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**THE IMPACT OF THE KHASHOGGI CASE ON THE
RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA**

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.
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ABSTRACT

Turkey and Saudi Arabia share a mutual Ottoman past. Turkey as once the Ottoman Empire ruled the Islamic World. Saudi Arabia was once part of while it existed. There has been no one specific leader in the Sunni Islamic World since the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate.

Nowadays both Turkey and Saudi Arabia are amongst the main key leaders in the Middle East. They remain the main rivals for the leadership in the Sunni Middle East. The relations have tensioned between the two since the Arab Spring erupted. Turkey welcomed the Arab Spring as an advocate of political Islam while as Saudi Arabia opposed it. Saudi Arabia opposes political Islam as the latter sees no significant part in the rule of the (al Saud) monarchy in the name of Islam. The Sunni Middle East is largely divided into two – the political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood supporters where belongs Turkey to as the main participant and the opponents lead by Saudi Arabia.

Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist and a Saudi government critic working for the US newspaper Washington Post. He disappeared in the Saudi Consulate in early October 2018. Turkey quickly reported him murdered and generated an international incident of his disappearance. Turkey kept the international media focus on the missing journalist ever since Khashoggi disappeared. Turkey sought answers and justice for Jamal Khashoggi? What was behind the internationally known Khashoggi incident where the main participants were Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the US? The rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Sunni Islamic context is examined in the current thesis.

Keywords: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, relations, Middle East, rivalry, leadership, Sunni Islamic world, political Islam, Jamal Khashoggi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP – Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

CENTO - Central Treaty Organization

EU – European Union

GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council

IS – Islamic State

MB – Muslim Brotherhood

MBS – Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

MENA – the Middle East and Northern Africa

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NRCW - New Regional Cold War

OIC – Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

PLO - Palestine Liberation Organization

PKK – Partiya Karkerên Kurdistnê (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

UAE – United Arab Emirates

US – United States of America

YPG – Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (People's Defense Units)

The Gulf - the Persian Gulf; the author uses the same terms as the authors referenced in current thesis

INTRODUCTION

The current thesis focuses on the rivalry regarding leadership in the Middle East between Turkey and Saudi Arabia and examines the impact of the Khashoggi incident on the situation. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are both considered being among the key leaders in the Middle East region. Internationally, mostly, confrontation to Shiite Iran has been the main topic of discussion while discussing the Middle East, but less has been spoken about the rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which both are Sunni countries. Therefore, this thesis will present the topic of rivalry on various levels between Turkey and Saudi Arabia by using the Khashoggi incident as a tool of research.

This thesis researches the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the wider context by looking at historical events and religious background. It uses the Khashoggi incident to highlight its impact on the rivalry between the two countries. The disappearance of the Saudi government critic Jamal Khashoggi on October 2nd, 2018 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey and what unfolded afterwards, is named the “Khashoggi incident”. His death brought international attention to the existing rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, especially in the USA. Prior to the Khashoggi incident, the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were already strained due to numerous differences starting from their leadership attempts in the region on political and religious levels. As Turkey is more secular and supports political Islam while Saudi Arabia opposes political Islam and propagates its Wahhabi vision of Islam, these two inevitably collide.

The current thesis proposes a hypothesis: The Khashoggi incident has significantly influenced the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The next research questions are presented to support the hypothesis: What kind of influence have historical events and religious background had on Turkey and Saudi Arabia’s relations before the Khashoggi case? What kind of influence has the Khashoggi case had on the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia?

Methodologically this thesis is based on a case study –investigation on how the Khashoggi incident has impacted the rivalling relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In this thesis investigative case study method has been used, as the consequences of the incident on the relations are not certain nor accurately measurable and remain ambiguous as the situation is more complex than at first sight. To furthermore justify the research method, the Khashoggi incident happened only six months ago (as of April 2019) which limits the analysis part significantly. The impact of the

Khashoggi case on already strained relations is researched based mostly on peer-reviewed, internet and media articles and news. The relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in connection with the Khashoggi incident are analyzed before, during and after the incident (even though, the time span is small and overlaps in most parts). The sources used for the analysis for the timespan prior to the incident are books, peer-reviewed articles, internet articles, news articles, news and a poll. The incident is described using information retrieved from news articles. The follow-up of the (post-)incident time is based on peer-reviewed and news articles, opinions and an assessment.

The thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the background of the two countries describing mostly recent history, foreign policy and religion in an attempt to explore the topic of rivalry on different levels. The first chapter entails the description of the relations by providing a chronological overview of the historical background. The second chapter gives a short overview of Jamal Khashoggi. The third chapter entails the Khashoggi incident and proceeds to the analysis of the actions of both countries that indicate the worsening of relations and the growing rivalry after the incident. Also, the author evaluates whether there could be changes in the future. As the Khashoggi incident took place not a very long time ago, the analysis on the post-Khashoggi time is somewhat hypothetical.

The author has chosen a topic related to Turkey since having been an ERASMUS student in Istanbul in 2011 where a deeper interest in the Middle East region and its religious diversity developed. The author wishes to express her deep gratitude to her supervisor PhD Holger Mölder. And special thanks to Viktoria Kotsjuba for valuable comments during thesis finalization and to Cris Lillemets for the encouragement and suggestions throughout the process. The author also thanks her family and friends for the support.

1. INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND ON TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS BEFORE THE KHASHOGGI INCIDENT

The first chapter focuses on the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia before the Khashoggi incident. The chapter starts with the background information which explains the historical (shared) experience of the two countries and the current situation. The overview aims to describe their past in order to understand their current relations. The first chapter creates a solid background for the analysis by describing the relations between the two countries, giving a chronological overview of their history from the Arab Spring until the onset of the Khashoggi incident. As the Khashoggi case is researched in a wider context, it is important to understand the relations before the incident to obtain a glimpse of the reasons Turkey had for its actions.

1.1. Bilateral Relations in the 20th Century

Modern Turkey was founded in 1923 after the Collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, a century ago, Turkey was the capital of the Islamic world, it controlled the Middle East from Northern Africa, partly Balkans, and all the way to the Persian Gulf (Sorenson 2018, 561). It had a big political and economic influence over the region. The course of power diminished as the Ottoman Empire came to its end and Atatürk took the course towards the west (*Ibid.*, 561). Today it remains one of the biggest and most populous countries in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia was part of the Ottoman Empire while it existed. It became independent in 1932. Therefore, the two countries have a long-shared past, one being the occupier and the other the subordinate.

Relations between the two parties have indicated a mutual dislike for decades. Turks represent the hated colonial power for the Saudis that kept them under Ottoman control for centuries. Ottomans controlled the two holy sites, Medina and Mecca as well during the occupation. (Pearson 2018) This can be considered as the reason why most Arabs, Saudis included, do not sympathize with Turkey. It is a common story among countries and people, who have been under occupation. Long occupation creates the basis for the Saudi antipathy toward Turkey as the once Ottoman occupier.

There was not much interest towards each other after the end of the Ottoman rule when both of the republics were independent until the 1960s. Turkey under the secular rule, that Atatürk had established, was highly interested in having strategic and economic ties with the West rather than to the Arab World. Turkey maintained good relations with Israel from the beginning, despite other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, disliking it. (Habibi 2018) Other pro-Western steps include joining NATO in 1952 (Sorenson 2018, 555) shortly after its formation, and CENTO in 1955 (Britannica). The latter intended to counter the threat the Soviet Union imposed in the Middle East area by trying to expand itself to consume the oil. Saudi Arabia was never part of this organization. (*Ibid.*)

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the ties between the two countries increased. Turkey joined the OIC in 1969 to be a “collective voice of the Muslim world”. The OIC is based in Saudi Arabia, the birth country of Islam. (Habibi 2018) Here can be seen cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia that connects the Islamic countries. It can be considered a significant step by Turkey towards the Middle East as before the attention was mostly concentrated on Western ties. Another step was taken in 1975 when Turkey started diplomatic relations to the PLO whose goal is to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories in Israel (*Ibid.* 2018). This can be considered as taking a step closer to the Arabic world from Turkey’s side.

1.2. The Foreign Policy of Turkey and Saudi Arabia

The following paragraphs will further highlight the foreign policy of both Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which will contribute to the bilateral relations.

Turkey has a geographic location that ensures that foreign policy is a priority for any Turkish government (Sorenson 2018, 554). As Turkey lies connecting both Europe and Asia on the Bosphorus waterway, it also has a vast sea border not to mention multiple Middle Eastern neighbours on land. Turkey’s most important foreign as well as domestic policy objective is the membership of the EU (*Ibid.*, 555). Turkey’s application was given in in 1987 and the process has had many barriers from the EU (*Ibid.*, 555). As EU membership has been unattainable thus far the course towards Europe has shifted more towards the East. Turkey led by the AKP also had a policy to become a regional power in the Middle East from 2003-2013 (Eksi 2017). But the Arab Spring

intervened with this policy (*Ibid.*). Now Turkey sees its foremost foreign policy goal in marginalizing Kurds and removing their forces from Eastern Turkey (Mabley 2018). Furthermore, Turkey has a wide list of foreign concerns and potential opportunities, therefore Turkish foreign policy interests have expanded which has led to an expansion in military capacities as well (Fuller, Lesser 1994). Pearson (2018) claims that Erdogan has made it very clear that he sees Turkey as a major leader of the Muslim political world as well as religion in the Middle East. One way of expressing it is the establishment of a new university to teach Islam to combat the traditional Arabic centres. Erdogan depicts himself as an alternative leader to traditional Saudi and Egypt leadership in the Middle East. (Pearson 2018)

Saudi Arabia is by territory the largest Gulf Arab country, which gives it the leading role in the Gulf foreign policy (Sorenson 2018, 317). Saudi Arabia was more of an oil-based financial power, which relied on petrodollar diplomacy until the Arab Spring. The US and Saudi Arabia share multi-billion dollar arms deals and the US has built much of the infrastructure in Saudi Arabia (Kaiser 2002 referenced in Sorenson 2018, 319). Saudi Arabia relies heavily on the American forces and power (al-Hayah ... 1998 referenced in Sorenson 2018, 319).

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy framework is built on the objective of leadership in the Muslim World within the framework of regime security (Efegil 2013). Eksi (2013) considers that regime security as a main foreign policy objective is due to the country's weakness in its internal structure. Largely the Saudi Arabian foreign policy is based on containing the influence of Shiite Iran (Matthiesen 2015). Saudi Arabia follows a status quo policy to preserve the existing balance of power externally as well internally along the axis of the regime security against Iran (Berti, Guzansky 2014). Iran is the most influential Shia Islamic country; therefore, Saudi Arabia tries to limit Iran's power and control the Shia Islamic population within Saudi Arabia.

With the onset of the Arab Spring, the Saudi foreign policy had become more aggressive. Under King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's rule since 2015, it continued keeping the direction of the foreign policy on the aggressive course (Matthiesen 2015). Furthermore, the Arab Spring weakened positions of Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, consequently, Saudi Arabia entered the quest to become a regional hegemon (Eksi 2017). The US shifted its foreign interest more towards China, leaving the leadership of the Middle East to its allies Saudi Arabia and Israel (Nazer 2016 referenced in Eksi 2017, 2). That caused the Saudi King Salman to adopt a regional leadership policy by entering to War in Yemen (Al-Rasheed 2016). However, it was the then-defence minister

MBS, who became the deputy Crown Prince in 2015, that launched the Saudi-coalition in Yemen (BBC ... 2018c) to combat Iran's influence (Al-Rasheed 2016).

Saudi Arabia implemented programme Saudi Vision 2030 after King Salman came to rule. That sets the future goals for Saudi Arabia which it aims to fulfil. The first main pillar set to be implemented is that Saudi Arabia has the status as the heart of the Islamic and Arab worlds. Amongst other pillars remain becoming an investment powerhouse and the hub connecting all the three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa). Regional and international goals are set to fortify and extend their interconnectivity and economic integration within the Gulf Cooperation Countries. (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs ...) The Saudi Vision 2030 is an ambitious programme especially in regards to foreign policy. Security of the regime with the objective to lead the Muslim World (Efegil 2013) combined with the programme 2030 proves well Saudi inclinations towards the leadership of the Islamic world as it constitutes the aim to do so.

1.3. The Relations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the context of Political Islam

As was seen in the previous chapter, which expanded on foreign policy, it somewhat overlaps to the inclinations in politics regarding the role of Islam. The aim of this chapter is to acknowledge that the political systems between the two countries researched are connected to their religious background. Even though both countries represent Sunni Islam, they differ. A brief overview of each country's religious inclinations is provided.

Turkey's political system is a combination of European and Middle Eastern identities (Sorenson 2018, 526). The kind of role Islam has in Turkey is a result of the Atatürk's reforms after the Ottoman-era. It is more moderate, tolerant, flexible and cosmopolitan. In the 21st century, it is called "soft Islam". Soft Islam is supported by the US and the West and it is a good example of how Islam and democracy can coexist. (Venetis 2014, 7) The secular rule in Turkey was strong until the 1980s and onwards when it saw that religion could not be kept separate from politics and Turkey's foreign politics changed. It sought to play a larger role in the region based on shared Islamic heritage. That marks a time when political Islam was added on a low level to Turkey's narrative. (Lalancette 2018) But Venetis (2014) claims Islamism re-emerged in Turkey in the past century. The leading party AKP is Islamist-oriented and has most seats in the Turkish parliament

(Sorenson 2018, 526). Nowadays, Islam is not as soft, as the leading AKP party has implemented changes and in recent years Turkey has become gradually less secular and more Islamic. (Venetis 2014, 7). Turkey views its role in the Sunni Islamic world important because it is the descendant of the Ottoman Empire who once was the legitimate ruler of it (*Ibid.*). Turkey under AKP rule is more Islamic and looking more towards the East and seeks a bigger role there.

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is an Islamic theocratic monarchy (Sorenson 2018, 291). From the very founding Saudi Arabia has been ruled by the al Saud family in nearly absolute terms (*Ibid.*, 298). For a time, the only check on the Saudi King's power was the disagreement in this family, namely amongst his brothers. The Saudi family princes have control over several ministries in the country. (*Ibid.*, 298) Saudi Arabia has been a leading voice for pan-Islamism since King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud time who reigned from 1964 until 1975. Saudi Arabia has established numerous pan-Islamist organizations (*Ibid.*, 317) and funded various Islamist groups that share its particular Islamist vision since the 1960s (Esposito 2002). Saudi Arabia supported pan-Islamist movements as the Wahhabi ulama (a powerful religious institution in Saudi Arabia) held unfriendly views on non-Wahhabi Muslims often not considering them Muslims at all (Hegghammer 2010). Since the two holy places of Islam are based in Saudi Arabia, it regards itself as the natural leader of the Muslim world (Eksi 2017). Saudi Arabia considers itself to be the custodian of the two holy mosques. After the fall of the Ottoman Sultanate, the banner of Islam is given to Saudi Arabia in its view and therefore, they have an important task to do – spread Wahhabi Islam (Venetis 2014). That is the dominant religion in Saudi Arabia which is a very conservative and puritanical view of Sunni Islam (Chiragh 1999 referenced in Venetis 2014, 6). Saudis themselves prefer to call Wahhabism as “true Islam” (Venetis 2014, 6). Regarding the importance of religion in Saudi Arabia, it is important to note that the foreign policy in Saudi Arabia is immensely linked to Islam.

What is generally understood under the term political Islam is that any interpretation of Islam serves as a basis for political identity and actions. More specifically it also refers to movements representing modern political mobilization in the name of Islam that emerged in the 20th century. (March 2015; Voll, Sonn 2009) Some scholars use the term Islamism instead of political Islam or use these two terms interchangeably (Voll, Sonn 2009) but March (2015) argues that Islamism differs. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia implemented the Law of Government in 1992, which specified the al Saud family (monarchy) right to rule under Islam (Sorenson 2018, 296). However, in the context of the thesis, it is more important to emphasize that political Islam (or Islamism) sees that necessarily monarchy of the al Saud family does not need to solely rule under the name of Islam.

Today the geopolitical antagonism of the Middle East is between three powers: Shiite Iran, Sunni moderate Turkey and Sunni radical Saudi Arabia (Venetis 2014, 3). There are tensions, which are expressed through rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Sunni Islamic world. Rivalry is currently ongoing and escalating as they compete in different areas where Muslims are habited: mainly Syria, Iraq, Egypt as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia (Katouzian 2003 referenced in Venetis 2014, 4). Venetis sees that both Turkey and Saudi Arabia are trying to impose their own model of Sunni Islam in the Muslim world at the expense of each other in the Sunni context (Venetis 2014, 5). Saudis perceive Turkey's attempts to extend Turkish influence in the Middle East as neo-Ottomanism (Mabley 2018) and Pearson claims many Arabs resent Turkey's goal to re-establish the neo-Ottoman influence in the Middle East (Pearson 2018).

The geopolitical antagonism between the two is nearly the same as Hanau Santini's (2017) claim that the New Regional Cold War has two different wars within it: Sunni bloc vs Shia bloc and an intra-Sunni cleavage between Saudi-led Sunni block versus the Sunni political Islam block led by the MB and its supporters Turkey, Qatar. Sunni political Islam bloc has sought primacy for a long time. The NRCW started in 2003 in the MENA area with the Iraq War. (Hanau Santini 2017) The Muslim Brotherhood is the fountainhead of organized political Islam (March 2015). Turkey's Islamist government is an ally of the MB which conflicts its relations nowadays with Saudi Arabia (Stein 2015; Pearson 2018). Views differ regarding the MB - Turkey supports, while Saudi opposes it (Stein 2015). Saudi Arabia has declared the MB a terrorist group since 2014 (BBC ... 2014a). It only intensifies the power struggle and verifies rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Hanau Santini (2017) claims that in the NRCW between Saudi Arabia and its allies versus Turkey and allies, the biggest trigger was the Qatar crisis in 2017.

Turkey represents a more liberal Sunni Islam while Saudi Arabia the ultra-conservative side of Sunni Islam – Wahhabism. Moderate Sunni Islam of Turkey conflicts less with Shiite Iran as Turkey has a less strict foreign policy (Venetis 2014). These two, Iran and Turkey, are expected to cooperate in order to put a stop to Saudi Arabian power attempts. However, the friendship between Turkey and Iran is seen as suspicious by the West. Israel and the US, therefore, prefer ties with Saudi Arabia. (*Ibid.* 2014). As Saudi Arabia's top priority in foreign policy is containing Iranian influence (Matthiesen 2015) it is evident that Saudi Arabia dislikes Turkey's relations with Iran and that rifts their relations furthermore.

Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia are the main characters for the leadership of the Sunni Islamic world for both geopolitical and economic reasons. This view in International Relations receives more attention and often the ideological differences are discussed. They are both Islamic countries but vastly different. The main fact for this, according to Venetis (2014, 5), is that the foreign rhetoric is diplomatic and therefore the true nature of Turkey's and Saudi Arabia's world views do not reveal. The rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is believed to escalate both in political as well as (para)military terms. Saudis are experienced in proxy wars and in showing their political power. Turkey is not as experienced in proxy wars. Turkey has been keener to use soft power and economic influence, but progress must be made in using other means as well. (*Ibid.*, 9)

Here can be seen that as Saudi Arabia's vision is to be the centre of the Islamic world it will inevitably conflict with Erdogan's same wish. It can be concluded that there is a rivalry in relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to become the leader of the Sunni Islamic world. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia represent different sides of Sunni Islam politically and aim to lead in the future. Political Islam is practised in Turkey whereas Saudi Arabia sees political Islam as a threat to its monarchy. But if one of these will succeed to do so, only the future can tell.

1.4. The Bilateral Relations Since Arab Spring

In this chapter, the period after the Arab Spring erupted, is being analysed.

The relations had two phases in the 21st century. When Erdogan came to power in 2002, the relations improved significantly due to him being pro-Islamist (Habibi 2018) and Baskan (2019) claims they were good already since the 2000s. Turkey under the pro-Islamic AKP, when it came to power, perceived essential to improve relations between the West and the Muslim world (Göl 2017). Since Arab Spring erupted in 2011 the relations deteriorated due to Turkey and Saudi Arabia supporting different sides and both seeing different favourable outcomes of the Arab Spring (Baskan 2019; Habibi 2018). Shortly Turkey was pro-Arab spring and Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, anti-Arab Spring.

In 2010, the Saudi government gave Turkey's then-prime minister, Erdogan, its most prestigious award, the King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam. He received praise for defending the rights of the Palestinian people. (Baskan 2019). This is a sign of warmer ties and represents great honour and

cooperation between the two countries. Baskan (2019) says this was the point where relations were as good as they could get. They are both after all Sunni Islamic countries.

Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia worsened in 2011 when the Arab Spring erupted (*Ibid.*). The governments of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya were brought down. Turkey, led by Erdogan and as an advocate of political Islam, welcomed the revolutions and the new governments that were implemented. Saudi Arabia, on the contrary, saw these uprisings as destabilizing. (Habibi 2018)

The relations between the two took a considerable turn towards worse when Turkey supported Morsi, a representer of the MB in Egypt and his rise to power (Baskan 2019; Habibi 2018, Stein 2015). Morsi won the Egyptian elections after Mubarak had been overthrown. Morsi as a representative of the MB was opposed to Saudi Arabia and UAE, who both oppose to MB's actions negatively. (Habibi 2018) Saudi Arabia and UAE were also concerned that if the MB would rise to power it could start similar movements in their own countries (Baskan 2019; Habibi 2018). Here we see the pattern of whom Turkey supports (MB and political Islam) and whom Saudi Arabia opposes, forming more clearly. As discussed in the previous chapter, the MB is a threat to Saudi Arabia as the MB that represents political Islam could have overthrown the al-Saud monarchy.

The relations intensified even more after a military coup overthrew Morsi in 2013. Erdogan did not approve the coup and gave refuge to the MB in Turkey. Saudi Arabia combined with Kuwait, the UAE and Oman, on the other hand, offered billions of dollars of financial aid to Egypt's new rulers to boost the economy. (Habibi 2018) For the clarification of the situation it is necessary to explain that Egypt is also one of the most important key players in the Middle East Region. Therefore, the kind of regime which is in power in Egypt matters both to Turkey and Saudi Arabia. As Erdogan tried to establish strong ties to Mursi and the MB, it made Saudi Arabia wary (Baskan 2019). Saudis feared the Arab Spring would encourage Islamists and opposition groups in Saudi Arabia and the rule of the monarchy would be at stake (*Ibid.*). Saudi Arabia is eager to protect its monarchy and represses opposition inside Saudi Arabia that could cause a threat. The working relations between the two remained unchanged (*Ibid.*).

Pew Research Center conducted an opinion poll on Saudi Arabia amongst 39 countries. It presents how the respondents of the study from Turkey's 26 regions amongst other countries perceive Saudi Arabia. According to the poll results published in October 2013 Turkey amongst all Middle Eastern

countries had the most negative view of Saudi Arabia as only 26% viewed it favourable and 53% viewed it unfavourable. The drop in the category “favourable” from 2007 until 2013 was 14%, that is from 40% to 26%. Respondents from Turkey, however, did not feel that there would have been too much Saudi influence in Turkey as only 20% considered so, while 52% said there wasn’t too much influence. The study also found that 66% of respondents see Saudi influence in Turkey as a bad thing while only 19% view it as a good thing. (Pew Research Center ... 2013) The poll from 2013 helps to understand how Turkish people feel about Saudi Arabia. Of course, the results would probably have been even more negative regarding Saudi Arabia, if the opinions of the Iranian people had been included in the survey. But the results help us understand how the Turkish people felt. The survey results show that two-thirds of the respondents felt that Saudi influence would have been bad in their country.

In 2014 Turkey applied to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council but lost the competition during the voting. According to several diplomatic sources, there was a campaign, led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, against Turkey’s membership. The reason for this Saudi anti-campaign is said to be Turkey’s support for the MB who both Saudi Arabia and Egypt are opposed to. Amongst other reasons why Turkey was not selected was that it was under criticism on attacks on Kurds fighting ISIS in Syria. (Avni 2014) Turkey was under international pressure to help fight the IS militants waging war at the border with Syria (BBC ... 2014b). It also illustrates, that anti-Turkey attitude in Saudi Arabia is ongoing at this point. Of course, problems and disputes with other countries in the past also impact the present political decisions for Turkey. The temporary UN Security Council seat in a time when the political situation was unstable in the Middle East area, gives more power in the decision-making process. Perhaps Saudis considered if Turkey became a member in 2014, some topics in the Middle East for example regarding the MB would come up.

In December 2014, the Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu criticized Saudi Arabia explicitly claiming that it had colluded with the West to deter democracy and keep the region under autocratic rule (Stein 2015). The relations continue to sharpen.

Yemen war started in 2015 when the Saudi-led coalition began the air strikes against the Houthis supported by Iran. Saudi Arabia feared that if the Houthis are successful that would give their regional rival Iran a foothold in Yemen. (*Ibid.*) As Saudi Arabia and Yemen share a long border the military launch was considered necessary. The Saudi-led coalition was initiated by MBS, then

serving as the defence minister to Saudi Arabia (BBC ... 2018c). Turkey expressed its support for the mission. In doing so, it formally approved Saudi Arabia's air campaign. Turkey also expressed public rhetoric to Iran to withdraw from Yemen. (Stein 2015) Turkey stated that it would support Saudi Arabia in its Yemen operation which raised the idea of a potential alliance between these two (Bacik 2016). Stein (2015) argues that Turkey did not join the Saudi-led Sunni axis but just supported it by public criticism towards Iran as there were too many schisms in the Saudi-Turkish relationship already beforehand. Turkey's decision to join the Saudi-led coalition was also based considerably on attempts to increase ties to the new Saudi Arabian government as the King of Saudi Arabia changed in 2015 (*Ibid.*). However, Venetis (2014) concluded that Turkey and Saudi Arabia's interests in Yemen collided due to both wanting leadership and both having hegemonic wishes. By Turkey approving the Saudi coalition, the relations somewhat improved.

In June 2017 Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain cut diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar as they accused it of aiding militant groups and keeping close ties with the Islamic Republic. Qatar denied all the accusations. The Saudi-led boycott of Qatar was undermined by Turkey that sent food supplies that previously had been imported from Saudi Arabia to ease the blockade. Turkey as well deployed troops to Qatar to its small military base. There were even rumours between diplomatic channels that Saudi and UAE leadership were preparing a military invasion of Qatar at the time they imposed those economic measures. Despite the rumours, there was no invasion and the presence of the Turkish troops on Qatari soil might have played a pivotal role in making alternative plans instead of the invasion. In return, Qatar paid financial support to Turkey in 2018. (Dudley 2018) One of the 13 demands from Saudi Arabia for ending the Qatar blockade was that the Turkish military base in Qatar would be shut down. Another was that Qatar would sever ties to "terrorist organizations" such as the MB amongst others, whom Turkey does not classify as one either. (Wintour 2017). This Saudi-led step to cut off Qatar gave the regional competitor Turkey an opportunity to draw Qatar over and more eagerly penetrate in the Gulf area (Ding, Zhao 2019). Turkey by sending the troops to protect Qatar's sovereignty fragmented the established norms of the Gulf security (Hanau Santini 2017). Saudi Arabia and Turkey collide in Qatar, which is the small neighbour of the Saudis in the Arabian Peninsula.

In response to Turkey aiding Qatar during the blockade, the Saudi-led coalition in Qatar held a meeting with YPG. A photo of the meeting was published with PKK's Öcalan's (one of the founders of the PKK) photo hanging on the wall. YPG is considered the PKK's branch in Syria by Turkey and thus considered a terrorist group by Turkey's government. Besides that, Saudi Arabia

and its allies contributed militarily as well to YPG. These meetings had publications in the Turkish media and therefore the anti-Saudi sentiment grew in Turkey. (Baskan 2019) Turkey's primary foreign policy goal is to marginalise Kurds and eliminate the Kurdish forces from Eastern Turkey (Mabley 2018). The step from the Saudi side irritated Turkey. Aiding YPG financially gives them more strength in Syria. That is something Turkey is afraid of because a strong region of Kurds in Syria might have an impact on Turkey's Kurds as well to consolidate more.

Hanau Santini says that the Qatar incident fractured the intra-Sunni consensus, though she sees as it was caused by an external party that is the new US policy under Trump's rule. As Turkey took Qatar's side and sent the troops there it caused an erosion to the cohesiveness of the Arab Gulf. (Hanau Santini 2017) When Turkey sent its troops to the Arabian Peninsula, it increased its presence there and made Saudi Arabia wary as the security situation changed significantly (Ding, Zhao 2019; Hanau Santini 2017). The relations sharpened with both the Qatar blockade and then the proceeding steps by Saudi Arabia forming more ties to YPG. As Saudi Arabia was the boycott leader, the Crown Prince MBS had to admit, that Saudi Arabia is no longer the only big player in the Gulf area. The relations took a sharp turn and it is evident that in the context of the Qatar blockade they see themselves as rivals. There is no sympathy from the Saudi government for Turkey having their troops in Qatar nor is there sympathy from Turkey seeing Saudi Arabia meeting with YPG.

In March 2018 in an interview with Egypt's Al-Shorouk newspaper the Saudi Crown Prince Salman referred to Turkey as part of the "triangle of Evil" alongside with Iran and hard-line Islamist groups (which includes the MB) (Reuters ... 2018a). In the same interview, MBS accused the MB of exploiting democracy in the region. Turkey, the patron of the MB, was accused of trying to revive the Ottoman caliphate that collapsed a century ago. Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt regard the MB as a terrorist organization. Erdogan previously had also sheltered members of the MB in Turkey as the former ousted Egyptian president Mubarak. As Saudi Arabia sees the MB as a threat to their rule as they advocate political Islam – Islam collecting votes on elections. (Bloomberg 2018) Saudi Arabia declaring Turkey as a part of the triangle of evil indicated that it entered competition openly and secretly with Turkey. This kind of aggressive remarks show that Saudi Arabia is competing for a leading position to its opponents Iran and Turkey. (Ding, Zhao 2019) Turkey's growing military influence causes fears to grow in Saudi Arabia, also the UAE and Egypt. Turkey now has three military bases in the region, one in Qatar, one in Somalia and a possible naval base in Sudan which by location opposes Saudi Arabia across the Red Sea. (Pearson 2018)

Saudi Arabia not only sees the Turkish troops presence on the Arabian Gulf as diminishing their power in the region, but it might cause fear as well. Even though, it is hardly likely that there would be any sort of invasion on the Saudi soil. Turkey protecting Qatar's sovereignty is causing antipathy for the Saudis. Fear in this context could also be related to the harsh Ottoman past. Many Arabs feel resentment as they perceive attempts from Turkey to re-establish a new-Ottoman influence in the region (*Ibid.*). As the Crown Prince is the de facto leader in Saudi Arabia, there is tremendous importance in what he says, because his words determine mostly if not absolutely the foreign politics of Saudi Arabia. Accusations of reviving the Ottoman caliphate on the Arabian Peninsula indicate possible rivalry. Making Turkey as a foe to Saudi Arabia much like Iran or radical Islamist groups, marks an escalation of the Saudi-Turkish relations towards more rift from the Saudi perspective.

Shortly after MBS's interview, in March 2018 the Saudi TV broadcaster MBC stopped airing popular Turkish soap operas. The move came due to tensions between Ankara and Riyadh and the latter's close partner UAE. Reasons for stopping the broadcasting said to have included from Qatar to Israel. Representative to MBC later stated that the series would be replaced with quality Arabic dramas that represent the values and traditions of the regions. MBC spokesman Hayek added that the network's decision was to stop airing the Turkish series mid-season was decided based due to economic and cultural considerations. (France24 ... 2018) This is a clear indication of how the conflict in the political sphere also spreads to the cultural sphere.

Turkey's Islamist government is close to the MB and therefore has poor relations with Egypt and UAE, the close allies to the Saudi government. Turkey is close to Qatar which is in a rift with Saudi Arabia and through supporting Qatar, Turkey also improves relations with the MB. President Erdogan sees himself as an alternative leader to traditional Saudi and Egyptian leadership in the region. The opposition of the Turkish-Saudi relations also stands on supporting the opposing sides in Syria: Turkey wishes to see the Syrian government strong while as Saudi Arabia has been opposing the Assad's government for years as it fears the growing power of Iran. The confrontation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia also arises due to Turkey allying with Iran to weaken the Kurds in Syria and keep the Kurds out of the peace process. The Saudis perceive it as Turkey accepting a greater influence of Iran in Iraq and Syria for Iran's help in dealing with the Kurdish issue. (Pearson 2018)

It is evident that Saudi Arabia has a confrontation with Turkey on several aspects, especially on Turkey's troops' presence on the Arabian Peninsula. As US forces are seen by the Syrian Kurdish leaders as a shield against attacks by Turkey, YPG did not welcome Trump's announcement to leave Syria and pull the troops out (Francis 2018). The US leaving Syria for YPG means losing an important ally not only protection from Turkey's side (*Ibid.*). The US required in 2018 that the allies in the Syrian war would raise 300 million dollars for stabilizing the parts taken back from IS in Syria now under the control Syrian Kurdish leaders of YPG. Coalition partners of those allies contributed financial support: Saudi Arabia gave 100 million dollars in August and UAE 50 million dollars. (Wroughton 2018; Francis 2018) As the areas are under YPG control Turkey perceives that Saudi Arabia is financing their long-time rival the PKK as they consider YPG the Syrian branch of it.

On an economic level, Turkey is one of the Islamic world's leading economies (Sorenson, 2018, 525) and is a fast-growing economy (*Ibid.*, 553), despite the recent lira fall (*Ibid.*, 553; el-Minshawi 2018). Turkey has a diverse economy: it benefits from developed industrial manufacturing, tourism and is rich in natural resources. Historically the Turkish economy has been turbulent (Sorenson 2018, 552). High inflation in Turkey is the result of the leading political system that tried to boost the popularity of the party or coalition in power using economy (*Ibid.*, 552). Turkey's economy has had setbacks (el-Minshawi 2018). Saudi Arabia's economic stability lies heavily on oil prices (Sorenson 2018, 291) which is very one-sided compared to Turkey. The bilateral trade between the counter parties has been quite stable from 2015 until 2018 with Turkey always slightly exporting more (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey ...). There is no apparent evidence of worsening or declining of economic relations.

As the national currency has dropped in Turkey and the country is in economic crisis, the Gulf investments remain important for Turkey. Gulf states are the third largest investors in Turkey. Saudi Arabia tops the Gulf investments. The share of Saudi Arabia in Turkish stock exchange is 2,4% and the GCC countries have a total of about 5-7%. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies also share a substantial trade exchange. (el-Minshawi 2018) From these numbers, it can be concluded that the Gulf states, amongst Saudi Arabia, remain important contributors in the Turkish economy. Thus, from Turkey's side, the Gulf ties in its economy are considerably important.

1.5. Summary of the Bilateral Relations

The research question on the influence of historical events and religious background before the Khashoggi case is answered below. It could be argued that the antagonism between these two countries is expressed through the New Regional Cold War theory (Hanau Santini 2017). The two countries have a past which makes one dislike the other –Saudi Arabia sees the ex-Ottoman ruler in Turkey.

In religion they both aim to be the mouthpieces of Sunni Islam. Each of them seeks primacy between competing political identities: Turkey supports political Islam and Saudi Arabia opposes the latter. An important note in this chapter is that when the Arab Spring erupted the relations deteriorated as both countries took a stance on opposite sides. Collision is on a political sphere – they seek to see different rulers in Egypt, views differ on the MB. One of the key incidents that caused the intra-Sunni conflict (New Regional Cold War) between the two, was the Qatar crisis in 2017 (Hanau Santini 2017). In response to Turkey assisting Qatar, Saudi Arabia attempted to have relations with YPG. Though supervised by the US, it makes Turkey wary as Saudi Arabia intervenes with Turkey's top foreign priority – marginalizing the Kurds. Turkey's relatively warm relations with Iran make Saudi Arabia wary as Iran is the arch-foe of Saudi Arabia. The latter's top foreign policy goal is the containment of Iranian influence.

Direct competition between the two counter parties for leadership in the region was started in 2018 with MBS's triangle of evil speech (Ding, Zhao 2019). Turkey's and Saudi Arabia's relations could be described as rivalling. Their interests collide more often than not. Despite somewhat difficult relations, they enjoy stable economic ties. Those are more necessary to Turkey than Saudi Arabia due to the first's economic crisis. This all adds tensions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, the cultural sphere in the bilateral relations has been impacted as well as Saudi Arabia limited Turkey's influence by stopping airing beloved Turkish TV series from broadcasting.

2. JAMAL KHASHOGGI

The the second chapter aims to give a short overview of Jamal Khashoggi. Jamal Khashoggi was a prominent journalist, who became known worldwide after he disappeared. To justify the disproportionate shortness of this chapter, the thesis aims to present the Khashoggi case in a wider context concentrating on the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The incident gained a significant international response, first-hand included were Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the US. Even though journalists are murdered every year in many countries, the Khashoggi case caused a wide geopolitical tension firsthand amongst Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist. He started his career in the 1980s in Saudi Arabia and had various roles in different newspapers. He also once served as an advisor to the Saudi government. Amidst journalism, later in 2012, he was also chosen to lead a Saudi-backed Alarab news channel to rival the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera. Originally, he was close to the Saudi royal family for decades. But Khashoggi fell out of favour amongst many others and left Saudi Arabia. Prior to Khashoggi leaving for exile to the US in 2017, the new Crown Prince MBS started the detainments of dissidents in Saudi Arabia. In the US he continued being a journalist. He started writing a column in 2017 for the Washington Post. In his first column for the paper, he said he feared being arrested due to dissents with the Crown Prince. Amongst the following columns until his death, he was critical of the repressive policies of MBS. He also accused the Saudi government of pressuring the Arabic daily newspaper Al-Hayat of cancelling his column. (BBC ... 2018b) Khashoggi also accused the Crown Prince MBS of controlling the media. Khashoggi implied that when some of the detainees at the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh (November 2017) were tycoons of Saudi Arabia's media, then it did not show the Crown Prince aiming to control the media but wanting to control the media even more than he already did. (Khashoggi 2018) Nevertheless, despite all the criticism, Khashoggi saw himself as a supporter of the Saudi Vision 2030 to be realized as he wrote in his first column for the Washington Post (Khashoggi 2017). Khashoggi was supportive of the Crown Prince MBS's reforms of modernizing Saudi Arabia.

However, there were many comments not suitable for the Crown Prince MBS. After Khashoggi's death was published a collection of some of his excerpts (Khashoggi 2018). Those clearly addressed that behind the modernizer MBS's image there was a repressive side that only allowed pro-government views in Saudi Arabia (*Ibid.*). It is evident that the Crown Prince MBS did not appreciate the criticism launched at him from the Washington Post by Khashoggi. The Washington

Post has a wide reading audience and it is based in Washington - the capital city of Saudi Arabia's biggest ally. So, the reputation of MBS was at stake.

Jamal Khashoggi did not have much of a political connection to Turkey. However, just like Erdogan, Khashoggi was a supporter of political Islam (Ghitis 2018). But in the context of the thesis, it does not matter as there is no evident connection to Turkey.

Jamal Khashoggi was in Istanbul. He was about to get married to his fiancée from Turkey. In order to do so, he needed to obtain the divorce documents allowing him to remarry. Therefore he visited the Saudi consulate in Istanbul at the end of September 2018. He was asked to return on October 2, 2018, which he did. According to the fiancée he had been sure that nothing bad could happen on Turkish soil, despite his confrontation to the Crown Prince MBS. Nevertheless, he gave his fiancée the number to an advisor of Erdogan, in case he did not return. He then entered the Saudi consulate and disappeared. (BBC ... 2018a)

The fact that Khashoggi had Erdogan's advisor's number and having warned his fiancée means he had foreseen that some problems could arise. Therefore Erdogan was involved in the incident in a way from the first day on. This information allows to assume that if Khashoggi had encountered fewer problems, for example, not been killed in the Consulate but kept hostage, nevertheless Erdogan most likely would have been involved in the incident. It is common that friendships (unilateral and post-mortem in this case) are formed based on a common enemy, so it seems to be in Khashoggi's and Erdogan's case as well. It is important to note that there is no known connection nor personal friendship between Khashoggi and Erdogan.

3. INFLUENCE OF THE KHASHOGGI CASE ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA

This chapter aims to research the influence of the Khashoggi case on the relations between the two countries. Investigative case study method has been chosen and various sources from news to field-specific articles are used to obtain information on the influence of the Khashoggi case. The time period since Khashoggi disappeared is being analyzed from the perspectives of both countries.

After Jamal Khashoggi did not return from the consulate, attention to his disappearance was brought by Turkey. The Turkish authorities were quick to report on the missing Saudi national with audio evidence backing it up. (BBC ... 2018b) Saudi Arabia denied any knowledge over Khashoggi's fate for more than two weeks. Crown Prince MBS himself said that Khashoggi had left the consulate and Saudi Arabia would not have anything to hide. However, Turkish officials claimed they had audio evidence that contained the gruesome fate of Jamal Khashoggi. (BBC ... 2018a) On October 19 due to international pressure, the Saudi authorities confessed that Jamal Khashoggi had been killed in a fight in the consulate (BBC ... 2018b). On October 20, Saudi Arabia reported that Khashoggi had been murdered in a "rogue operation" by a security official. Saudi officials gave conflicting explanations on what had happened in the consulate. (BBC ... 2018a) The details of Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance and possible brutal murder have insignificant value in the context of this thesis. Therefore, they will not be analyzed.

On October 23, Erdogan said that there were signs of Khashoggi's murder being planned (Reuters ... 2018b). Turkey had already claimed before that they owned evidence that it had been a planned operation to terminate Khashoggi. Supporting evidence was provided by Turkish officials of the incoming and outgoing Saudi nationals. This time Erdogan said that the order to kill Khashoggi came from the highest levels of the Saudi government. Erdogan specified that King Salman (MBS's father) was unlikely behind the order. Saudi Arabia denied any sort of Crown Prince MBS's involvement. (BBC ... 2018a) However, Erdogan made a more direct accusation towards Saudi Arabia.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia conducted a joint investigation on the Khashoggi case although Turkish officials were granted access to the Consulate more than two weeks after the incident. Turkey wanted the suspects of the Saudi hit squad to be extradited to Turkey for trial, but Saudi Arabia refused the demands. (*Ibid.*) Turkey conducted several steps since Khashoggi's disappearance. It

brought international attention to the case, stepped up for answers and justice for Jamal Khashoggi's fate by so directly confronting Saudi Arabia. It can be claimed that the Khashoggi incident was something that Turkey generated or arranged for the purpose of damaging the reputation of Saudi Arabia.

More than a month after Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance, on November 15, Saudi Arabia finally confessed the details of the murder (*Ibid.*). However, it is important to mention that officially the suspects in charge of Khashoggi's murder have been charged. 11 suspects out of 5 who face the death penalty. 18 suspects were initially arrested. (Gambrell 2019) Technically speaking, justice is being served by Saudi Arabia. MBS has no official link to the murder of Khashoggi. But given the fact, he is the de facto leader, he can be connected to the case. This is the most common international perspective. Since the Khashoggi incident, it has been widely suspected throughout media that MBS was behind the order to murder Khashoggi and in the context of this thesis, it is considered so as well.

The Saudi confession to Jamal Khashoggi's death tensioned the diplomatic crisis between Saudi Arabia and its allies. Though Saudi Arabia's relations started to tension to its allies since the murder leaks. After the murder was confirmed by Saudi Arabia, president Trump said that it was the worst cover-up in history. As the assassination details were slowly revealed by Turkey, Trump continued defending the US ties to Saudi Arabia despite of it as the latter remains a key trading partner in the area. (BBC ... 2018a) Therefore, Trump administration's response gave little space to respond meaningfully to Khashoggi's murder as the US and Saudi Arabia share mutual opposition to Iran (Simon 2019). The relations between Turkey and the US were already strained when the Khashoggi incident occurred. Mostly as the US cooperates with YPG in Northern Syria and the region remains under YPG's control. (Francis 2018)

As the Khashoggi incident blossomed, from Turkey's side however, there was no need for Erdogan to point the finger directly to MBS. Media has widely covered MBS's actions since he became the de facto ruler in Saudi Arabia and brutal actions seem to fit his pattern: purge of corruption of the Saudi elite at the Ritz-Carlton, Yemen war and the detainment of the Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri. (Simon 2018) In this sense murder of a journalist who criticizes MBS publicly does fit the established pattern of him since he came to power.

As anonymous Turkish officials leaked materials of the murder, suspicions of the fate of Khashoggi emerged. As Erdogan has long sought primacy for Turkey in the Middle East, he saw the murder as an opportunity to stain the image of Saudi Arabia as Saudi Arabia remains the principal rival in the Middle East primacy quest. Turkey also opposes the close relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia opposes the MB whereas Turkey approves it, and as Saudi Arabia banished Qatar then Turkey saw a way to make some amends. Hence Simon sees how Turkey behaved after the Khashoggi case as obtaining a geopolitical advantage. (*Ibid.*). It indeed seems to match up as Turkey and Saudi Arabia have several quarrels, therefore keeping the media interested gave Turkey an advantage.

During the rule of Erdogan, a significant amount of journalists have been imprisoned in Turkey. In fact, Turkey tops the world in the number of jailed journalists. Hence, Turkey's response to Khashoggi's disappearance most probably had a political agenda opposed to Saudi Arabia. The murder shifted the international focus away from Turkey's own mistreatment of journalists. Turkey took the offensive role with the news leaks towards Saudi Arabia. Erdogan's control over Turkish media institutions let Turkey respond widely. Turkish media dropped new items on the Khashoggi case for two weeks, keeping the topic in the international news cycle. As Turkey and Saudi Arabia have distance in their relations the murder was as godsend for the Turks as it shifted attention away from Turkey's own problems. Relations between the two were rocky already before but the incident created even more distance. Prolonging the Khashoggi new cycle gave an opportunity to obtain a better look at the regional and foreign policy objectives of Turkey. The objectives are Turkey's neo-Ottoman ambitions, Qatar and the MB representing conservative Islam which all are opposed by Saudi Arabia. (Mabley 2018) The biblical verse of one seeing the speck of sawdust in one's brother's eye and paying no attention to the plank in one's own eye suits well in regard to Erdogan's response. Turks do not like Saudis (Pew Research Center 2013), Erdogan does not like government critical journalists in Turkey yet he stood up for Jamal Khashoggi. That can be described as political hypocrisy towards Saudi Arabia. Not only was the incident a way to better Turkey's reputation internationally but more to deflate Saudi Arabia's and MBS's - as the world's attention was on them to answer the difficult questions regarding Khashoggi.

Trump's Middle Eastern foreign policy revolves largely in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, with the Crown Prince MBS leading it. Hence, Turkey feeding the media with new information on the murder shows, that whatever the leverage over the Saudis is also leverage over the US. Turkey received a chance to change the current difficult relations with the US during the Khashoggi case.

When US Secretary of State Pompeo was on a visit in Ankara due to Khashoggi's disappearance the topic of Syria came up (connected to Kurds and Manbij in Syria). (Ghitis 2018) Turkey used the opportunity and the advantage it had created itself to push its perspectives with the US in the region. The incident provided negotiation space.

As Turkey is in economically difficult times, in debt and the foreign relations with the US and Saudi Arabia are currently not good, the Khashoggi murder presented itself as an opportunity. Also, as Erdogan's plan to make Turkey the regional powerhouse has been eroded by developments in the Middle East, then the Khashoggi case was a well-timed incident. Turkey can now subtly reinforce its position in support of Islamist politics and the MB. As Erdogan never accused MBS personally, but the high levels of the Saudi government, then Turkey might in exchange wait investments from Saudi Arabia to boost its economy by investments and refinance the debt. If Erdogan helps the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince out of the crisis diplomatically, it would have a tremendous impact on warming the relations between the two countries. Also, Turkey as it offered to initiate the joint investigation on Khashoggi, showed a move on reconciliation from Turkey's side. (*Ibid.*) As Turkey was the country that generated the Khashoggi case, it obtained power over Saudi Arabia. It can only be hypothesized how much Saudi Arabia wanted the journalist case to quiet down but it depended on Turkey. Turkey placed Saudi Arabia under international shame.

Turkish president Erdogan held a speech on October 15, 2019, where he claimed that Turkey is the only country that could lead the Muslim World. Prior to making the claim, he noted the reasons he sees which consist of: Turkey's cultural wealth, accretion of history and the geographical location and the past of keeping diverse faiths in peace for centuries. (Yeni Şafak ... 2018) Making this claim at a time while Saudi Arabia's international reputation was deteriorating day by day due to Turkey's actions note Erdogan's true claims for the leadership of the Sunni Muslim World. Such ambitious words to lead (probably in the context of comparison to Saudi Arabia) provide more sufficient understanding of the goals Erdogan has set for Turkey. Especially towards the Muslim World and perhaps the West as well.

Erdogan saw the Khashoggi case as a political trigger to stand against Saudi Arabia, its main rival to lead the Muslim World. As Erdogan gave his speech during the Khashoggi crisis that Turkey would be the only country to lead the Muslim world on the meeting with faith leaders was his way of cementing his religious legitimacy. As Erdogan is envisioning the glory of the Ottoman past as the

leader of the Muslim world and even depicts today for Turkey, his actions to be more active in the leadership activities within the OIC only make him clash with Saudi Arabia. With the disappearance of Khashoggi, Erdogan used the opportunity to damage MBS's image in the West. As the Khashoggi case was widely written about in the Western media, MBS's image deteriorated. As Turkey and Saudi Arabia oppose in Qatar and in regards of the MB, it also gives Turkey more reason to keep the Khashoggi case circling in media. Turkey also received more leverage on the US to push its perspectives in Syria to make the Kurds abandon the area near Turkey's border. US Secretary of State Pompeo's was on a visit in October 17 in Turkey to discuss the Khashoggi case. The Khashoggi case placed pressure on Trump and gave Erdogan a chance to better Turkey's image for it to be viewed not as a security threat as Saudi Arabia depicts Turkey for the US. Erdogan used the Khashoggi case to push its interests with the US. Khashoggi case did not give Turkey the maximum benefit it sought – to lead the Muslim world. Reasons for it include that the national currency the Turkish lira is weak and Saudi investments should be balanced with Erdogan's leadership attempts and rivalry. As Saudi Arabia was to host Saudi Arabia's Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh and several of participants pulled out which also represents economic damage by the Khashoggi case. (Due-Gundersen 2018) Here is notable that the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 received damage as well to its grotesque goals to become the investment hub for three continents. It would cause economic damage to Saudi Arabia if the investors would decide to withdraw.

Saudi Arabia viewed Turkey's challenge to keep up the media cycle on Khashoggi as an attack on the legitimacy of the Saud family as rulers. The antagonism between Erdogan and MBS is mutual as they are rechecking a familiar history of Turkish-Saudi rivalry which dates back decades. The question of leadership in the Sunni world has been unanswered since 1924 when the Ottoman caliphate was abolished. The Khashoggi case underlined that there is a battle between the two countries to gain more influence in religious, political and economic spheres throughout the Sunni world. Each of the two countries tries to use the other's moments of weakness and mistakes in their own favour. This is what Turkey did as Jamal Khashoggi disappeared. What could Turkey want in return of quieting the Khashoggi case? Economic support for Turkey, diplomatic relief for its most important Gulf ally Qatar, contain the Saudi support for the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds? Turkey used Khashoggi in its own favour to build leverage against Saudi Arabia. They both present differing political visions for the Sunni world. Their interests are the same political causes but from different angles: in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Somalia, Tunisia. Turkey believes that morally upright Muslim citizens should rule the Sunni World. In contrast, Saudi Arabia believes that traditional

and clear hierarchy vested in Riyadh appointed Muslim clerics should rule it. Khashoggi case helps to secure soft power in the Muslim world for a long time. Much of the Turkish-Saudi rivalry categorizes into the political and soft power spheres where both the countries seek to win the hearts and minds of the Sunni Islamic world. It is a nuanced rivalry between them and regional Sunni countries have been drawn into either camp Ankara or camp Riyadh. (Stratfor Worldview ... 2018) However, the description of what kind of Muslims should rule the Sunni world fits with the description of political Islam defined by (March 2015; Voll, Sonn 2009) that any interpretation in the name of Islam fits to rule.

What marked suspicion was the transfer of 100 million dollars from Saudi Arabia to the US to build up Syrian places that have been fought back from IS and are now under YPG. It came through the same day on October 16 when Pompeo came to Riyadh to discuss Khashoggi's disappearance. The financial support of Saudi Arabia had been agreed upon earlier the same year in 2018. It is also suspected that the Saudi Kingdom would compensate Turkey for its willingness to start the joint investigation on Khashoggi. (Hudson 2018) Baskan (2019) predicts the support to YPG can brew the crisis between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to a severe level that cannot be compared to the Khashoggi's case as Turkey's aim is to eradicate YPG from Northern Syria. As Turkey's top foreign policy goal is marginalizing Kurds in Eastern Turkey (Mabley 2018) then aiding the consolidation of the Kurds in Syria, near border of Turkey can make the latter angry at both the US and Saudi Arabia. Though the US-led restoration programme for Syria was started before the Khashoggi incident, then transferring the money the day of the visit, surely raised suspicion in Turkey. It does seem like a rapid payoff to the US to help the Khashoggi case to fade more quickly.

Simon (2019) claims Turkey aims to confront Saudi Arabia in its Middle East primacy quest, Due-Gundersen (2018) says it aims to lead the Muslim World (Due-Gundersen 2018), Stratfor Worldview ... (2018) assesses that Turkey seeks more influence throughout the Sunni World towards re-establishing (Ottoman's rule) the leadership of it. Ghitis (2018) saw Turkey's actions lessening the past misfortunes of its plan to become a regional powerhouse. As Turkey led by the AKP also had a policy to become a regional power in the Middle East from 2003-2013 (Eksi 2017) but the Arab Spring intervened. Turkey as a supporter of conservative Islam (Mabley 2018) or a supporter of Islamist politics Ghitis (2018) both point out that it had a role in its actions. Turkey supporting the MB is considered an important fact in the generated incident towards Saudi Arabia (Simon 2019; Mabley 2018; Ghitis 2018; Due-Gundersen 2018). As the relations to the US are important for both the parties, then the behaviour on the Khashoggi case showed Turkey trying to

change both Turkey and Saudi Arabia's relations to the US in favour of Turkey (Simon 2019; Ghitis 2018; Due-Gundersen 2018). For Saudi Arabia the relations with the US remain important and vice versa in the context of the US Middle East policy. Turkey on the other hand presently is not on good terms with the US and used the Khashoggi incident to change the relations.

Saudi Arabia owns financial power and large-scale investment capabilities. So, there also were suspicions that Turkey might use the Saudi riches for its own good to alleviate economic crisis that it has currently ongoing. (Ghitis 2018; Hudson 2018; Stratfor Worldview ... 2018) After all, Erdogan needs to be pragmatic in terms of the Turkish economy. Nearly 10% is the amount of the Gulf investments' share of Turkey's the foreign investments (el-Minshawi 2018), consequently Turkey's response to Saudi Arabia in the Khashoggi's case possibly had limitations due to that fact. Saudi Arabia has most of the GCC's support as they are allies apart from Qatar, so possibly Saudi Arabia could also withdraw or decrease not only its own investments but those of its Gulf allies from Turkey's economy. Turkey has a democratic system and Erdogan gets the power on elections from the Turkish citizens' votes. Hence, Erdogan cannot risk Turkey delving into an even deeper economic crisis.

There is no question about the fact that the Khashoggi incident has caused reputational damage for Saudi Arabia. Jamal Khashoggi after his death, however, for Turkey became a possibility to orchestrate a public spectacle where the villain was Saudi Arabia with the limelight on the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince MBS. It was a direct confrontation against Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Sunni) region (though different authors use different terms of the areas). It is evident that if the anonymous Turkish officials had not contributed to the media for weeks with the information leaks on the murder, the disappearance of Khashoggi would not have caused such damage to Saudi Arabia. Turkey in so doing was manipulative towards Saudi Arabia. Saudi Vision 2030 and making Saudi Arabia the powerhouse of the Gulf area investments fell through at least in 2018 when numerous potential investors did not proceed with the investments. Turkey's direct confrontation to Saudi Arabia in the Khashoggi case showed Turkey's attempt to change existing positions in the Middle East and shifting the existing ties to the US both in favour of Turkey. The relations between the two parties somewhat continued to tension due to the Khashoggi case.

CONCLUSION

The thesis aims to examine the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Sunni Islamic World. To obtain the most recent outlook, the Khashoggi case was used as a tool for of research.

The hypothesis was presented for the current thesis “The Khashoggi incident has significantly influenced the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia”. The hypothesis was partially proved because even though the Khashoggi case further tensioned the relations, it remains ambiguous to what extent as the relations were somewhat tense already before.

There has been antipathy between Turkey and Saudi Arabia since the Ottoman times when Saudi Arabia was not even formed yet. As the Ottoman Empire came to its end and the new modern Turkey and Saudi Arabia gained independence. Saudi Arabia saw itself as the natural leader of the Islamic world as Islam came to existence on its soil and, and it regards itself the custodian of the two holiest mosques in the Muslim World. Arabs have negative views on Turks as the previous Ottoman occupiers. Turkey views Saudi Arabia most negatively of the Middle Eastern countries (Pew Research Center ... 2013). The relations were modest and nothing particularly stands out until the 21st century. The relations warmed when Erdogan came to power in 2002 as the AKP party rule was pro-Islamist.

The relations started to worsen since the Arab Spring erupted. Turkey was pro-Arab spring and Saudi Arabia anti-Arab Spring. Turkey and Saudi Arabia saw themselves on different sides regarding Egypt, Tunisia, Libya since 2011. Turkey welcomed the revolutions as a supporter of political Islam. Contrary to Saudi Arabia, which opposed the Arab Spring revolutions as it saw the revolutions and political Islam as a threat to its monarchy and to its role in the Islamic World. Erdogan has shifted the foreign policy course more towards the East and Islamic countries during his leadership. Turkey aims to play a bigger and leading role in the (Sunni) Islamic world. Saudi Arabia since King Salman’s rule from (de facto Crown Prince Salman) 2015 has shifted its course and seeks a leading role in the Islamic world as well. It sought to prove itself militarily by initiating the Yemeni war the same year. The Saudi Vision 2030 depicts Saudi Arabia as the heart of the Islamic world. The relations worsened considerably during the Saudi-led Qatar blockade as Turkey undermined it by sending its troops to protect Qatar’s sovereignty. In response to the Qatari crisis, Saudi Arabia sought contact with YPG who Turkey considers the Syria branch of the PKK. Relations sought to deteriorate as Saudi Arabia under the US contributes to building up parts of

Syria where YPG is in command. Yet they indulge in stable economic relations. As both the counter parties thrive a leading role in the (Sunni) Islamic world, their goals collide. The relations between the two could be described as rivalling, competitive in the Middle East Sunni area. The research question regarding influence of historical events and religious background to the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia would be best described as “struggling for the Sunni Islam leadership” (Venetis 2014) and the New Regional Cold War as the intra-Sunni cleavage (Hanau Santini 2017).

The influence of the Khashoggi case on the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia highlighted several aspects. The behaviour of Turkey in the Khashoggi case which it probably solely generated itself, showed the latter confronting Saudi Arabia. During Khashoggi’s disappearance, Erdogan’s speech declaring that Turkey would be the only country to lead the Muslim World was a message indicated to the Muslim World to win the audience and support in it. It directly challenged Saudi Arabia as the latter visualizes itself the centrepiece of the Islamic World. Saudi Vision 2030 has great priorities set with the pillars indicating to be the centre of the Islamic world. During the Khashoggi case, Turkey contributed significantly to the news cycle in the international media with the leaks which ultimately had damaging effects on the reputation of Saudi Arabia and especially on the reputation of MBS. Erdogan’s attempts to try to find answers for the disappearance of a journalist, a Saudi national Jamal Khashoggi, was heroic indeed but given that Turkey’s own politics regarding freedom of expression is repressive, makes it in a way a hypocrite step. The Khashoggi spectacle hurdled priorities of Saudi 2030 Vision greatly.

Turkey also aimed to change the relations of both to the US by trying to better its own position. Saudi Arabia continued funding the restoration of the parts of Syria taken back from IS under YPG control even during the Khashoggi incident. As one of Turkey’s primary security and foreign policy goals remains to marginalize the Kurds in its country and neighbouring Syria, Saudi Arabia gave a reason for the relations to tension even more.

The two countries were already competing in the regional power-game, however, the Khashoggi case indicated they will continue doing so. The relations before the Khashoggi incident were already strained, they will continue to be henceforth. There is a kind of cold war going on between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey presents a softer political Islam and aims to lead the Muslim World and Saudi Arabia aims to lead the Muslim World but by opposing political Islam as they see the Islamic world should be ruled by the al Saud monarchy. Both adhere to Sunni Islam, they

thrive to be the leaders. And Khashoggi incident presented a chance to Turkey to use it as a tool to combat and manipulate the latter's main rival in achieving the leading role. The research question on the influence of the Khashoggi case on the bilateral relations concludes it could worsen the relations in the future.

The thesis indicated that the relations between Turkey and Saudi could well be described as rivalling. The applicability of the conclusions of the research questions helps to understand the fragmentation of the Sunni Middle East - Turkey as the biggest political Islam supporter and its allies against the Saudi bloc. Given the happenings of the past two years: Qatar blockade, Saudi Crown Prince Salman declaring Turkey as a part of the triangle of Evil in March 2018, Turkey's actions since it generated the Khashoggi incident and Saudi Arabia's influence and financing growing in Syria by aiding Turkey's enemy YPG, the relations are expected to tension even further. Further research possibilities could be examining fragmentation of the Sunni Middle East, Sunni leadership attempts, the New Regional Cold Wars in the Middle East, information warfare and media as a tool of war.

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