iraq of its WMD and encountered various obstacles, mainly resistance from the Iraqi authorities.[72] Others reasons, such as the claim of support for terrorism, are highly contested.

Regardless of the truth behind the presented rationales, the US ground forces, along with a UK contingent invaded Iraq through Kuwait on 20 March 2003. The Iraqi armed forces, after 12 years of stifling sanction and unable to replace and repair their aging military equipment[73] was unable to show any effective resistance. A combination of a fast ground offensive, air attacks and usage of Special Forces ensured[74] almost total domination over the Iraqi Army. Big parts of it deserted with only the Republican Guard and paramilitary Baathists, the "Fedayeen", being loyal to the regime. Many soldiers who also happened to be locals simply dropped their weapons, took their uniforms and returned to their homes.[75] Even when the advance reached Baghdad, which many specialists predicted would be a "Stalingrad-on-Tigris",[76] with massive losses for the US army, this was not the case. While there was some resistance, by 9 April, Baghdad had been captured by the US army, ending 34 years of Saddam's reign in Iraq. Saddam Hussein himself was not found within the city, but rather eight months later, on 13 December 2003, when a search party located him hiding in a town near his hometown of Tikrit. After a trial in which he was found guilty, he was hanged in 2006.[77] The rebuilding of Iraq by the US started immediately after the end of the war and would only end in 2011 with the departure of the last US forces from the country. For eight years under US occupation and consequently struggling to regain its foothold in the region, it is safe to assume that Iraq at that point had ceased to be an important regional power and certainly could not approach its former influence in the Gulf. As a result, Iran and Saudi Arabia remained the two stronger regional powers, at least in terms of military power.

72John Keegan, *The Iraq War*. (London: Hutchinson, 2004), 111.

73Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Forces: 1988-1993*, 72

74Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 148.

75Ibid, 148.

76Ibid, 5.

77Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v "Iraq War." accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War.

Having observed the background of the arms buildup both for the Second and the Third Gulf War, certain observations already arise with regards to the core argument of this thesis. By numbers alone, Iraq and Saudi Arabia had in the years examined managed to amass large and modern arsenals; or Iran had invested in technologies that could also have further applications, such as the missiles that it procured and later domestically produced. As it will be observed in the following chapter, these factors will play an important role and possibly highlight other important connections between stability and the international arms trade.

Chapter 3

Weapons + Politics = Stability?

3.1 The destabilizing factor of weapons systems

Through the above chronological approach of the events leading up to the Third Gulf War and to the more recent years, it has become apparent that all of the states examined engaged in extended arms transfers. Such transfers underline one of the biggest issues that surfaces and is also visible in our own case; in the words of Brad Roberts "[w]eapons proliferation puts a premium on the exploration of alternatives to national self-reliance and accumulating ever more and more powerful weapons".[78] The procurement of weapons in most cases not only worsens the situation, but also makes alternate methods of problem solving less and less viable. It is to this extent that the procurement of specific weapons systems and their technology plays a very important role. This is especially influenced by the external arms suppliers. While, during the previous decades most of the conventional weapons transferred to a state were either surplus or outdated, by the late 80s and onwards many clients were receiving the latest in military technology.[79] The Iraqi air force, consisting at the outbreak of the Second Gulf War of modern French Mirage F1 aircraft and Soviet built Mig-29s is but one example. Saudi Arabia, as it has been observed in previous chapters, is receiving some of the most modern military equipment for both its ground and air forces by the West and in particular by the United States. Iran has managed amid sanctions to obtain the technology for producing ballistic missiles by China and the Soviet Union/Russia.

Incidentally, these weapons also fall into the category of destabilizing weapons. More specifically, "battle tanks, fighter aircraft, submarines, smart munitions and surface to surface missiles" are deemed to be a destabilizing factor[80] since their deployment can be of decisive importance in a conflict. The weapons themselves

78 Brad Roberts, *Weapons Proliferation and World Order After the Cold War*. n.p., (Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 1996), 27.

79 Ibid, 67.

however are but a portion of the destabilizing factor. The way in which they are used is also important. The tactics, strategic planning, skill level of the users and strategic doctrine can affect the destabilizing or stabilizing role of a weapons system.

As state relations change, so can a doctrine or the approach towards a specific state, and thus make the weapons destabilizing or vice versa in a specific region. The deployment of Saudi air forces, for example, only for self-defense reasons after the Second Gulf War would in no way be destabilizing the region. A focus on their attack role after the worsening of Saudi-Iranian relations however, paired with well-trained pilots capable of conducting air raids in neighboring countries is a different matter.[81] This characteristic, along with unstable political environments, can have dire implications, especially in a region such as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

Furthermore, the international arms trade is not a one way exchange. The role of the exporters themselves and of what they provide to their customers is to be taken into consideration. In this regard, the supplying countries also have a certain responsibility to not supply destabilizing weapons and large quantities of weapons in general.[82] Sadly, this responsibility has often been sacrificed for the sake of economic profits[83] or "realpolitik". In fact, based on a 1990 Report by NATO, out of the 50 nations that sold weapons to Iran and Iraq, 28 actually sold to both states. This was a clear illustration of the trend "to assign more importance to the profit motive than to perceived geopolitical considerations".[84] It is obvious that the beginning of this trend affecting such an area would have serious consequences for the future and stability of the region. This is more so the case when it comes to examining oil rich states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.

---

80 W. Seth Carus, "Chapter 2: Weapons Technology and Regional Stability." In *Arms Control and Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, edited by Shelley A. Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 10.

81 As portrayed in Table 1.1 and in Chapter 1.2, the existence of "tanker" aircraft in the Saudi Air Forces that allow for airborne refueling could be used to further extend the operational radius of Saudi aircraft and practically enable them to target any area in Iran.

82 "Destabilizing Stocks of Conventional Weapons Preoccupy First Committee as Speaker Describes Amount Spent on 'Breeding, Exacerbating and Maintaining' Conflict," October 22, 2014, accessed July 25, 2016, http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/gadis3508.doc.htm.

83 North Atlantic Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, 1990 Reports (Brussels, November 1990), 19-20.

84 Ibid.

Iraq, with the assistance from countries such as France (which was the biggest importer of Iraqi oil at the time), the United States and the Soviet Union before and during the Iran-Iraq War, managed to create and develop through arms transfers a sizable and advanced arsenal. These transfers contained not only conventional weapons systems, but also the technology with which Iraq would progress its chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities. A decade later, in 1991 some of the abovementioned powers would seek to dismantle that same arsenal they supplied.

Furthermore, taking as a starting point the Iran-Iraq War, new markets and suppliers would emerge – China, Italy, Brazil and Spain. This was the case also for some types of arms markets; the "black" and "grey"[85] ones would grow even more. This development facilitated countries facing sanctions by the international community, such as Iran, to use the black market, bypass these barriers and get a hold of parts or weapons needed.[86]

To conclude, it becomes apparent that due to arms transfers, all of the states researched have procured – legally and often illegally – potentially or outright destabilizing conventional weapons. Furthermore, the excessive supply of weapons and of military technology – which can lead to domestic production of conventional weapons – further exacerbated and still exacerbates the stability of the Gulf area and the Middle East. By observing some of the key conflicts that were connected with the arms trade, such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Second and the Third Gulf War, it is noticeable how the accumulated armaments affected the intensity of the conflicts. They paint a grim image for future conflicts and regional rivalries. However, as observed, arms are but one factor in the regional equation. It has also to be determined in a certain way what other factors exist, and what is their impact on the states examined.

3.2 Proliferation and its effect on regional balance

As it has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, all three states researched had at a certain point between the 80s and 00s invested heavily in arms imports. What will be argued hereunder based on the data examined, is that the conventional weapons proliferation between the examined countries played an essential role in the outbreak and outcome of two wars, the Iran-Iraq War and the Second Gulf War. Furthermore, it created a course of events that would lead to another, the Third Gulf War, while it

85 The arms market that does follows the legal trading channels, but is not licensed or authorized by the original manufacturer, therefore perfectly legal in contrast to the black market.

86 According to Cordesman (Iran's military forces, page 69), Iran has used a variety of organizations to procure old US equipment in order to get access to spare parts for some of the US weapons supplied to the Shah regime. Until 1999 he believes Iran was able to get access to high technology components such as "radar testing devices, navigation and avionics equipment" to name but a few.

remains a source of concern regarding security in the Gulf region. In addition, it defines regional relations and promotes instability. As it might be expected, weapons and their procurement are only but one aspect of this kind of proliferation. The political context plays also an important role in promoting instability and hindering opportunities for disarmaments and the search for different solutions in regional relationships. It is therefore very important to the research question itself to examine some aspects of conventional weapons proliferation under the light of arms buildups

In order to proceed to the matters of instability, regional rivalry and other relevant important factors, there is a need to set out some of the characteristics of proliferation and arms races and observe whether if they actually occurred in the timeframe and areas examined. Such questions have to be addressed since they are inherently connected with the research question and will also assist in reaching certain conclusions regarding the arms buildup among Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It is noteworthy that arms races do not only denote advances in weapons systems with regards to their quantity and quality – either through domestic production or through arms trade – but also in the size of armed forces and military expenditures in general.

To that extent, a book published by Grant T. Hammond a couple of years after the Second Gulf War, *"Plowshares into Swords: Arms Races in International Politics, 1840-1991"*, is of assistance to a certain degree when trying to flag some of these important points. First of all, Hammond does not believe that the term "arms race" is particularly helpful; he proceeds in offering alternatives to the term, such as "military competitions, arms races, panics ('abortive arms races, arms races that are one sided, and hence, arms races that never were'), and rearmament races".[87] He also considers that "[a]rms races, like war, are conducted for a political purpose";[88] a consideration which supports the belief that political context can have a destabilizing factor as well. Furthermore, he notes that "the narrowly regional races with specific geographic focus or goals appear to be the most sensitive and war prone".[89] Most importantly, Hammond provides a series of points to be used in order to ascertain whether an "arms race" is indeed an arms race:[90]

87 Grant Tedrick Hammond, *Plowshares into Swords: Arms Races in International Politics, 1840-1991*, (Univ. of South Carolina, 1993), 9.

88 Ibid, 243.

89 Ibid, 249.

90 Ibid, 31.

1. Two or more participants, though the relationship is in essence a bilateral one.

2. Specific designation of an adversary or potential adversary.

3. Military and diplomatic planning based directly on the capabilities and intent of each other.

4. A high degree of public animosity or antagonism between the parties involved.

5. Politico-military linkage of state actions between or among the rival force structures and strategies.

6. An extraordinary and consistent increase in the level of defense effort in excess of 8 percent per annum.

7. A focus on a particular weapons environment or weapons system vis-a-vis the opponent with an explicit ratio goal.

8. The purpose of the effort: seeking dominance via intimidation over the rival in politico military affairs.

By applying these conditions to the cases and the various arms transfers and military expenditure examined, some of the key points are met. It has to be noted that these points are not set in stone, and have been a subject of criticism. For the purposes of this thesis however the usefulness of this series of points lies in observing certain trends. Such trends in turn can function as an indicator of increased arms transfers during the examined period in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia and more importantly highlight other variables regarding stability and the arms trade of conventional weapons.

1. Two or more participants, though the relationship is in essence a bilateral one:

While the conflicts obviously had two or more participants, the arms buildup did not always follow this scheme. The Iraqi buildup in the late 70s, that signified the beginning of two decades of extended arms imports into the country and led to the Iran-Iraq War, did not have a counterpart from the Iranian side. The weapons that the post-Revolution Iran possessed and used in the subsequent war were part of the Shah's quest to enhance his country's power projection capabilities in the region and were not specifically aimed at Iraq. Similarly, in relation to the Second Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and in turn the US Coalition had not engaged into a bilateral relationship with the goal of exceeding Iraq in terms of arms transfers. After the Third Gulf War

however and with Iraq out of the picture, there was certainly a visible competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

2. Specific designation of an adversary or potential adversary:

There appears to be a designation of adversary or potential adversary in all the cases examined. Nonetheless, in most of the cases the specific focus was lacking. Iraq's goal was the dominance in the region as a whole, and its efforts were not aimed at specific adversaries. The Anti-Israeli and Anti-American rhetoric that formed, and still forms, a big part of Iran's policy could serve as another example for its lack of specific enemies. Regarding, however, the Iranian-Saudi rivalry, at least on the Saudi side there seems to be a designation of Iran as the main potential adversary in the region.

3. Military and diplomatic planning based directly on the capabilities and intent of each other:

With the exception of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the Third Gulf War, there is no specific focus from any of the states examined on the exact capabilities of each other. Besides, intent can be interpreted differently by different actors and in such case it would require research beyond the scope of this thesis.

4. A high degree of public animosity or antagonism between the parties involved:

This is a condition that is being fulfilled consistently after the Iranian Revolution. Antagonism was and is still ranging from economic and political to religious reasons among all the parties encountered.

5. Politico-military linkage of state actions between or among the rival force structures and strategies:

Regarding this point, the meaning of linkage in the cases at hand plays an important role. Linkage can vary from a behavior utterly focused on the "rival force structures and strategies" to a much more general and far less detailed connection. By that definition, there certainly exists a linkage between all the states in the cases studies researched.

6. An extraordinary and consistent increase in the level of defense effort in excess of 8 percent per annum:

While this condition is met when it concerns consistent increases in military expenditure and defense efforts in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, the excess of 8 percent annually in armaments that is described can be easily malleable. This figure is derived not only from Hammond's examples of arms races (mostly in the end of the

19th and the first half of the 20th century)[91] , but is also based on purely empirical data and could become eventually outdated in a more modern environment.

7. A focus on a particular weapons environment or weapons system vis-a-vis the opponent with an explicit ratio goal:

There appear to be specific choices on specific weapons systems, such as the Iranian reliance on ballistic missiles, or the Saudi investment in having a state of the art air force. This planning often is based on potential competitors and on the lack of any other data to base the defense planning on. The acquisition of F-15 fighter aircraft by Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Second Gulf War certainly did not have any set ratio with regards to Iran, in a time period when both states were having amicable relationships.

8. The purpose of the effort: seeking dominance via intimidation over the rival in politico-military affairs:

While this point could be a valid purpose of an arms race, it does not exclude the existence of other purposes. Domination is not often the only goal of arms acquisition. Deterrence and security may as well be reasons for the procurement of weapons. Therefore, this last condition cannot be met in almost all regards and is not useful for any comparisons in the cases at hand.

As it can be observed, while some of the criteria were met after being applied to timeframe and states examined, they do not fully comply with those specified by Hammond. Even if they would fit in each situation, some of the conditions themselves lack substance. The application of this test to the present case studies, however, serves as a tool in order to identify some key issues characterizing the arms trade in the region.

First of all, the Iranian Revolution changed the balances in the Middle East, as a new regional competitor appeared. Before, due to the "Twin Pillars" policy and the neutral relations between Iran and Iraq there was a certain degree of stability in the region. The fact that Shia's consist 90-95% of Iran's population, a very large percentage for the generally Sunni Middle East created additional obstacles, especially later in the relations of the state with Saudi Arabia, the place of the holiest places in Islam.

Secondly, while these states during the timeframe examined seem to have had competitive or outright hostile relations, they did not appear to designate one state as a specific enemy and thus base their whole military planning and their arms imports

91Hammond's examples of "arms races" start from 1874, and an armaments race between France and Germany that ended in 1894. The rest of the cases are also focused on the first half of the 20th century, thus not taking into account a post-Cold War environment.

on this designated potential adversary. By way of example, Iran maintained - and still maintains - an Anti-American and Anti-Israel policy. It would not be logical to believe that it perceived Saudi Arabia (even though often Saudi Arabia is considered a rival due to its ties with the West) or Iraq as its only specific rivals.

Thirdly, the impact that political context can have in regional relations is obvious. By the time Saddam Hussein asserted dominance over Iraq in 1979, after rising through the ranks of the Ba'ath Party, he had managed since the early 70s as vice president and later as president[92] to equip his armed forces to such an extent that he could pursue his objective of making Iraq the main regional power. The attack on Iran in 1980, followed by the invasion of Kuwait in 1991 show how political context can and will affect arms transfers, eventually leading to proliferation. Furthermore, in the case of Saudi Arabia, many of its policy choices were influenced by the behavior of their primary ally and arms supplier, the United States; more so in the time period after the Second Gulf War,[93] fact that played an important role in Saudi-Iranian relations.

What can be concluded from the examples above, is that first of all there has not been any "arms race" or anything close to that notion – this was not the purpose of comparison either way. Political and historical reasons, as well as the general instability in the region, along with a broad field of potential adversaries were what led to arms transfers of such extent in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq or of specific types of weapons in the case of Iran.[94] As Yezid Sayigh observed:

> *Accumulation of military strength risks being either too successful or not successful enough ; in the first case, exaggerated power can lead to aggression; in the second case an arms buildup may alarm neighbors and provoke them into a counter-build-up, eventually threatening the first state and leaving it less secure than it started[…] The imperatives of national security may lead to domestic and foreign*

92Until July 1979, Iraq had a form of dual leadership, with Al-Bakr, a popular and high ranking Ba'ath Party member who also happened to be a cousin of Saddam, acting as the "official" face of Iraq as its president while Saddam as vice president was tasked with guaranteeing the continuation of the regime and the rebuilding of its armed forces. In truth however, Al-Bakr was only nominally president of the country, with Saddam possessing the actual power. (Death Lobby 9, 65)

93Rich, "Gulf War 4.0", 474.

94Based on the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction on "Defining Weapons of Mass Destruction", within the WMD category also fall weapons such as ballistic missiles. More specifically there is a distinct category that defines "WMD as weapons, including some CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) weapons but not limited to CBRN, capable of causing mass destruction or mass casualties" (Page 8). Therefore the ballistic missiles that Iran possesses and can contain CBRN warheads but also explosive ones can be considered WMDs.

policies that are actually disruptive of regional relations and that run counter to the demands of integration into the international order.[95]

In relation to the case studies of this thesis, it is observed that both events fit in what Sayigh pinpoints. Iraq had managed to be that successful in accumulating its strength and possessing this "exaggerated power" that would lead in conflicts. Firstly, this is seen during the 70s and before the Iran-Iraq War, in which it was the aggressor. Secondly, and coming from an elevated position after the Iran-Iraq War, such was the case in the time period immediately preceding the Second Gulf War. Believing that arms procurements were the sole reason that led to this aggression would be an exaggeration, but it certainly has played its role. In the second case, the arms buildup of Tehran and the focus on developing nuclear weapons would have most certainly alarmed Riyadh, leading it to even bigger investments in weapons systems. Data on the military expenditure of Saudi Arabia emerging for 2005, when its relations with Iran are considered to have started deteriorating, 2005, shows that the Kingdom has spent constantly increasing amounts of money on military expenditure, starting from $38 billion in 2005 to $85 billion in 2015.[96]

3.3 The economic workings of the arms trade

"*The sinews of war are infinite money*"

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Having addressed the point that stability is not only linked to the types of the weapons used, but is also influenced heavily by political and historical events, a question has to be answered: how does the arms trade work? In what ways does a state – or an organization – procure weapons systems and pays for those? Such a question is valid not only in the case of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, but also for some of the oil rich GCC countries such as the UAE. In the later cases, the wealth they amassed due to their natural resources has enabled these states to procure large amounts of weapons.[97] The reason for addressing specific aspects of the arms trade economy is due to their connection and application in many instances with the

95 Yezid Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, Adelphi Paper 251 (London: Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990), 52, 70.

96 SIPRI military expenditure database, accessed 25 July 2016, http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database.

97 Of course this does not mean that countries such as Iraq did not have economic issues due to extensive spending or fluctuating oil prices that usually affects oil producing countries. In fact, by 1989, Iraq owed billions to its suppliers. (Anthony H Cordesman, *Iraq's Military Forces: 1988-1993*, 69-72).

examined states. In addition, certain new trends regarding arms transfers are starting to emerge, having their own impact in regional relations. Furthermore, the fact that the case studies concern oil rich states also indicates that this wealth can be used to obtain large amounts of weapons – more so when oil prices are high. Such a factor will also have to be taken into account when trying to understand how some of these states were even able to pay for their weapons. In some cases, the payment was done through cash transfers, without excluding other methods that were and are employed.

While the international arms trade is a business sector that functions normally as any other, it possesses certain unique characteristics. Lump sum cash payments for arms are not that common, especially when it comes to developing countries. One notable example of a country that at times paid fully in cash and in fact managed to attract suppliers because of that was Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and before the Second Gulf War.[98]

The increasing trend however when it comes to arms transfers and methods of payment, is through bartering.[99] The goods offered in exchange for arms have ranged in the past from olive oil and chocolates, to oil or other natural resources.[100] Arms trade bartering can also be observed in the form of offsets,[101] either as an exchange or as a "bonus" to a cash deal.

This method of trading is not restricted to material goods only, but can extend to services as well as in a variety of business sectors. The offsets when it comes to services and industries can take the forms of co-production, licensing of weapons systems or even investment in totally different sectors. These methods are accompanied by a number of advantages and disadvantages. First of all, offsets give the possibility to states that do not possess the funds or do not wish to buy directly weapons for political reasons, to arm themselves or even develop a domestic arms industry through military technology transfers.[102] This also offers a wider field for arms companies to operate and compete in. Such a situation in turn leads states to often choose arms suppliers based on the offset package that forms part of the deal.[103] As it is understood, in cases of co-production and licensing, offsets can have a

98 Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, 95.

99 Jan Feldman, *Unconventional Trade: Bartering for Weapons*, SAIS Review 6 (1986), 201.

100 Ibid, 203.

101 Grillot and Stohl, *International Arms Trade*, 43.

102 Feldman *Unconventional Trade*, 202.

positive impact since they create new job positions or help advance the industrial capabilities.

The method of offset entails however a number of negative effects. Firstly, there are concerns regarding the transfer of – often high grade – military technology to "allies" that may not be as trustworthy in the future, and thus constitute a threat to the national defense of the supplying company's state. Secondly, this method can be harmful to the domestic economy, since, due to the offsets, job spots in the industry are exported. Nevertheless, what is certain is that offsets have come to characterize the international arms trade and even deals that primarily involve cash are supplemented by an offset package to attract buyers.

As a regional example that further portrays this trend, the case of Saudi Arabia is indicative of the role of offsets in the arms trade. According to consulting company Frost & Sullivan and a report released in 2013 regarding military offsets,[104] Saudi Arabia was considered to be the biggest receiver of offsets. It was actually calculated that Saudi Arabia reached an amount of close to $62.63 billion in offset obligations to be invested in the country, either in the domestic arms industry or in different sectors. The multitude of deals that Saudi Arabia has concluded in the previous years for advanced Western military equipment constitute the underlying reason for such high figures.[105]

To conclude, the logic behind how the economics of bartering and offsets function in the international arms trade is that these methods – in particular offsets in the form of co-production or licensing – are benefiting states which often do not possess the capability or direct funds to bolster their arsenal or advance their own domestic military industry. It is in this way that they are able to manufacture parts of military equipment and thus create new variables in arms trading, affecting also the state's strategic planning. Saudi Arabia as presented above is one such example. Iran's capability to domestically produce various weapons through technology transfers constitutes another example, since technology transfers have enabled it to establish a domestic industry and to manufacture its own weapons.

3.4 The Post-Third Gulf War Situation and its Effects on the International Arms Trade in the Region

103 Grillot and Stohl, *International Arms Trade*, 46.

104 Dominik Kimla, *Military Offsets & In-country Industrialization: Market Insight,* Frost & Sullivan Report, March 2013, accessed 30 July 2016, www.frost.com/prod/servlet/cio/275947347, 19.

105 Ibid, 19.

While this thesis has as its chronological endpoint the Third Gulf War, its aim is not to only analyze from a historical and geopolitical view the connection between the conflicts, regional relations and the arms transfers. Such analysis can function as a helpful tool in trying to accomplish a different goal as well. The knowledge of the evolution of the proliferation of conventional weapons in the Gulf assists us also to observe the current situation and the way arms trade influences regional relations today.

As described briefly, the removal of Iraq from the regional equation was an important change for the region. The existence of US troops in Iraq until 2011 was not the only reason. The UN sanctions on Iran due to the threat of a nuclear program used for military purposes could pose on mankind, and the deterioration of the relationship between Riyadh and Tehran have led to the resurgence of a regional rivalry between the two states. The relations between the two countries are not only dictated by geopolitics. Religion also plays a very important role in their relationship, since in Saudi Arabia are located the holiest places of Islam. Often the participation or not to the hajj, and the regulation of the mostly Shia Iranian pilgrims has been used as a form of soft influence.

Recently, what really affected negatively the relations between the two states would be the nuclearization of Iran.[106] Especially taking into account the fact that Iran possesses ballistic missiles which could contain nuclear warheads in its arsenal, it is reasonable to deduce that this capability would be worrying for Riyadh. The removal of this threat, namely through the signing of JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) helped alleviate the issue.

The lifting of the sanctions against Iran and the guarantee that the country would be unable to use nuclear technology for military purposes[107] does not mean that the region has been stabilized. In fact, such a belief is flawed for a number of reasons. First of all, the lifting of the sanctions means that Iran is finally open to legal economic investments. Its position and oil production capabilities could lead to an even more extended economic competition with Saudi Arabia, potentially affecting their relations in that manner as well. Secondly, a sanction-free Iran would potentially be able to import weapons or dual-use technology easier than before, especially in the field of missiles. Both states have managed to extend their arsenals in the past few

106 Rich, "Gulf War 4.0",474

107 *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*, accessed 25 July 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/docs/iran_agreement/iran_joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action_en.pdf, 3.

decades and an influx of even more arms and technology due to a sanction-free Iran could increase the chances of an open conflict waged with conventional weapons.[108]

The fact that – albeit with a few exceptions – the relationship between the two states is characterized by the usage of "hard" power makes the situation even more volatile than otherwise expected. Both states do not actively seek war.[109] A war in the region would be – with no exceptions for winners and losers - harmful to both countries; regardless of whether an international power such as the US would intervene. However, the potential of a wrong act that could lead to such a conflict should not be discounted in an unstable environment such as the one in Middle East. The trigger for such an act could perhaps lie in the "proxy wars" that Iran and Saudi Arabia have found themselves to support and in which the arms trade plays an important role.

Chapter 4

"Proxy wars" and the Role of Small Arms and Light Support Weapons

4.1 Hezbollah and the Yemeni Civil War

Proxy wars, intrastate conflicts and asymmetric warfare have come to characterize many of the region's conflicts in the past two decades. To this extent also some of the states under examination have played their role in these kinds of conflicts, often by supplying weapons. The examples to be analyzed are the aid of Iran to Hezbollah since its inception in Lebanon against Israel and the ongoing Yemen civil war, which appears to be supported by both Iran and Saudi Arabia on opposing sides. It becomes apparent that as mentioned above, such conflicts could function as triggers for open conventional interstate engagements. Furthermore, they bring up a usually overlooked danger: the impact of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) in conflicts.

Iran and Hezbollah are connected from the emergence of the organization in 1985. The fact that Hezbollah is a Shia group created with the goal of expelling the Israeli forces that occupied the country is crucial for the support it would receive from the predominantly Shia and Anti-Israeli Iran. Hezbollah fighters were allegedly trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) and some high ranking IRG officers are considered to have assisted in the coordination of Hezbollah's military planning.[110] Furthermore, Hezbollah has received large amounts of financial support by Iran,

108 Rich, "Gulf War 4.0", 478.

109 Ibid, 482.

110 Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In The Path Of Hizbullah*. (Syracuse University Press, 2004), 7.

considered to be $100 million at least a year. Other specialists and analysts in Lebanon consider that the amount of financial support to Hezbollah may be closer to 200$ million annually.[111] This aid takes many forms, with cash funds and material goods such as weapons being the most common. Specifically, Tehran used to deliver arms to Syria, most of them being SA/LWs, and then have them transported to the Hezbollah camps in Lebanon.[112] Not only that, but Iran appeared to be indirectly funding propaganda stations as well. Hezbollah and by association Iran were also connected with the training of Palestinian militants, creating further issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The withdrawal of Israeli forces – using major conventional weapons such as tanks, artillery and aircraft and faced mostly with guerilla tactics and the usage of SA/LWs by Hezbollah – from south Lebanon in 2000 and in 2006 underlined the success of the group, owing a big part of it to the Iranian support.

The Yemeni civil war is a different case, since it is a war which started in 2004 (the starting point of the Houthi insurgency) and is still taking place, but also it is a conflict in which two of the states examined take part in. Saudi Arabia is directly engaged in Yemen and provides support to the Hadi government.[113] Iran allegedly is engaged indirectly, since it is believed that it has been supporting the Houthi side with cash and weaponry, especially after 2011.[114] The conflict as a whole is regarded in fact as a "proxy war" between the two countries, and the Saudi intervention as an effort to halt Iranian expansion in the Gulf region.[115] The Yemen civil war does not have two opposing sides, but rather multiple actors; a large part of the country is occupied by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula forces (AQAP) and elements of Islamic State (IS) are active in the region. This fact further muddies the waters in search for a peaceful solution to the civil war. Furthermore the emergence of a "gun culture" is noticeable

111 Matthew Levitt, Chapter from Terrorism Financing and State Responses: a Comparative Perspective, February 2005, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-finances-funding-the-party-of-god.

112 Ibid.

113 "Heavy Clashes on Saudi-Yemeni Border; Hadi Government Pleads for Troops," March 31, 2015, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0MR0HE20150331.

114 Andrew W. Terrill, "Iranian Involvement in Yemen." *Orbis* 58, no. 3 (2014): 439 doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2014.05.008.

115 "Yemen's guerrilla war tests military ambitions of big-spending Saudis", accessed July 30, 2016 http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/saudi-military/.

in the state. At the same time, the fact that Yemen ranks second in gun ownership per capita– in excess of one gun per two persons – only after the United States, creates an even more unstable environment;[116] in particular when paired with the extensive black arms market that exists in the state.

The connections between the Yemeni civil war and arms transfers are multiple. Saudi Arabia was recently licensed £2.8 billion in deals by the UK in military equipment, with a total number of 122 licenses to Riyadh since its intervention in the civil war.[117] Some of these weapons were used in the bombing of Yemen, while others were quite likely to end in the hands of the Hadi government. Iran, on the other hand, is supporting the Houthi militants in various ways. Along with cash, Iran since 2012 appears to have used small boats to supply small arms and light support weapons to the insurgents.[118]

The importance of the "proxy wars" and the connection between states and militant organizations does not have as its only purpose to show how regional rivalries can have a spillover effect to other conflicts in the region. They also serve as examples of a subject not extensively researched by academics, that of small arms and light weapons. It is in the viewpoint of this thesis, however, that with asymmetric warfare and intrastate conflict becoming progressively the norm in the Middle East, SA/LWs will have a continuously destabilizing role in the region, especially if the lack of control and exposure over them is taken into account.

This observation, however, does not indicate that major weapons are not used in "proxy wars" or that they are not any more important. Instead, it leads to the conclusion that small arms are sufficient to create an insurgency, ensure in many cases its immediate survival and create an added problem for the government or occupation forces.[119] In the case of the war in Lebanon and the Hezbollah-Israel conflict, the Hezbollah forces using mostly SA/LWs were even able to defend successfully for a

116 Weapons and firearms specifically have a very big importance in Yemeni culture, being considered symbols of manhood. While originally used for celebratory reasons, firearms have also come to be carried openly especially after the Arab Spring in 2011 for personal security reasons and due to the instability in the country, (http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/gun-control-yemen-style/273058/).

117 "UK licences £2.8bn of arms sales to Saudis since kingdom entered Yemen war", accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/19/uk-issues-28bn-export-licences-arms-saudi-arabia.

118 "With Arms for Yemen Rebels, Iran Seeks Wider Mideast Role", accessed July 30, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/world/middleeast/aiding-yemen-rebels-iran-seeks-wider-mideast-role.html.

short period of time against an army possessing an extended arsenal of major conventional weapons. Such examples as Hezbollah receiving these type of weapons from Iran only help making the chances of peace and security slimmer. This general instability of the Middle East and the latest successes of groups like IS can be of tantamount importance to regional security.

4.2 The Importance of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Before delving into the characteristics which lend SA/LWs their destabilizing factors, there is need for a term to specify which are the weapons that fall into the category of small arms and light weapons, since definitions appear to be differing. A method of exclusion based on the arms that SIPRI does not consider as major, could also be applied in order to pinpoint what exactly constitutes SA/LWs. This however has the adverse effect of excluding at the same time certain weapons systems, such as light artillery, mortars over a certain caliber and rockets. Another, more traditional approach, would simply be to define small arms and light weapons as the weapons carried by a lone infantry soldier. While this definition benefits by including some weapons that are otherwise considered major, such as man portable air defense systems (MANPADS) or anti-tank missiles (ATGM), weapons that require more than one person in their operation are not included.[120]

The UN definition is deemed to be the most appropriate for this thesis, since it includes weapons that are excluded from the other definitions. Therefore, according to the definition adopted in 2005:

- “Small arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns.”

- “Light weapons are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. They include, inter alia, heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a caliber of less than 100 millimeters”.[121]

119Aaron Karp, "The Arms Trade Revolution: The Major Impact of Small Arms", in *Weapons Proliferation in the 1990s*, edited by Brad Roberts, (MIT University Press, 1995), 64.

120Karp, *Arms Trade Revolution*, 63.

Having established the definition, it is important to analyze the characteristics that render SA/LWs potentially destabilizing weapons systems, as suggested by this thesis:

1. *Cost efficiency*: SA/LWs are really cheaper than many major weapons systems and are in most cases the only type of weapon used in intrastate conflicts and proxy wars.[122]

2. *Ease of use*: Most major weapons need specialized personnel and lengthy training in order to maximize their effectiveness. Some of them, like tank crews and aircraft pilots often require months or years of training before being judged combat worthy. SA/LWs in most cases, especially in relation to small arms, need days or weeks of training and no special training facilities in order to be efficient, making the process of arming and training people much easier and faster.

3. *Ease to obtain and transfer:* Major conventional weapons are "high profile" systems that attract a lot of attention and have only few ways to be transferred, either by transport planes or transport ships. SA/LWs on the contrary attract far less attention, can be transferred in many more ways and can exploit poor policing of the borders or even bribery of customs officials. In addition, it is easier for the black and grey market to transfer large amounts of small arms. A tank for example is larger than a common shipping container, necessitating numerous containers and a ship large enough to transport them. In contrast, when in September 2015 the Greek Coast Guard inspected a cargo ship bound for Libya and possibly to assist Libyan Islamists, it managed to find hidden in the declared cargo – furniture and gym mats – of a medium sized cargo ship about 5.000 shotguns and half a million rounds.[123] In the Middle East and in regions with frequent shipping such as the Persian Gulf such possibilities should not be discounted.

4. *Ease of maintenance*: Sophisticated major weapons often require an extended network of staging and logistics facilities along with the prerequisite support personnel needed, as well as extensive storages for supplies, specialized ammunition and spare parts. Furthermore, the man-hours needed in order to ensure the correct function of these

121"International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons", United Nations, accessed July 30, 2016 http://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf.

122Grillot and Stohl, *The International Arms Trade*, 83.

123"Greek Coast Guard Seizes Libya-Bound Ship Carrying Weapons," September 2, 2015, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-greece-arms-idUSKCN0R20V220150902.

weapons systems denies them continuous usage and is often costly.[124] With regards to SA/LWs, often maintenance can be performed in the field, while supplies due to the size of the weapons and ammunition they are firing are easier to transport.

5. *Qualms of use, exposure and control*: SA/LWs are weapons that are employed with far less discretion in conflicts than weapons systems such as ballistic missiles, tanks or aircraft. For the viewpoint of this thesis, this fact is owed to two reasons which are connected to each other. First of all, arms control is focused mostly on major weapons, along with efforts to restrict their proliferation. Most countries are concerned mostly about limiting the supply of major weapons, and less about restricting SA/LW exports. The real danger as it has been said, "…is not powerful lawbreakers, but weak lawmakers" and in the case of weak legislature restricting transfers of SA/LWs, it characterizes most states.[125] This understatement of the role of SA/LWs is not restricted to state policies. In today's world with the instant flow of information and the reports of various conflicts around the globe as Karp observes, "[m]en carrying rifles are not enough. Major Weapons fit the bill; they are more exciting in action and they are easier for the human mind to track".[126] Therefore, it is possible for conflicts that are waged with small arms to be simply obscured, because they simply do not make the headlines.

As established above, small arms and light weapons are also playing an increasingly important role in conflicts and possess certain advantages over major weapons, with relatively little attention paid to them. If left unchecked in the case of the Middle East, and more specifically regarding the Gulf, the consequences of arms transfers containing SA/LWs to militants and insurgents in various conflicts in the area can be grave. By exposing some of the characteristics of such types of weapons, this thesis suggests that SA/LWs can also be destabilizing for the future of the region examined.

124"Costly Flight Hours | TIME.Com," April 2, 2013, accessed July 30, 2016, http://nation.time.com/2013/04/02/costly-flight-hours/.

125Karp, *Arms Trade Revolution*, 67.

126Karp, *Arms Trade Revolution*, 62.

Chapter 5

The Result of the Equation

Throughout this thesis and by analyzing the positions of Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the regional equation, before during and after the two Gulf Wars, along with some of the more modern conflicts that they are directly or indirectly influencing, one remark is become apparent. The international arms trade as revolving around the research question reveals that arms transfers did not only influence regional relations, but also fueled competition, spurred further armaments and continue to destabilize even more an already fragile and economically sensitive region such as the Middle East.

From the 1980s, arms transfers have managed to turn Iraq into the largest military power in the region and necessitate an international effort in order to halt its expansionism in 1991. The defeat of Iraq did not stabilize the region for long and in fact the Third Gulf War and the US intervention in the region brought up a new era of turmoil. With internal stability in Iraq compromised, Iran and Saudi Arabia have come to consider each other – after a period of friendly relations – as their respective main regional antagonist. They have consequently proceeded in either spending increasing amounts of money in importing arms – as is the case of Saudi Arabia -- or developing with technology transfers weapons such as ballistic missiles in the case of Iran.

However, arms trade and technology transfers are not just restricted to the states researched. They can themselves in turn supply militant groups and friendly governments with small arms and light weapons – which are among the most common types of weapons used in intrastate conflicts – and escalate conflicts in that manner. Arms transfers in all their forms have managed to create for the past few decades an insecure environment. While the lifting of the sanctions on Iran and the removal of a nuclear – and particularly destabilizing regionally and globally – threat is a positive step in regional stability, the conventional weapons that nowadays Iran and Saudi Arabia have amassed would be enough to trigger an open conflict by themselves.

The SA/LWs proliferation encountered in the region can create additional problems since SA/LWs are often overlooked, with more attention paid on major conventional weapons. SA/LWs should certainly become a subject of more intensive research, especially in a region plagued with intrastate conflicts such as the Middle East. However, the whole problematic of conventional weapons proliferation does not simply concern the actors procuring the weapons or supplying in turn other regional actors. A big portion of the problem has political roots and is directly tied with the international community. As Beker comments "…[i]n essence, disarmament is about

the organization of power in the international community".[127] Restricting completely arms flows to a certain state will not change anything. Another state or company will see profit and will fill the gap. In a generally accepted unipolar and increasingly multipolar world obsolete theories on arms control can no longer be applicable.

In cases under examination and especially in a Middle East which is experiencing the aftermath of the Arab Spring, with political instability being rampant and organizations like IS having extended their sphere of influence across the region, the prospects of disarmament and engagement in alternate methods of conflict resolution appear bleak. The situation regarding Iran and Saudi Arabia is even more complex due to religious and economic differences as well as the prevailing Anti-Israeli and Anti-American sentiments in Iran.

Furthermore, in the light of recent events another important issue arises, which will have to be addressed eventually and which will potentially decide the future of Iraq. This potential thorn in the side of Gulf region stability is linked to the ongoing situation in Iraq and the various militia groups that are operating against IS. Such groups fall under an umbrella of organization of armed groups named "Popular Mobilization Forces"[128] that are created by the Iraqi government. Some of the largest groups are comprised of Shia militias, and it has often been suspected that Iran has supported them financially and with arms transfers and training. Hadi al-Amiri, the leader of the biggest Shiite militia group in Iraq, Badr, is even openly supportive of Iran.[129] Such organizations reportedly possess light weapons and even tanks.[130] There lies therefore another possible danger, that of Iran being able to exert influence over these groups in a future Iraq without IS. This event could even escalate to a fully-fledged sectarian conflict and spark more open actions by Saudi Arabia and Iran.

While as established instability is also reliant on political and historical events, the type and numbers of conventional weapons transferred have played an important role in influencing themselves the regional relations, in facilitating the conduct of war in the cases examined and in creating not "equal equations". The proliferation of

127 Avi Beker. *Disarmament Without Order: The Politics of Disarmament at the United Nations*. (Praeger, 1985.), 3-4.

128 "Shi'Ite Militias in Iraq Remain a Dangerously Potent Force," January 20, 2016, accessed July 10, 2016, http://time.com/4187322/iraq-baghdad-kidnap-shiite-militia/.

129 "Breaking Badr," March 5, 2015, accessed July 25, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/breaking-badr/.

130 Ibid.

SA/LWs is further affecting the result of the equation, functioning as a relatively unknown variable that needs to be researched. It is worrying that even well-regarded and trustworthy sources regarding arms transfers, such as SIPRI, do not possess any concrete data on the extent and types of SA/LWs transferred.

To conclude, unless solutions are found regarding transfers of both major conventional weapons and SA/LWs, that are adapted to the unique characteristics of the region, the most important actors in the Middle East will continue co-existing as competitors in an increasingly unstable environment.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

February 13 2004 interview of High Value Detainee #1(Saddam Hussein) by the FBI, accessed July 30 2016, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/05.pdf.

"Destabilizing Stocks of Conventional Weapons Preoccupy First Committee as Speaker Describes Amount Spent on 'Breeding, Exacerbating and Maintaining' Conflict," October 22, 2014, accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/gadis3508.doc.htm.

Nations, United "International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons." Accessed July 30, 2016 http://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf.

Nations, United. "UN-Register, Categories of Conventional Arms." 2013. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.un-register.org/Background/Index.aspx.

North Atlantic Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, 1990 Reports (Brussels, November 1990), 19-20.

Perlo-Freeman, Sam Aude Fleurant, Pieter d. Wezeman and Siemon t. Wezeman. Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2014. Fact Sheet, Stockholm: SIPRI, 2015.

Perlo-Freeman, Sam. Arms Transfers to the Middle East. Background Paper, Stockholm: SIPRI, 2009.

SIPRI Military Expenditure Database for time period 1988-2015, accessed July 30 2016 http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database.

SIPRI, The financial value of the global arms trade, accessed July 30 2016, http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/transfers/measuring/financial_values.

SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Saudi Arabia: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1980 to 1991*. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iraq: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1980 to 1991*. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

SIPRI trade register*: Transfers of major conventional weapons to Iran: sorted by supplier. Deals with deliveries or orders made for year range 1991 to 2003*. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

Solmirano, Carina and Pieter D. Wezeman, Military Spending and Arms Procurement in the Gulf States. Fact Sheet, Stockholm: SIPRI, 2010.

UN Refugee Agency. Syria Regional Refugee Response. Last updated July 20, 2015. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (accessed July 30, 2015).

"UN Resolution 661." UN Arms Embargoes. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/iraq/661.

Secondary Sources

Amiri, Reza Ekhtiari, and Fakhreddin Soltani. "Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait as Turning Point in Iran-Saudi Relationship." *Journal of Politics and Law* 4, no. 1 (March 2011): 188-94.

Beker, Avi. *Disarmament Without Order: The Politics of Disarmament at the United Nations*. Praeger, 1985.

Behestani, Majid, and Mehdi Hedayati Shahidani. "Twin Pillars Policy: Engagement of US-Iran Foreign Affairs during the Last Two Decades of Pahlavi Dynasty." *Asian Social Science* 12, no. 5 (December 20, 2014): 20-31. doi:doi:10.5539/ass.v11n2p20.

Chapter from Terrorism Financing and State Responses: a Comparative Perspective, February 2005, accessed July 30 2016 http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-finances-funding-the-party-of-god.

Chubin, Shahram, *Soviet policy Towards Iran and the Gulf*, Adelphi Papers 157 London: IISS, 1984.

Cleveland, William L., and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 4th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009.

Cordesman, Anthony H. and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War. IV: The Gulf War*, Westview Press, 1996.

Cordesman, Anthony H. *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Westport: Praeger, 1999.

Cordesman, Anthony H. *Iraq's Military Forces: 1988-1993*. CSIS Middle East Dynamic Net Assessment. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994.

Cordesman, Anthony H. "The Conventional Military." 2010. Accessed July 25, 2016. http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/conventional-military.

Grillot, Suzette and Rachel Stohl, *The International arms trade*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Hammond, Grant Tedrick. *Plowshares into Swords: Arms Races in International Politics, 1840-1991*. Univ of South Carolina, 1993.

Hamzeh, Ahmad Nizar. *In The Path Of Hizbullah*. Syracuse University Press, 2004.

Hiro, Dilip, *Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War*, London: Paladin, 1992.

Harkavy, Robert. E. “The Changing International System and the Arms Trade.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science The Arms Trade: Problems and Prospects in the Post-Cold War World* 535 (1994).

Jervis, Robert. "Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective." *World Politics* 61, no. 1 Cambridge University Press, January 2009.

Karp, Aaron. "The Arms Trade Revolution: The Major Impact of Small Arms." In *Weapons Proliferation in the 1990s*, edited by Brad Roberts, 57-70. MIT University Press, 1995.

Keegan, John. *The Iraq War*. London: Hutchinson, 2004.

Kimla, Dominik. *Military Offsets & In-country Industrialisation: Market Insight*, March 2013, accessed July 30 2016. www.frost.com/prod/servlet/cio/275947347.

Rich, Ben. "Gulf War 4.0: Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Complexification of the Persian Gulf Equation." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 23, no. 4 (2012): 471-86. doi:10.1080/09596410.2012.712453.

Roberts, Brad. *Weapons Proliferation and World Order After the Cold War*. PhD diss., Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 1996.

Ṣāyiġ, Yazīd and Avi Shlaim. “Introduction.” In *The Cold War in the Middle East*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Terrill, Andrew W. "Iranian Involvement in Yemen." *Orbis* 58, no. 3 (2014): 429-40. doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2014.05.008.

Timmerman, Kenneth R, *The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996.

W. Carus, Seth "Chapter 2: Weapons Technology and Regional Stability." In *Arms Control and Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, 9-16, edited by Shelley A. Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp , Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.

Yezid Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, Adelphi Paper 251, London: Brassey’s for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, (1990).

Newspaper Articles and Definitions

Encyclopaedia Britannica. s.v “Iran-Iraq war.” Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Iraq-War.

Encyclopaedia Britannica s.v "Persian Gulf War." Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.britannica.com/event/Persian-Gulf-War.

Encyclopaedia of United States National Security (2006), s.v “Multipolarity” by Richard J. Samuels

Editorial. “Greek Coast Guard Seizes Libya-Bound Ship Carrying Weapons.” Reuters, September 2, 2015. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-greece-arms-idUSKCN0R20V220150902

George, Susannah. “Breaking Badr.” Foreign Policy, March 5, 2015. Accessed July 10, 2016. http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/breaking-badr/.

Hersh, Seymour M. "US Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War Against Iran." New York Times, January 26, 1992. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all.

Malsin, Jared. “Shi’Ite Militias in Iraq Remain a Dangerously Potent Force.” Time, January 20, 2016. Accessed July 10, 2016. http://time.com/4187322/iraq-baghdad-kidnap-shiite-militia/.

Mukhashaf, Mohammad and Sami Aboudi. “Heavy Clashes on Saudi-Yemeni Border; Hadi Government Pleads for Troops.” Reuters, March 31, 2015. Accessed July 30,2016.http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0MR0HE20150331.

Root, Tik. "Gun Control, Yemen-Style." The Atlantic. February 12, 2013. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/gun-control-yemen-style/273058/.

"Saddam Hussein's Broadcast, February 22, 1991." Los Angeles Times. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-22/news/mn-1740_1_saddam-hussein.

Schmitt, Eric and Robert F. Worth. “With Arms for Yemen Rebels, Iran Seeks Wider Mideast Role”. New York Times, August 20, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/world/middleeast/aiding-yemen-rebels-iran-seeks-wider-mideast-role.html.

Thompson, Mark. “Costly Flight Hours.” Time, April 2, 2013. Accessed July 30, 2016. http://nation.time.com/2013/04/02/costly-flight-hours/.

Wintour, Patrick “UK licences £2.8bn of arms sales to Saudis since kingdom entered Yemen war.” The Guardian April 19 2016. Accessed July 30, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/19/uk-issues-28bn-export-licences-arms-saudi-arabia.

.