

Saudi-Iran Rivalry and its Effects on West-Asian Stability

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The paper argues that the dynamics of politics in west Asia can be summed up as the battle for power and influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both states use the ideological and sectarian differences to achieve their strategic goals in West Asia and beyond. The ideological dimension of this tussle took an unprecedented turn with the arrival of a revolutionary regime in Iran in 1979. The revolutionary zeal of the new Iranian regime and its insistence on exporting the revolution to other countries alarmed the Arab gulf monarchies who all have a sizeable Shia population. These Arab countries came together to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1980 as a measure to check the growing Iranian influence in the region and preclude the possibility of its military interference in any Arab gulf countries. The formation of GCC was the first collective effort by the gulf monarchies to build an organization aimed against Iran. The primary driver of the formation of GCC was the security dilemma faced by Saudi Arabia— the biggest and the richest gulf state.

The paper concludes that the only way to achieve regional stability is for Iran to provide a degree of reassurance to Arab countries about regional security and its positive role in it and on the other hand Arab states in the region must acknowledge the role of Iran as a regional power with a stake in the stability in west Asia. This alone can help remove the trust deficit between the two groups and help stabilize the region in the long run. Failure to cooperate on these vital issues will only push Iran away from Arab countries with a lot of negative consequences for regional stability.

Introduction

West Asia is one of the most volatile regions in the world today. Almost all the countries in the region, especially the powerful ones, are directly or indirectly involved in conflicts that are either intractable or bloody. With the renewed American involvement in the region after September 11 attacks and the resulting quick fall of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, the regional

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