

Egyptian-Saudi Relations between Short-lived Honeymoon and Radical Strategic Shifts

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Abstract

This paper is not an attempt to trace Saudi-Egyptian relations, but rather is an attempt to answer the very central question: how ideological orientations do affect the relations between the two countries. This paper argues that four interlinked variables affected Saudi-Egyptian relations almost throughout the last seven years. First, the centralization of Iranian threat in Saudi-Egyptian relations after the downfall of Mubarak. Second is the rise of the MB as a key political actor in post-Mubarak Egypt. Third, the rise of Qatar influence in Egypt. Finally and almost the most important, the change in the Saudi strategic priorities and foreign policy doctrine after King Salman received power in 2015. This paper argues that Saudi-Egyptian relations need comprehensive reconsideration and reestablishment based on the new realities and threats of the region and the two countries mutual strategic interests. Structurally, this paper is divided into two parts, besides the theoretical framework. The first part, "A Short-lived Honeymoon: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Abdullah", explores the relations between the two countries from 2011 to January 2015. The second part, "Radical Strategic Shifts: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Salman", explores the relations between the two countries from 2015 to 2017.

Keywords: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah, King Salman, President El-Sisi, The Muslim Brotherhood

Introduction

Saudi-Egyptian relations have always swung back and forth between close cooperation, rivalry, and overt conflict and warfare. In this context, Saudi Arabia had developed close cooperation with Egypt Under king Fourk (1936-1952). However, when the Free Officers came to power officially in 1954, Saudi-Egyptian relationship became in a crisis and warfare mode. Many reasons are attributed to the deterioration of the relations between the two countries under Nasser era (1954-1970), including their contradictions in political objectives and their differences in trajectories and foreign policy orientations. In this context, while Egypt under Nasser led the Non-Aligned Movement and pan-Arab ideology, and advocated secularism and republicanism, Saudi Arabia supported absolute monarchy and Islamist theocracy. (Chronicle, 2017) Thus, while Nasser saw Saudi Arabia as an obstacle to the Arab unity, Saudi Arabia saw Nasser's ideology of pan-Arabism as a threat to their own power. (Global Security, 2017) Additionally, while Nasser was a key ally for former Soviet Union and eastern block, Saudi Arabia was a key ally for the United States and western block. Nasser therefore accused the kingdom of "reactionary" and "backwards" and accused "the Saudi rulers of being "puppets" of Western powers." (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) The relations between the two countries reached to the warfare mode in 1962, when Nasser supported the coup that was aimed to dethrone Imam (king) of Yemen, who was supported by Saudi Arabia. (Chronicle, 2017) As a result, both Saudi Arabia and Egypt sent their troops to defend its ally. "At the height of its involvement, Egypt had 75,000 troops in Yemen." (Global Security, 2017)

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Equally, Saudi-Egyptian relations under President Anwar Al-Sadat (1970-1981) were oscillated. During the first seven years of Sadat era Saudi-Egyptian relations improved, specifically when Sadat shifted Egypt “foreign policy alignment away from the Kremlin and Arab nationalist states and towards the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Arabian Peninsula sheikdoms.”(Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) However, after Sadat signed the 1979 Camp David Accords with Israel, Saudi-Egyptian relations had deteriorated. Saudi Arabia led a campaign to isolate Egypt from the Arab region. Accordingly, all diplomatic relations were severed between Egypt and the Arab states and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League.(Global Security, 2017) In fact, Sadat was assassinated in 1981 while Egypt relations with Arab world were suspended and the Arab league was moved from Cairo to Tunisia.

Relations started to warm under President Mubarak (1981-2011), especially when Egypt shifted towards the western-led camp and became together with Saudi Arabia and Israel, the United States key strategic allies in the Middle East. For Saudis, Mubarak did not represent a threat to the kingdom, but rather a guardian for the Gulf Security. The strong alliance between Mubarak and Saudi Arabia demonstrates itself in the liberation war of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. Accordingly, Egypt “sent a force of 35,000 Egyptians to Saudi Arabia in conformity with the provisions of the Arab Mutual Defense Pact signed in 1950.”(Global Security, 2017) Saudi-Egyptian political relations have remained cooperative throughout Mubarak and Egypt itself turned into a Saudi's orbit.

Nevertheless, since the downfall of Mubarak in February 2011, Egyptian-Saudi political relations have witnessed unprecedented tensions. In fact, the relationship between the two countries can be divided into two periods. During the first period (February 2011–January 2015), the relationship between the two countries was characterized by mistrust, circumspect cooperation, specifically when Morsi received power in June 2012, and strong cooperation, specifically from the period that followed the downfall of Morsi in July 3, 2013 to the death of King Abdullah (2005-2015) in January 2015. Saudi strategy at the first period was aimed at preventing the MB from dominating post-Mubarak Egypt; preventing the infiltration of Iranian influence within Egyptian politics; containing the influence of Qatar -- which supported the MB and allied with Iran -- in Egypt; and supporting the military move to oust Morsi and the MB from power. During the second period 2015-, the relations between the two countries were strained further as a result of the change in the Saudi strategic priorities and foreign policy doctrine after King Salman received power in 2015. The relations between the countries have witnessed unprecedented tension, especially in terms of four major crises: Syrian crisis; Yemeni crisis; the Egyptian expected role in the Gulf Security; and the Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement between the two countries and the conflict over transferring two Egyptian islands, Tiran and Sanafir, to Saudi sovereignty, which is a part of what is known as a 'deal of the century'.

This paper is not an attempt to trace Saudi-Egyptian relations, but rather is an attempt to answer the very central question: how ideological orientations do affect the relations between the two countries.

This paper argues that four interlinked variables affected Saudi-Egyptian relations almost throughout the last seven years. First, the centralization of Iranian threat in Saudi-Egyptian relations after the downfall of Mubarak. Second is the rise of the MB as a key political actor in post-Mubarak Egypt. Third, the rise of Qatar influence in Egypt. Finally and almost the most important, the change in the Saudi strategic priorities and foreign policy doctrine after King Salman received power in 2015.

This paper argues that Saudi-Egyptian relations need comprehensive reconsideration and reestablishment based on the new realities and threats of the region and the two countries mutual strategic interests.

Structurally, this paper is divided into three parts. The first part, "Theoretical Framework: New Variables in the Saudi-Egyptian Relationship", explores different variables that affect the relations between the two countries. The second part, "A Short-lived Honeymoon: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Abdullah", explores the relations between the two countries from 2011 to January 2015. The third part, "Radical Strategic Shifts: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Salman", explores the relations between the two countries from 2015 to 2017.

2. Theoretical Framework: New Variables in the Saudi-Egyptian Relationship

In fact, four interconnected variables determine Egyptian-Saudi relations. First is the concern of Saudi Arabia that Iran could make advantage of the Arab spring to increase its influence in the region, specifically in Egypt. Thus, Saudis

seek to contain the Iranian influence by supporting authoritarian rulers of the region, including Mubarak of Egypt and President Ben Ali of Tunisia, and by fighting Iran's Shiite regional proxies such as Hezbollah in Syria and Houthis in Yemen and removing regimes allied with Iran such as Syria's Bashar al-Assad.

The second variable is the concern of the kingdom that the MB could employ the Arab spring to dominate post-Mubarak Egypt. In fact, the MB was a major ally to Saudi Arabia from 1950s to 1980s. However, since 1980s, the MB activists had challenged the kingdom stability and national security. They help "mobilizing two generations of radicalized Saudi subjects, called the Sahwis, who sought to end Saudi rule" (Haykel, 2013) Thus, since 1990s, the ruling Wahhabi elites have begun to see the MB as a more a threat than as a useful ideological tool. (Dacrema, 2013) After the Sept. 11 attacks, the late Saudi Crown Prince Nayef blamed all his country's problems on the Brotherhood. (Miller, 2012) Thus, an anti-Brotherhood campaign led by the kingdom resulted in arresting hundreds of the MB affiliates and criminalizing most of the MB-linked organizations. It is therefore after the downfall of Mubarak regime, Saudi major strategy was to prevent the MB from dominating post-Mubarak Egypt. Consequently, Saudi Arabia was not pleased by the rise of the MB and Mohamed Morsi to power in Egypt. Many reasons are attributed to the reluctance of Saudi Arabia to the rise of the MB to power in Egypt. First, "Saudis are nervous about any elected Islamist government in their world, and that's what Morsi in Egypt represented. (Zecchinelli, 2015) Second, "the Brotherhood competes ideologically on the same terrain as the Saudi state, namely the politics of Islam. (Haykel, 2013) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Saudi Arabia finds in the rise of Mohamed Morsi and the MB in a country as important as Egypt as a danger to its internal stability, a potential threat to its national security, (Steinberg, 2014) and therefore a significant threat to the regime. (Haykel, 2013, 5-6) This concern and traditional antagonistic towards the MB (Pollard, 2013) resulted from the fact that Saudi Islamist influenced by the MB has built strong oppositional force in the kingdom since 1990s and has the ability to mobilize against the regime. For these reasons, Saudi Arabia and many Gulf States sees the MB as "the looming danger—a group they see as the slick, smiling front for a terrorist movement seeking power. (Alterman, 2014) Thus, Saudi Arabia had held back their support while Morsi was in power. (Pollard, 2013) However, with the change in Saudi leadership in 2015, the MB has become no longer an immediate threat, but an integral ally.

The third variable is the concern of the kingdom that Qatar could exploit the Arab spring to maximize its influence in the region, specifically in Egypt. In fact, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have a history of mutual antagonism. Qatar, which is clearly a country in search of a regional role, finds in the Arab Spring a "perfect opportunity to catapult it into a more prominent position." (Haykel, 2013, 2-3) Thus, the kingdom seeks to contain Qatari influence in the region, which challenges Saudi regional influence, specifically through its alliance with traditional enemies of the kingdom at that time, the MB and Iran. In fact, the major differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar are revolved around the MB. While Doha systematically favors the Brotherhood and has fostered a congenial alliance with the MB, (Cafiero, 2012) Riyadh considered the rise of the MB "as a threat to its own autocratic monarchical system." (Cafiero, 2012) Thus, Doha provides the MB with significant financial and political support, while the Brotherhood directs its energies outward and acts as a conduit for projecting Qatar's influence into the region. (Haykel, 2013, 2-3) For this reason, when the Arab Spring began, Qatar started supporting protest movements, specifically Islamist forces affiliated to the MB. (Steinberg, 2012, 3-4) Qatar, which had unfriendly relations with Mubarak regime, finds that its relations with Egypt under Islamists would be better than that of Mubarak's. With a strategic ally like Egypt, "Qatar would be given the chance to pose a real challenge to the Saudi leadership within the [Gulf Cooperation Council] GCC". (Dacrema, 2013, 6) An indication of Qatari strategy in Egypt was that Qatar was the single exception of the six GCC states that has been supportive of Morsi since his election as president. (Dacrema, 2013, 4-5)

The fourth variable is the change in the Saudi strategic priorities and foreign policy doctrine as a result of the change in Saudi leadership when Prince Salman, who is "known as sympathetic to religious conservative factions and notably Salafists that share al-Qaeda's and IS's rejection of Shiites," (Dazi-Heni, 2015, 1) succeeded his half-brother Abdullah as king in January 2015. However, the real change came when King Salman appointed his nephew, the country's Interior Minister Mohamed ben Nayef, as the new crown (removed from his position in June 2017), replaced veteran Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal with Adel El Jubeir, the first non-royal to hold the post, and appointed his son Mohamed as the Deputy Crown Prince, appointed as a Crown Prince in June 2017. The new leadership has adopted new aggressive doctrine in foreign policy and "gives top priority to curbing Iran's expansion and addressing security issues in the region, rather than crushing the Muslim Brotherhood which remains al-Sisi main obsession." (Zecchinelli, 2015, 67-68) In fact, the major differences between the two countries revolve around their contradictory conception on the nature of the threat faced their internal stability.

For Saudis, the immediate threat is specifically Iran and considered the MB as a potential ally, while Egypt, on the other hand, considered the MB as a significant threat. In King Salman doctrine, the major existential threats to Saudi Arabia are Iran and its Shiite regional proxies, including Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Syria and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), also known as ISIL or the Islamic State. (Berger et al., 2015, 2) In consistency with his strategy, King Salman allied with the MB, al-Qaeda affiliated groups: al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen as well as Jabhat al-Nusra, and Ahrar al-Sham in Syria (Dazi-Heni, 2015, 2) to fight the ISIS and to encounter the Iranian threat and its militia proxies. For Saudis, Iran "uses its militia proxies to undermine states and deny them authority throughout their territory, giving Iran leverage over Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, and Sana. (Berger et al., 2015, 1) Thus, Salman's strategy is aimed "to unite as much as possible Sunni Islamists in order to weaken Teheran's cohesive bloc made up of its Shiite regional proxies." (Dazi-Heni, 2015, 2) It is not surprising therefore that "King Salman said in the Egyptian Parliament in April 2016, that the two countries were united against terrorism, and this was the code word to Iran. (Olmert, 2017) However, the so-called "Sunni alliance" is not fully accepted by Egypt. (Dazi-Heni, 2015, 2) Besides, the Sunni-Shia divide is not an integral part of the Egyptian military doctrine. This new shift in foreign policy and strategic objectives help widening the disagreement between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, specifically in terms of Syrian, Yemeni, Egypt's expected role in Gulf Security and in the Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement between the two countries under which Egypt will transfer two strategic islands to Saudi Arabia: Tiran and Sanafir, to Saudis.

3. A Short-lived Honeymoon: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Abdullah (2011-2015)

3.1. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Arab Spring

When the uprising erupted in Egypt on January 25, 2011, Saudis supported Mubarak and the military against the protesters in order to contain infiltrating Iranian influence within Egyptian politics and the influence of both Qatar and the MB in post-Mubarak Egypt. For Saudis, spreading Iranian influence in Egypt would threaten the regional alliance of pro-American "moderate" regimes they have built together with Egypt and Jordan against "extremist" Iran. Thus, "When threatened with the loss of Egypt as the most important pillar of that coalition, Riyadh believed it had to act." (Steinberg, 2014, 17-18) In this context, Riyadh supported maintaining the status quo and intervened to prevent the fall of Mubarak regime. Thus, throughout the eighteen days of the Egyptian uprising, the Saudi leadership reassured President Mubarak of its support. (Steinberg, 2014, 18-19) The Saudi King even alerted the White House of the tension their bilateral relations would witness if the Obama administration did not support Mubarak. (Farouk, 2014, 9-10) He also advised Obama to remain loyal to its ally, Mubarak, and "When Obama refused to heed Riyadh's advice, the Saudi regime bitterly accused Washington of discarding Mubarak "like a used Kleenex". (Cafiero, 2012) Saudis' support to Mubarak triggered hostility in the streets of Cairo during the eighteen days of the Egyptian uprising. Demonstrators chanted "Mubarak, leave, Saudi Arabia is waiting" referring to the presence of Tunisia's Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali in Riyadh. (Farouk, 2014, 7-8) However, after the downfall of Mubarak regime on February 11, 2011, "the Saudis adapted, spotting a chance to shape future developments. (Colombo, 2012, 12) They supported the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Egypt de facto president after the downfall of Mubarak and declared that they respected the choice of Egyptians in changing the system. (Kamrava, 2012, 98) They therefore issued a statement on February 15, 2011, in which they expressed "hope in the efforts of the Egyptian Armed Forces to restore peace, stability and tranquility." (Farouk, 2014, 9-10) However, despite the fact that Saudi effort was not able to prevent the downfall of Mubarak regime, Saudi attitudes towards the 2011 and its supportive stance towards Mubarak regime pushed the Egyptian public to describe Saudi Arabia as a counter-revolutionary power. (Author interview with some young revolutionaries, Tahrir Square, Cairo, February 10, 2011)

In fact, the Saudis' suspicion of the infiltration of the Iranian influence within Egyptian politics became immediate after the downfall of Mubarak regime. For instance, after two weeks of removing Mubarak regime, "Egypt allowed two Iranian warships to navigate through the Suez Canal for the first time since 1979. (Farouk, 2014, 4) Additionally, Egypt's first post-Mubarak foreign minister, Nabil El Arabi, declared on April 5, 2011, after one month of assuming office, his intention to visit Iran and to adopt new foreign policy towards Iran by normalizing Egyptian-Iranian relations, (Farouk, 2014, 4) which had been severed since the 1970s. Such statements raised the concerns of the Saudis in Arabia towards Egypt's new regional alignments and of the possibility of Egyptian rapprochement with Iran. (Farouk, 2014, 4) In fact, these goodwill gestures towards Iran coincided with the arrest of an Egyptian lawyer by Saudi

authorities on charges of smuggling narcotics into the kingdom. The arrest sparked large-scale protests near the Saudi embassy in Cairo.

In response, Riyadh quickly postponed negotiations over a \$2.7 billion aid package to Egypt, closed its embassy and consulates in the country, and recalled its ambassador. (Miller, 2012) This crisis revealed that the popular mood was in favor of restructuring Egypt's relations with the Gulf, particularly with Saudi Arabia. (Farouk, 2014, 8) Nevertheless, as a result of Saudi pressures upon the SCAF, El Arabi retreated his new foreign policy orientation and reiterated together with Prime Minister Essam Sharaf that "Gulf security is more than a "red line," but a "red wall." (Farouk, 2014, 7) Eventually, the Saudis restored relations after "a Brotherhood-led parliamentary delegation traveled to Riyadh and apologized directly to King Abdullah". (Miller, 2012) Consequently, Ambassador Al-Qattan, who was recalled on April 29, returned to Egypt on May 6, 2012. (Farouk, 2014, 8) "One month later, on May 29, Egypt expelled an Iranian diplomat suspected of spying." (Farouk, 2014, 7) In return, Saudis agreed to support the new Egypt with an initial \$4 billion in economic aid. However, behind the scenes the Saudi government maintained close contacts with the SCAF to prevent the MB from dominating post-Mubarak parliament. (Steinberg, 2014, 19) In this context, Saudi Arabia supported Salafist forces and parties (Racimora, 2013, 9), rivals of the MB, however, the MB who supported by Qataris (Cafiero, 2012) won the majority in the 2012 parliament and one of its affiliates, Mohamed Morsi, become Egypt post-Mubarak president in June 2012. Thus, Saudi Arabia had held back their support while Morsi was in power. (Pollard, 2013)

To conclude, Saudis' effort to contain the rise of the MB and the influence of Qatar in Egypt after the downfall of Mubarak was doomed to fail.

3.1.1. Saudi Arabia and the MB

In fact, while Qatar has warmly welcomed President Mohamed Morsi, Riyadh has viewed the ascent of the Muslim Brotherhood with trepidation. (Haykel, 2013, 6) However, Morsi wasted no time to court Saudi Arabia. In this context, "The first foreign trip Morsi made was to Saudi Arabia to assure the leadership there that the new Egypt would not be a threat." (Haykel, 2013, 6) Morsi also declared in his inaugural speech that Egypt had no intention to "export the revolution". (Steinberg, 2014, 18-19) He described "the Gulf countries' security as a "red line" that should not be crossed. (Miller, 2012) Morsi went as far as stating that "Egypt and Saudi Arabia are one big tribe". (Farouk, 2014, 8-9) Nevertheless, both Saudi and the MB never trust each other. The mistrust between the MB and Saudi Arabia revolves around Morsi rapprochement with Iran. Actually, Morsi attempts to improve and normalize Egypt relationship with Iran raised the concerns of Saudi Arabia. (Azzam, 2013, 167-168) In this context, Prime Minister Hisham Qandil even went as far as Iraq to expand Egypt's economic relations with the Gulf, beyond the GCC. (Farouk, 2014, 8-9) Morsi simultaneously took significant steps to restructure Egypt's relations with Iran. His administration renewed political, economic, and trade ties with Tehran. Iran actually encouraged Morsi's new regional endeavor. (Farouk, 2014, 7) Both parties exchanged high-ranking officials' visits. Iranian Vice-President Mohammed Reza Rahimi was the first Iranian high-level official to visit post-Mubarak Egypt on August 8, 2012 and was received by Morsi himself. (Farouk, 2014, 7) In August 2012, shortly after assuming office, Morsi visited Tehran; the return trip to Cairo by his counterpart Ahmadinejad followed in February 2013. (Steinberg, 2014, 18-19) During his visit to Cairo, Ahmadinejad called for a strategic alliance with Egypt and offered a much-needed loan that Cairo had failed to get from the International Monetary Fund and Arab Gulf states. (Farouk, 2014, 7) However, these efforts have no effect in normalization Egyptian-Iranian relations (Said, 2013) but rather, they triggered the anger of Saudi Arabia which supported the military move against the MB.

3.1.1.1. Saudi Arabia, the Military, and the MB

In fact, the rise of the MB to power in Egypt represents an internal threat for Saudi Arabia. The kingdom thus supported the military intervention to remove Morsi from power on July 3, 2013. It is in fact unclear whether the Egyptian military discussed its July 3 plan to oust Morsi from power in advance with the Saudi leadership, or sought Saudi support. (Steinberg, 2014, 18) Two hours after General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announced that the MB President Mohamed Morsi had been deposed; Saudi Arabia's king Abdullah publicly supported the move. (Chronicle, 2017) He immediately send an effusive congratulatory telegram to Egyptian Army Chief Abd al-Fattah El-Sisi, (Steinberg, 2014, 19) in which he expressed his full support to El-Sisi who, according to the telegram, "managed to save Egypt at this critical moment from a tunnel so dark only God could comprehend its dimensions and repercussions." (Zecchinelli, 2015, 65)

On the other hand, King Abdullah voiced criticism against the supportive position of the United States and foreign powers towards Morsi, (El-Bey, 2013) in which he described these powers as supporters of the terrorism. Additionally, the kingdom supports the Egyptian government measures against the MB. For instance, when the Egyptian government declared the MB a terrorist organization, Saudi Arabia followed suit in March 2014. (Steinberg, 2014, 17-19) And after the dispersal of the pro-Morsi sit-ins in Cairo, "King Abdullah delivered a televised statement pledging support for what he described as Egypt's fight against "terrorism," and he scolded the West for its criticism. (Kirkpatrick, 2013) Willing to replace Qatar as Egypt's biggest donor, after one week of the removal of Morsi, "Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait announced a total of \$12 billion in budgetary aid, central bank support and oil products to help Egypt in the upcoming months." (Steinberg, 2014, 17) By one account, Gulf economic support for Egypt exceeded \$29 billion during 2013–2015 (Sharp, 2016, 9) and may even have exceeded \$50 billion. (Alterman, 2014, 18-19) In fact, without this support, it is unlikely that the Sisi regime would have been able to face down Egyptian public fury, which has largely been rooted in economic grievances. (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, (ACRPS), 2016, 3) However, the honeymoon was short-lived. President Sisi has tried to balance Egypt's need for independence with the growing need of its Gulf allies for regional military support (Sharp, 2016, 9), deepens the agreement between the two countries. The tension has begun so after the death of king Abdullah in January 2015. The differences between the two countries revolve around four major issues. First and foremost is the Syrian crisis. The Second dispute between the two countries revolves around military intervention in Yemen. The third of area of conflict is Egypt's role in Gulf Security. The fourth area of rift is the Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement between the two countries under which Egypt will surrender two strategic islands to Saudi Arabia: Tiran and Sanafir. However, these three issues of dispute have been impacted by the changes in the Saudi leadership and the radical strategic shift in the kingdom priorities designed by king Salman.

4. Radical Strategic Shifts: Egyptian-Saudi Relations under King Salman (2015-)

4.1. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Syrian Crisis

The first area of rift is the differences between the two countries on the Syrian crisis. In fact, three interconnected factors caused tension between the two countries in this respect. First, the fate of Bashar Al-Assad. In this context, Riyadh and Cairo have very different assessments of the fate of Syrian president. While Saudi Arabia insists that the priority in the Syrian crisis lies in the removal of Assad from power by any means, "even if Syria is destroyed and divided," (Al-Ajrami, 2017) Egypt's has emphasized the need to undermine radical militant organizations in Syria and to protect the institutions of the Syrian state. (Said, 2016) Egypt's fear of rising Islamism compels it to emphasize the need to weaken and eliminate Islamist radical militant groups and to preserve the Syrian army. (Chronicle, 2017) It is therefore Egypt calls for "preserving the integrity of Syrian territory, even if that means keeping Bashar Al-Assad's regime in power." (Al-Ajrami, 2017) Sisi thus sees president "Assad as another bulwark against extremism and the disintegration of the state." (The economist, November 25th 2016) It is not surprisingly therefore that in his "interview with a Portuguese TV channel in November 2016, Al-Sisi said that "Egypt is supporting the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), which is affiliated to Al-Assad." (Ezzidin, 2016)

The second area of rift is the differences between the two countries on fighting radical and extremist groups. According to King Salman doctrine, the major existential threats to Saudi Arabia internal stability are Iran and its Shiite regional proxies such as Hezbollah militia, allied with Assad, who is Alawite (an offshoot of Shiism) (The economist, November 25th 2016) and the ISIS, which ideologically represented the same model of Saudi Arabia style of governance: Wahhabism. For this reasons, the kingdom joined an international alliance against the ISIS and "declared the entity a terrorist threat." (Al-Rasheed, 2014) It also tries to establish Sunni coalition to fight the Shiite regional proxies in Syria and in Yemen. The kingdom thus allied with the MB, Sunni radical groups, including al-Qaeda, and Turkey, specifically in Syria from 2011-2013, which is sympathetic to Islamist groups such as the MB. By contrast, both the IS and the MB are the top concern of president Sisi, who declared them terrorist organizations. It is therefore when Saudi Arabia announced in February 2016 that it was ready to send ground troops to Syria as part of the international coalition to fight the Islamic State, "Egypt responded that the readiness to send ground troops to Syria was a sovereign Saudi decision and not applicable to the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism." (Mandour, 2016) Even the Egyptian government described the Saudi decision as "an individualistic sovereign decision," (Said,

2016) and “isolated.”(Said, 2016) By contrast, Egypt’s Foreign Minister emphasized that Egypt favors a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

In the end, Saudi Arabia’s deliberation did not translate into action on the ground. (Said, 2016) For Egyptian regime, a military intervention—in which the Egyptian military would likely suffer heavy casualties—could cause a wide-scale domestic backlash. (Mandour, 2016)

Finally, the Egyptian stance towards both Iranian Russian influential role in the Syria crisis. In In this context, while Saudi Arabia’s priority is to curb the influence of Iran, which it sees as a destabilising force, (The economist, November 25th 2016) and contain Russian influence; the Egyptian position is more aligned with Moscow and Tehran than with Riyadh. (Mandour, 2016) While Russia is backing Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad, along with Iran which is not on very good terms with Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia is backing the rebels in Syria. (Ezzidin, 2016) For Egypt, "supporting the pro-Assad Russian policy in Syria is an attempt to cultivate closer relations with Moscow."(Mandour, 2016) In fact, with deepening relations with Iran and Moscow, "Sisi has delivered a message to Saudi Arabia that Cairo’s alliance with Riyadh is not irreplaceable and that Egypt has other options should the Saudis decide to diminish their support for his country. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)

Actually, the Egyptian coordination with the Iranian policy in Syria was aimed at keeping Bashar Al-Assad’s regime in power, rather than an attempt to normalize relations with Tehran, as what happened during Mohamed Morsi era (2012-2013). The coordination between the countries has been apparent since 2016. For instance, on September 23, Egypt Foreign Minister met Iranian Foreign Minister in New York on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly meetings to address the Syrian crisis and the necessity to have a peaceful solution to the crisis.(Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)Additionally, "About a week later, Yasser Othman, the head of Egypt’s Interest Section, went to Tehran and met with Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran’s Majlis speaker’s special international affairs advisor, who praised Cairo’s “productive” role in Syria and called for greater Egyptian-Iranian cooperation."(Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) Since then, Saudi Arabia"looked with great concern upon any rapprochement between the Egyptian and Iranian governments.(Said Omar, 2017)

On the other hand, the very reason for Egypt's move to cultivate Russia as an ally is the fact that Russia "would impose fewer military demands on Egypt."(Mandour, 2016) It was also aimed to preserve the integrity of Syrian territory and keeping Bashar Al-Assad’s regime in power. Egypt thus wasted no time in demonstrating publicly its disagreement with the kingdom over the Syrian crisis. For instance, in March 2015, El-Sisi angered Saudi Arabia when he asked during the Arab Leaguesummit to read a message from the Russian president on the Syrian crisis. The Saudi foreign minister at the time, the late Saud al-Faisal, protested, saying: “The Russians are an integral part of the atrocities in Syria. Is to convey their message a disregard of our views on the Arab world? (Chronicle, 2017) It is not surprisingly therefore that in the summer of 2015, "Saudi Arabia made its irritation clear with the presence of Egypt, the UAE and Jordan in meetings held in Moscow on a possible resolution to the Syrian crisis."(ACRPS, 2016, 3)Similarly, during a summit a ministerial summit for the foreign ministers of Russia and the Gulf Cooperation Council held on May 26, 2016, "Saudi Arabia did not restrain itself from voicing its disagreements with Moscow."(ACRPS, 2016, 3)Additionally, in September 2016, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry admitted to the existence of a dispute with Saudi Arabia regarding Syria. (Soliman, Asmahan, and Said, Omar, 2017) To quote Shoukry, the kingdom “is adamant about the need to change the Syrian government or leadership. Egypt does not follow the same approach.”(ACRPS, 2016, 3) Problematically, Cairo’s interests in Syria have increasingly converged with Moscow’s as Sisi pushes for a resolution to the Syrian crisis that likely keeps Assad in power.(Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)For this reason, Egyptian alignment with Putin angered the Saudi regime. For instance, on 8 October, an overt confrontation happened between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, when the former voted in favour of the Russian draft resolution in the United Nations (UN) Security Council regarding a peace solution in Syria. During the same session, Egypt had also voted in favour of a French resolution for Syria, a move which Saudi Arabia’s envoy to the UN described as “painful.”(Ezzidin, 2016) Despite the fact that none of these resolutions were adopted by the UN Security Council, as they were both vetoed,(Ezzidin, 2016)Egypt’s decision to vote in favor of Russia’s draft resolution has intensified growing tensions between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The move was criticized by Saudi government and media. As a result, two days later, "Riyadh took the step of recalling its ambassador to Egypt, Ahmad Al Qattan"(ACRPS, 2016, 1) and the Saudi Aramco informed the Egyptian government that oil shipments to Egypt were suspended, and Saudis "put on hold financial aid agreements".(Haykel, 2013, 3)

Additionally, Aramco told Egypt in November 8 that the halt was indefinite, which can be considered "as a Saudi sanction on Egypt for its vote." (Mostafa, 2017) No reasons were given for the Saudi punitive actions. However, Saudi Arabia's actions pushed Egypt into the hands of the kingdom's rivals, (Bianco, 2017) including Iran, to supply its oil needs. (Soliman and Said, 2017) For instance, in November 2016, Egypt's oil minister visited Tehran to obtain an oil deal that would make up for the losses in Saudi fuel aid. (Haykel, 2013, 3) Egypt agreed to import oil from Iraq, which now has close ties to Iran. (The economist, November 25th 2016) In a response to Saudi punitive actions, on 24 November 2016, the Egyptian president said publicly that he supports the Syrian armed forces in their fight against terrorists, a position at odds with Saudi's. (Chronicle, 2017) Likewise, the Egyptian army sent a unit of 18 helicopter pilots to Syria on 12 November 2016, according to the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir*, which is known for its proximity to the Syrian regime. (Chronicle, 2017) Eventually, in March 2017, six months after the halt, Aramco announced the resumption of oil shipments to Egypt. (Soliman, Asmahan, and Said, Omar, 2017) But, the two countries' disagreements on the Syrian crisis remained the same.

In fact, Russia plays a key role in Egypt's geopolitical maneuvering that is irking the kingdom. Thus, Saudi Arabia came to see that Russian-Egyptian cooperation would strengthen Iran's hand in the Levant at the expense of Saudi Arabia's. (Ezzidin, Toqa, 2016)

To conclude, the Syrian crisis has created some common ground between Egypt and Iran and Russia. However, "This maneuvering has come at the expense of Cairo's historical alignment with Riyadh." (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)

4.1.1. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemeni Crisis

The Yemeni crisis has been another factor contributing to the deterioration in the Egyptian-Saudi relations. The dispute between the two countries revolves around military intervention in Yemen to fight Houthi rebels, a Shi'ite offshoot allied with Iran. In fact, Saudi Arabia's decision to commit its military might to preventing a total takeover of Yemen by Houthi rebels represents a watershed moment in its struggles with Iran both for regional dominance and to halt a creeping Iranian encirclement of the kingdom. (Ottaway, 2015, 1) However, while Saudi Arabia sees the war in Yemen as part of its larger struggle against Iran's spreading influence in the Arab world, Egypt appears genuinely ambivalent about Iran's expansionist policies." (Haykel, 2013, 3) The dispute between the two countries expressed itself in Egypt's limited contribution in the so-called 'Operation Decisive Storm', Saudi-led coalition in Yemen to fight Houthis, declared in March 2015. Despite Egypt announcing its participation in the operation, the Egyptian military's participation has been more symbolic and has not met the quality or quantity expected by the Gulf States. (Mandour, 2016) Egypt "only sent four warships to guard the Bab al-Mandab strait at the entrance to the Red Sea – which is strategically vital for Egypt." (Noll, 2015) In fact, Saudi Arabia hoped for a vigorous Egyptian contribution to a unified Arab stance in opposition to Iran's political, economic and now military encirclement of the Arabian Peninsula. (ACRPS, 2016, 1) Disappointed by Egypt's limited military intervention in Yemen, Saudi Arabia's asked the MB branches in both Egypt and Yemen to secure Sunni support for the kingdom's war in Yemen. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, Egypt, 2016) In fact, Saudi alliance with the MB has created further tension in the Cairo-Riyadh relationship, given the fact that Egypt declared the MB as a terrorist organization. In response, Egypt wasted no time to demonstrate its opposition to the Saudi policy towards Yemen publicly. In March 2016, Sisi angered the Saudis when he spoke at an Arab League summit in Egypt and read a letter penned by Vladimir Putin calling for the Yemeni crisis to be resolved "without any external interference." (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, Egypt, 2016) Additionally, the Egyptian government's granting of permission to Houthi figures to put on a photo exhibit in Cairo displaying photos of Yemeni victims of the Saudi-led military campaign did not ease any tension in Egyptian-Saudi relations. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, Egypt, 2016) Furthermore, the Egyptian government declined "its intention to send ground troops if needed. Even though the Egyptian National Security Council agreed in January 2016 to extend Egypt's participation for up to one year." (Mandour, 2016)

In fact, many reasons are attributed to Egypt's symbolic military's participation in Yemen and Sisi's reluctance to make a substantial contribution to the anti-Houthi military campaign. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, Egypt, 2016) First, Egypt's public opinion, its media and its army were all hostile to see Egyptian involvement in a new war in Yemen as the conflict led by Nasser in support of the young republican regime in the 60s

cost the lives of 26,000 Egyptian soldiers.(Zecchinelli, 2015) Second, the Egyptian military has refrained from involvement abroad unless a vital national interest is at stake.(Fandy, 2002, 64). Thus, Egypt does not want to get involved in Yemen and insists that being part of the coalition does not mean that it has to take part in the fighting; it wants to limit its participation to logistic support and perhaps some limited remote operations. (Al-Ajrami, 2017)

4.1.1.1. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf Security

The third area of rift can also be seen in Egypt's inability to fulfill its promises to militarily defend Gulf regional security against Iranian threat, a pledge that Abdel Fattah el-Sisi made during his presidential campaign in 2014 (Mandour, 2016), and reiterated in March 2015 when he told King Salman that "GCC security represents a "red line" for Cairo."(Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)It is not surprisingly therefore that Saudi Arabia was disappointed by Sisi maneuver to avoid playing active role in defending Gulf regional security against the Iranian threat. However, instead to fulfill his promise, Sisi proposed in March 2015 to set up a Joint Arab Force as an alternative to his promise to defend Gulf regional security. The function of the Joint Arab Force is to "face regional challenges and protect national Arab security", (Said, 2016) and, importantly, is to ensure the continuous flow of Gulf aid, most notably from Saudi Arabia. (Mandour, 2016) However, "Saudi Arabia declared the death of Sisi's initiative, while suddenly announcing the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism, which counted Egypt among its members."(Said, 2016) In fact, "Saudi Arabia prefers ad hoc coalitions precisely in order to avoid long-term dependency on other countries, not least Egypt." (Noll, 2015) According to Mustafa El Labbad, director of the Cairo Al Sharq Centre for Regional and Strategic Studies, "Saudi Arabia doesn't want Egypt as a partner, even as a second-rate one. It doesn't want an Arab front".(Zecchinelli, 2015) However, Egypt's failure to defend Gulf Security and the reluctance of Sisi to not involved in external military front resulted from the fact that sending ground troops in particular and Egyptian troops in external military tasks has not been part of Egypt military doctrine since Egyptian participation in the international collation to the liberate of Kuwait in the 1990s.

4.1.1.1.1. Deal of the Century: Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement:Tiran and Sanafir

Another area of tension in the Saudi-Egyptian relations, which is indirectly related to the Iranian threat and building regional coalition to fight Iran and regional proxies, is the Maritime Border Demarcation Agreement between the two countries under which Egypt relinquished two strategic islands to Saudi Arabia: Tiran and Sanafir. The two islands are situated in the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba leading to Jordan and Israel.(Al-Ajrami, 2016) They have been an instrument in blocking the Strait of Tiran, which is Israel's only maritime gateway from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Red Sea. The islands were captured by Israel in 1967, and returned to Egypt in 1982. (Widdershoven, 2017) Saudi and Egyptian officials, including President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's (El Sharnoubi, 2017) say the islands belong to Saudi Arabia and have been under Egyptian control only because Riyadh asked Cairo in 1950 to protect them. (Al-Ajrami, 2016) However, neither Saudi nor Egyptian officials demonstrate documents to prove such claim. All available documents, some dating back to 1840, prove that Tiran and Sanafir are Egypt's. (Mahfouz, 2016) Additionally, both islands fall under the terms of the Camp David Accords. That alone proves they fall within Egyptian territory."(Mahfouz, 2016) This was what pushed Many Egyptians to believe that Egypt rewarded the two islands to Saudis as a return for Riyadh's major financial help after the downfall of Morsi.

In fact, the transfer of the islands is part of a deal provided by King Salman during his visit to Cairo in April 2016. The deal includes three interlinked aid packages to Egypt. First is to provide Egypt with 700,000 tons of refined petro-products per month from Aramco, in a five-year-deal valued at \$23 billion.(Chronicle, 2017)Second is to provide \$1.5 billion development plan for the Sinai Peninsula.(Mostafa, 2016) Third is to build a bridge to connect Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which will ease the transport of people and goods and thus improve economic cooperation.(Al-Ajrami, 2016) In return, Egypt signed the maritime border demarcation agreement with Saudi Arabia on April 9, 2016, in which Egypt would transfer the two Egyptian islands to Saudi Arabia.

In fact, the transfer of the islands was announced to the Egyptian public without any preamble, despite the fact that the negotiation that led to sign the agreement took at least eight months, according to official statements. (Mostafa, 2016)Thus, Egyptians have contested the handover due to the obscurity of the negotiations. A wave of street protests sparked against Sisi for the first time since his term begun, in which street protests denounced what is widely seen as a sale of Egyptian land to Saudi Arabia, and hundred were arrested. (Mahfouz, 2016). The relationship between the two countries has soured, specifically after "the Egyptian Supreme Administrative Court ruled on January 16 against the agreement, declaring the islands Egyptian.

The court argued that the Egyptian government failed to submit documents in support of Saudi sovereignty. (Soliman and Said, 2017) Nevertheless, more recently, in a violation to the Egyptian constitution, the Egyptian Parliament approved the agreement and sent it to the president for ratification. Finally, El-Sisi relinquished the two Egyptian strategic islands to Saudi Arabia and they become under Riyadh sovereignty.

In fact, the transfer of the islands is related to the Iranian threat and the desire of Saudi Arabia to cooperate with Israel to defeat Iran and the ISIS. In fact, Israel and Saudi Arabia obviously share similar views on key issues such as the threat posed by Iran. According to Ahren, "The latest development in the Straits of Tiran suggests that their agenda of common interests is broadening." (Ahren, 2016) An area of common interests is to build new regional alliance that will include Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. According to Ben Caspit, "The transfer of the two islands to Saudi Arabia — reveals part of the dialogue that has been developing between Israel and its Sunni neighbors, (Caspit, 2016) or moderate Sunni states, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. Despite the fact that Israel and Saudi Arabia has no formal ties, "but there have been hints of quiet cooperation -- or at least a strategic dialogue -- over certain issues such as Iranian influence in the region. (Eglash, 2016) However, with transferring the two islands to Saudi Arabia, kingdom be a part of the 1979 peace treaty with Israel and its strategic dialogue with Israel will come into effect accordingly. It is not surprisingly therefore that Egypt is consulted with the United States and Israel before the transfer of the two Egyptian islands. The Egyptian government explains that "it is all in accordance with the peace treaty with Israel, and Israel is consulted." (Olmert, 2016) Rex Tillerson, United States Secretary of State states that "Trump thanked Sisi for the giving of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia." (Awd news, April 14, 2017) Equally, Saudi Arabia is consulted with Israel concerning the transfer of the islands and the freedom of shipping from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Red Sea. According to Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon Riyadh, "not only was the transfer plan of the two islands prior approved by Israel and the United States, but also Saudis gave written assurances to Tel Aviv that there will be no implications for Israeli shipping from Israel's only Red Sea port in Eilat through the Strait of Tiran." (Vergolia, 2016) "We reached an agreement between the four parties – the Saudis, the Egyptians, Israel and the United States – to transfer the responsibility for the islands on the condition the Saudis fill in the Egyptian shoes in the military appendix of the peace agreement," he said. (Eglash, 2016) The fact that the transfer has now earned Israeli support reflects the depth of the shared interests between the three sides: Cairo, Riyadh and Jerusalem. (Caspit, 2016) Furthermore, "the multilateral agreement over the two islands, and the open talk of a reassuring letter the Saudis sent to Israel, is the most tangible evidence yet for the undeclared alliance." (Ahren, 2016) Despite the fact that transferring of the two islands may ostensibly lessen the tension between the two countries, the transfer of the two islands would be a black blotch in the relationship between the two countries for generations to come.

5. Conclusion

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, two previously staunch allies, have soured since the 2011 uprising. In fact, except for a short period from July 2013 to December 2014, the relations were generally strained. Relations between the two countries under king Abdullah were determined by three interconnected factors: supporting Mubarak regime and thereafter the army, containing the Iranian and Qatari threat and preventing the MB from dominating post-Mubarak Egypt. After the removal of Mubarak from power, Saudi supported the SCAF, Egypt de facto president, demonstrates its opposition for the political rise of the MB. Saudi Arabia thus supported removing Morsi from power in July 2013. It also supported financially the new regime led by Sisi. The cash helped Egypt avoid an economic collapse. (The economist, November 25th 2016) In fact, despite pouring tens of millions of US dollars into Egypt following the ouster of former president Mohamed Morsi, the two countries have opted for different paths in their relations and their foreign policies, (Ezzidin, 2016) specifically after King Salman received power in January 2015.

The changes in the Saudi national strategic priorities since the appointment of king Salman and the deputy crown Prince, Mohamed Ben Salman was the major reason for the deterioration of the relationship between the two countries. King Salman new tactical approach towards jihadi groups and his alliance with the MB and other radical groups, which are considered terrorists by Egypt, raised concerns of the Egyptian leadership. From this point on, relations have become more strained and disagreement between the two countries demonstrated publicly.

In this context, indications that Egypt was not fully supportive of Saudi Arabia could be seen since 2015 when Egypt has refused to follow the kingdom's policy in Syria and Yemen, and Egypt's geopolitical shift which made Cairo more closer to Moscow, Tehran, and Baghdad. In fact, Sisi's unwillingness to toe Riyadh's line in these regional crises "has infuriated the Saudis,"(Ezzidin, 2016) and widened the gap in the relations between the two countries.

Despite the disagreement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the relations between the countries do not suggest that the situation has reached a crisis mode,(Said, 2016) or warfare as it was happened in Yemen in 1960s. In fact, the Egyptian-Saudi interests are deep and complex, their disagreements in some regional crises will not be a reason for a complete rupture between two countries that have many interests in common. (Mostafa, 2016) In fact, "Egypt needs Saudi Arabia's largesse and Saudi Arabia—surrounded by enemies and unfriendly regimes in Iran, Syria, Iraq and Yemen—needs Egypt's regional weight." (The economist, November 25th 2016) Nevertheless, the close ties that existed between Cairo and Riyadh under the late King Abdullah became a part of the history.

In fact, both countries are in a dire need to build an alliance, that is not only based on religion or mutual adversaries, but on economic and strategic interests. (Widdershoven, 2017) Three areas of mutual economic and strategic interests between the two countries could be of utmost importance in this respect. One area is to fight terrorist groups and maintain the security of the Red Sea. In fact, fighting Islamic State offshoots in the Egyptian Sinai help defending GCC security as the "the peninsula located between the Mediterranean and Red Seas. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) In this context, Saudi Arabia could support Egypt financially in its campaign against terrorism, specifically in financing Egypt in acquiring smart weapons required for fighting terrorism. The second area is the vital role that Egypt can play in Mohamed Ben Salman's Saudi Vision 2030 project. According to Ben Salman's Saudi Vision 2030 project, Saudi Arabia planned to be a hub for foreign investments and trade in the Middle East. In this context, "increased trade to and from Saudi Arabia also will have to go through the Suez Canal, Egypt's artery to the world."(Widdershoven, 2017) In this respect, "investors will be only interested in a multibillion dollar investment spree in Saudi Arabia if the surrounding region is stable. (Widdershoven, 2017) In this context, Egypt can provide Saudi Arabia with logistic and technical support. The third area of common interests is Egypt role in the gulf food security which requires to "secure supply routes, the Saudi leadership is determined to keep the Suez Canal and Red Sea open and free of terrorist activity. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) Economically speaking, fighting terrorism in Egypt, especially in areas close to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal could be of utmost importance to achieve Saudi Vision 2030 project and for the gulf food security. The security of the Suez Canal is vital for the export of Saudi oil to the West as well. The risk of Egypt, situated at the intersection of Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Middle East sliding into political unrest similar to 2011 is a worst-case scenario for Saudis. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016) Thus, stability in Egypt is a top priority. The Saudis would face a serious security crisis if Egypt's economy collapses and/or political conflicts result in worsening terrorism and violence. (Bianco, Cinzia and Cafiero, Giorgio, 2016)

Finally, it is true that Egypt will not play the role it has played under Mubarak in Gulf Security and it will not play a central role in the regional crises including Yemeni and Syrian crisis, given its ailing economy and deteriorated leadership role. However, Egypt can play a key role in resolving these crises peacefully with a coordination with Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the United Nations, in a way that maintains the Gulf security and the regional and international stability.

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