

While the range of the visual data is commendable, the approach to all of them as if they were of the same genre and the frequent usage of French in several chapters may be minor criticisms. Put differently, the author's choice of data and interpretation of them is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, using diverse artworks can be considered inspiring and thought-provoking. On the other hand, each of these diverse forms requires a different methodological standpoint.¹ To illustrate, as proposed by Theo van Leeuwen (2001), visual analysis is predicated on the idea that to understand an image as a text, its written or spoken language, sounds, visuals, and other modalities must be analyzed simultaneously. Therefore, it can be argued that photographs and other visual data considered in the book might have been categorized and analyzed as separate materials. For example, Figure 2.1., a sculpture by Aïcha Filali, and Figure 2.2.,

photographs by Meriem Bouderbala (p. 75), might have required a different analytical perspective from each other, and then Figure 3.1. (p. 118), a collective art project by Selma and Sofiane Ouissi. As they include various components and have different representative powers, these figures require analytical perspectives specific to their own genres. Last but not least, the book's primary audience is scholars of international relations who are interested in the Arab Spring but wish to look at it from a new angle, as well as multidisciplinary researchers interested in the subject matter. Overall, it is an important piece of work that should not be neglected.

Endnote

1. For a more detailed information on visual analysis see: Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, "Introduction," in Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt (eds.), *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, (New York: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004).

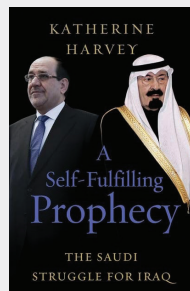
A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Saudi Struggle for Iraq

By Katherine Harvey

Hurst & Company, 2021, 392 pages, £35, ISBN: 9781787385665

Reviewed by Yusuf Bahadır Keskin, Amasya University

The ideological hostility and walls of suspicion between Riyadh and Tehran have become a significant dynamic in the relations with post-Saddam Hussein Shiite-led Iraq. The policies thoroughly analyzed in this work, *A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: The Saudi Struggle for Iraq* by Katherine Harvey, exemplify how historical traumas and prejudices can profoundly influence the foreign policymaking process.



This study suggests that the negative stance of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy towards Nouri al-Maliki during King Abdullah's era contributed to Iraq's regional isolation and increased its susceptibility to Iranian influence. The controversial steps taken by King Abdullah towards the post-war Iraqi government and his misreading of his neighbor's politics have resulted in heightened Iranian influence in Iraq. The book highlights the consequences

of decision-makers' errors or biases in foreign policy. In post-war Iraq, which became politically and ideologically fragmented, the establishment of stability and healthy relations with its neighbors was adversely affected. Moreover, Riyadh's negative approach towards Iraq led to unintended consequences, hindering the Saudis' effectiveness in regional competition.

Compared to many studies in the field of international relations, Harvey's work possesses a more comprehensible structure, offering a detailed historical background and a comprehensive examination of critical turning points. The analysis is further enhanced by interviews with high-level figures directly involved in the subject matter and by examining diplomatic documents obtained from sources such as WikiLeaks. Harvey constructs the theoretical framework of her work by drawing on theories from international relations and social psychology.

The study primarily focuses on the concepts of misperception and the self-fulfilling prophecy. This theoretical approach helps us understand how Saudi leaders perceived Iraq's Shiite leadership and how these perceptions shaped their policies. Harvey uses these theoretical tools to explain how Saudi Arabia's policy towards Iraq evolved into a self-fulfilling prophecy. This work stands out as an essential resource for understanding the Middle East's geopolitics and the interactions and struggles between Riyadh, Baghdad, and Tehran.

The book consists of 6 chapters. Chapter 1 details the historical background of Saudi Arabia's relations with Iraq and the increasing influence of post-1979 Iran, which transformed into a Shiite theocracy. This historical perspective is crucial for understanding the origins of Saudi policies towards Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war, which began a year after the

revolution and lasted eight years, had significant impacts on Riyadh, turning Tehran into an irrevocable enemy due to its expansionist ambitions and the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih. These factors increased Iraq's strategic importance for Riyadh. Consequently, Saudi Arabia initially attempted mediation during Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and, after failing, supported Kuwait's liberation alongside the U.S.-led coalition. The First Gulf War complicated regional alliances, and during this period, the threat from Iraq was perceived to surpass that from Iran by Saudi leadership.

Over time, the Iranian threat became the most significant trauma influencing Saudi foreign and security strategies. This concern dominated not only issues directly related to Iran or Iraq but also broader foreign policy matters. For instance, Iran remained distant from negotiation tables concerning Bahrain, the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine, or the disputes over Abu Musa and Tunb Islands in the Gulf. Even the issue of pilgrimage created tensions between Tehran and Riyadh. Consequently, Saudi leaders, especially during the 1990s, clung rigidly to the perceptions they had formed about Iran in the previous decade, shaping their foreign policy accordingly.

Chapter 2 focuses on the significant changes in Iraq following the U.S. invasion and the establishment of a new political structure. Riyadh's primary preference was for Saddam Hussein to be overthrown by a military coup and for a leader sympathetic to their interests to take power. However, these action plans presented to the G. W. Bush Administration were not accepted. Post-2003, the Bush Administration's approach in Iraq brought the Shiite community to power, exacerbating Saudi concerns about Iran. According to Harvey, the Saudis overlooked the possibility that Iraqi Shiite interests could diverge from those of Iran.

Chapter 3 centers on the relationship between Nouri al-Maliki, who made his first official foreign visit to Saudi Arabia after becoming Iraq's Prime Minister in 2006, and King Abdullah. The U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad, described Maliki as "least susceptible to Iranian influence," yet Riyadh viewed him as "untrustworthy" and even an "Iranian agent" due to unmet promises (p. 118). Saudi Arabia's rigid stance on Maliki, particularly driven by concerns over Iran, effectively pushed Maliki's Administration closer to Iran. Harvey argues that Maliki and his Dawa Party attempted to pursue a more independent and pragmatic policy. However, Saudi leaders' lack of confidence in this effort stemmed from prejudices, misinformation from Maliki's rivals, and an inability to pressure the King to reassess his decisions.

Chapter 4 uses Alexander Wendt's "logic of enmity" theory to explain how King Abdullah cast Nouri al-Maliki into an enemy role, naturally leading to a troubled relationship between the Saudi and Iraqi governments (p. 143). From 2006 to 2009, despite various mediation efforts, including those by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, King Abdullah refused to communicate with Maliki's government. In 2009, Maliki publicly criticized the negativity of Saudi Arabia's stance towards Iraq. Institutionally, Saudi foreign policy could not detach itself from this hostile attitude, preventing the establishment of healthy bilateral relations. This attitude even failed to gain support from other Arab monarchies like Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE. Faced with growing support for Iraq's integration into the Arab world, the Saudis found themselves increasingly isolated. This rigid stance negatively impacted not only Saudi Arabia's interests but also the region's overall stability.

In chapter 5, which focuses on bilateral rela-

tions in the context of the 2010 parliamentary elections in Iraq, Maliki contends that Saudi Arabia attempted to remove him from power by supporting Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya coalition. Maliki even speculated that the three major bombings in Baghdad towards the end of 2009 were carried out with the support of Saudi Arabia and Syria for the same purpose.

As a result of the elections, Iraqiyya emerged as the winner, outpacing Maliki's coalition by two seats. This outcome drove Maliki away from his pursuit of an "independent and non-sectarian Iraq" and pushed him towards Iran (p. 179). Harvey explains this process using Robert Merton's concept of the "self-fulfilling prophecy." Merton describes it as "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false definition come true" (p. 177). According to this interpretation, King Abdullah's unwavering accusation that Maliki was an Iranian agent ultimately led Maliki to align more closely with Iran.

One of the central themes in Harvey's analysis, particularly highlighted in the final chapter, is the Arab Spring. The struggle between ISIS and government forces in Iraq and Syria politically extended to the Saudi administration. Saudi Arabia, along with Qatar and Türkiye, supported Sunni insurgents in Syria. Iraqi Shiites claimed that Saudi Arabia aimed to overthrow not just the Assad regime but also their government. According to the Saudi thesis developed from the Iraq and Bahrain examples, the Arab Spring was instigated by Iran's sectarian and racial policies to increase its regional influence. Ultimately, the conflicts in Syria and other regions brought the Maliki Administration closer to the Iranian regime. Maliki's second term was marked by political crises and sectarian tensions, leading to increased authoritarianism. There was even a belief that Riyadh supported ISIS to depose

Maliki, further strengthening the Iraq-Iran alliance.

During the period starting after 2015, under King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, efforts were made to re-establish relations with Iraq. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir's visit to Baghdad in 2017 was a significant turning point. As a critique, this chapter could have provided a more detailed examination of the impact of Riyadh's policies towards Maliki on its relations with other Arab countries and the U.S.

The book highlights how Saudi Arabia's biases and erroneous decisions resulted in unfavorable outcomes in regional politics. Harvey argues that Saudi Arabia's policies effectively drove Iraq into Iran's sphere, actualizing the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Katherine Harvey's *A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy* offers a comprehensive examination of Saudi Arabia's policies towards Iraq, filling an important gap in Middle Eastern studies and international relations. The book provides an in-depth analysis of Saudi foreign policy dynamics and their regional consequences. Additionally, the relationship trajectory between these two key Middle Eastern powers serves as a valuable resource for understanding state behaviors.

Harvey's work is crucial for understanding the impact of perceptual errors and the human factor on foreign policy. Due to its detailed and comprehensive nature, the book is likely to appeal more to academics and those closely following the Middle East. It holds significant value for both academic circles and policymakers, offering insights that resonate across these communities.

The Age of Counter-Revolution: States and Revolutions in the Middle East

By Jamie Allinson

Cambridge University Press, 2022, 302 pages, \$29.99, ISBN: 9781108735520

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The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world. It began in response to oppressive regimes and a low standard of living, starting with protests in Tunisia following Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in protest of police corruption. With the success of the protests in Tunisia leading to a revolution and the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, similar movements sprouted across other



countries like Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain.

The book *The Age of the Counter-Revolution* by Jamie Allinson, a Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Edinburgh, is based on his expertise in Middle Eastern politics

to provide a nuanced examination of these complex events. The book extends beyond the regional focus to engage with broader discussions about the nature of revolution