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Topic- Iran's Regional Policy Post-9/11: A Case Study of Saudi Arabia

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FINDINGS: Iranian institutions like the Supreme Leader and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its specialised forces like the Quds Force determine Iran's regional policy and they have strong relations with the non-state actors supported by Iran in the region. It was also concluded that non-state policy is an important aspect of Iran's foreign policy to project its power in the region and to come of isolation.

A study of the historical background of Iran-Saudi relation led to the conclusion that religion and sectarianism dominated their early relations that were revived in 2003 and more so after the Arab Spring. One of the results of the study also concluded that Iran- Saudi relation is impacted because of their perception building of the each others as rivals. Another result pointed out that Iran's regional policy underwent a significant change after 1979 as a result of which the region witnessed a fight between two countries that have their roots in Islamic ideology. The Iranian state has a Persian-Shiite identity as opposed to the Sunni-Wahhabi state of Saudi Arabia making them ideologically different. The thesis after examining the various factors behind their rivalry concluded that post-9/11, especially after the American invasion of Iraq, their rivalry increased in the region. The result of the research also stressed that Sect has acted as a division between the two countries since the coming of Islam but was not used for political gains in the region in past. It was found that sectarianism also has an economic explanation in Iran-Saudi relations. The execution of respected Shia cleric Shiekh Nimr al Nimr by Saudi Arabia aptly explains both politics of Sectarianism as well as the political economy of Sectarianism.

Another result pointed out that Iran's regional policy towards Saudi Arabia post-9/11 is due to security mainly in the Persian Gulf besides the sectarian dimension. On the issue of Palestine, it was found that Iran has been able to showcase Saudi Arabia in a negative light by convincing the people of the region that it has not done enough to solve the Palestinian issue and has bowed down to the U.S. in this matter. On the issue of the nuclear programme, it was concluded that the security deficit between the two countries has led them to a competition in striving to have their own civilian nuclear programme. The same is in the case of the island issue where both have divergent viewpoints primarily because of the security deficit around the Persian Gulf region. An important outcome of the study is the strong link between the role of major powers and Iran-Saudi relations in the region.