

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS

From the transcript below, write a 2800-3000-word research report that presents the findings of three different analyses that are each based a different research philosophy: (neo-)positivist, interpretive, and critical. Justify the coding and interpretation techniques you used for each analysis in relation to your research question, making use of the relevant literature on qualitative research methods. Support your main findings using data fragments and/or summary tables.

TRANSCRIPT

Adel al-Jubeir is the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia. This interview was conducted by FRONTLINE's Martin Smith on Feb. 24, 2017 for the documentary [Bitter Rivals: Iran and Saudi Arabia](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-frontline-interview-adel-al-jubeir/). It has been edited in parts for clarity and length.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-frontline-interview-adel-al-jubeir/>

So the 1979 revolution is a seismic event for the region. How did it affect Saudi Arabia?

The Khomeini revolution of 1979 was a seismic event in the region. It affected the whole world. It unleashed sectarianism. It incorporated the doctrine of exporting the revolution. It triggered a counterreaction in the Sunni world among conservative or extremist Sunnis, and as a consequence, the sectarian fires were stoked. And we are still paying the price today.

That same month, Juhayman [al-Oteibi] seized the mosque in Mecca, and radio stations in Iran called for the Shia of Saudi Arabia to rise up against the state here. You weren't in government at that time.

I was a student.

You were a student. Do you remember it?

Yes.

What was your reaction then?

It's not their business to interfere in our affairs. The Saudis who are Shia are Saudi citizens; they belong to the Saudi state. Their loyalty is to the Saudi state. And Iran or any or nobody else either has the right to interfere. We don't go and try to provoke minorities in Iran. We don't go and try to provoke the Sunnis in Iran into taking up arms against the Iranian state.

You say that the Iranian Constitution calls on Iran to export the revolution and to interfere in the affairs of others. Where does it say that exactly?

Between the revolution and Khomeini's will, the principle of exporting the revolution is enshrined. Iran set up Hezbollah, the first sectarian-based terrorist group in Lebanon and proceeded to use Hezbollah to dominate Lebanese politics.

They tried to interfere in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait, in Bahrain in order to provoke the Shia minorities into rebelling against their states. The Iranian Constitution calls for protection order of what they call “the dispossessed,” which is the Shia.

Yeah, but they don’t just protect the dispossessed Shia. They also intervene where they think necessary to aid Sunnis, Sunni Palestinians of Hamas, for example, or Sunni Kurds in Iraq or Bosnian Sunnis, or even Armenian Christians.

I don’t know that that is correct. Their support for Hamas is to undercut the Palestinian authority. Their support for the Kurds in Iraq under Saddam Hussein was to undercut the Iraqi state. In Bosnia, they talked more than they provided support. Most of the support came from Arab countries.

Right. But they still are supporting Sunni movements, regardless of what the aims of those movements are. I mean, they make this argument over and over again, that “Look, we’re not sectarian, as you say. We are interested in coming to the assistance of the oppressed.”

I think that this is a misnomer. They’re intervening, or providing support, as you call it, in order to cause mischief. They harbor leadership from Al Qaeda. When the U.S. launched its war against Afghanistan in 2001, the virtual board of directors of Al Qaeda fled from Afghanistan to Iran. They’re all Sunni. And they’re a terrorist organization, including Osama bin Laden’s son; including Saif al-Adel, the chief of operations for Al Qaeda; including the chief propagandist for Al Qaeda.

So how is that sectarian?

I’m saying that they use these people in order to cause problems, problems in Sunni countries. So they use Sunnis in order to do this. This is sectarianism. The end result is sectarianism. The fact that they have Al Qaeda’s people in Iran is providing shelter and harbor for terrorists.

The order to blow up three housing compounds in Riyadh in 2003 was made by Saif al-Adel while he was in Iran. We have the conversation on tape. Why would Iran do this? In order to cause problems in Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia is a Sunni country. Isn’t that sectarianism?

So they’re simply exploiting Sunnis where they can to put pressure on Sunni governments?

Correct.

Why would they want to do that?

You should ask them that question. Their objective is to export the revolution. If you want to export the revolution, you have to weaken your opponents or your perceived opponents, so they use underhanded tactics. They use terrorism in order to do this. They try to recruit people from within those countries to rise up against their states.

I mean, they were doing a lot of this while you were supplying money to their enemy, Saddam Hussein. You decided to back Saddam Hussein when he invaded Iran.

Yes. We supported Saddam Hussein, because Saddam Hussein was an ally. It was a war between Iran and Iraq. Iraq is an Arab country. We had different agreements within the Arab

League, and so we supported Iraq. Iran at the time publicly called for the overthrow of the Saudi government.

Right. But your involvement with Saddam, who was a dictator — he wasn't a democratically, legitimately supported leader of Iraq — you decided to support him in his intervention. So how is that different than their interventions in other countries?

We also mobilized more than 30 countries to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. And we worked with the international community to impose no-fly zones in the southern part and northern part of Iraq, because Saddam Hussein became a threat, so we did what we thought was in our best interest.

But to an outsider looking at this, to be fair, they see interventions all over the place. They see your intervention with Saddam Hussein into the affairs of Iran. They see your intervention in Yemen. You point to their support for Hezbollah and Lebanon. To an outsider looking at this, how do they differentiate between your interventions and their interventions?

We have not attacked any Iranian embassies. We have not assassinated any Iranian diplomats. We have not planted terrorist cells in Iran. We have not tried to engage in sabotage in Iran, whereas they have done this to us consistently over the past 35 years.

They're a revolutionary state. Do you feel that you understand their thinking about how they maintain their revolution? They only have one real ally in the region, maybe two.

The reason the world is lined up against them is because of their behavior. Iran is the chief sponsor of terrorism in the world. Iran has total disregard for international law and fundamental principles of international relations, such as good neighborliness and noninterference in the affairs of others.

Iran has committed acts that no other country would do, and as a consequence, Iran has been put under sanctions — sanctions because of its support for terrorism, sanctions because of its violations of ballistic missile accords, sanctions because of human rights, and sanctions in general. So the world cannot be wrong and Iran is right. This is not Saudi Arabia that's speaking. The sanctions were imposed on Iran by the European Union, by the United States, by the United Nations.

But from their point of view, you were allied with the shah of Iran. You were allied with the United States through this and continued to be through this period where the United States was meddling in their internal politics, where the CIA overthrew a legitimately elected government in Iran. You allied yourself with Saddam Hussein, who was himself an abuser of human rights.

The problem that the Iranians have are twofold. One is they have to decide if they're a revolution or a nation-state. Revolutions are emotional and irrational. Nation-states are rational actors that you can deal with and reach agreements with. I don't know that that decision has been made yet.

The second thing that the Iranians need to come to grips with is, history is history. What's past is past. You're judged looking forward. If Japan maintained a grudge against the U.S. because U.S. dropped a nuclear bomb on it, would Japan become an ally? If Germany held a grudge

against the allied countries because of World War II, would Germany be an integral part of the Western alliance? Of course not. So what we're saying is, the Iran-Iraq War happened, and it was a tragedy for both Iraq and Iran.

Was it a mistake for you to side with Saddam?

I can't say it's a mistake or not, because the decision that was made at the time was viewed as the most rational decision. But the war is over. It came to an end in 1989, and life goes on. And so you judge countries by their behavior today.

What do we see? The Iranians keep saying, "We want to look forward, not past." Great. Let them act on it. But what do we do with the present? What do we do about Iran's meddling in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan? What do we do about its support for terrorism? What do we do about its violations of the ballistic missile accords? What do we do about its violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216 with regards to an arms embargo to Yemen?

Those are things that the Iranians have to abide by if they want people to deal with them as a normal country. We have tried, since the Iranian revolution to build bridges to Iran. They violated the Hajj in the mid-80s. They violated our airspace; we shot down their aircraft. They continue to try to incite our Shia minority. They have planted terrorism cells in Saudi Arabia. They have assassinated our diplomats, blown up or attacked our embassies.

Yet we keep trying to work things out with them. And for 35 years — actually 38 years now — we have tried to extend a hand of friendship to Iran. And in exchange, we get death and destruction. So now the Iranians have to make a decision. If they really want to have better ties with people, they need to change the way they conduct business.

I want to come back to some of that. But I want to pick up a thread that we dropped earlier, and that was the reaction after Juhayman seized the mosque in Mecca after the revolution. You talked about a Sunni counterreaction that has contributed to the crisis that you're in today. Can you talk about what you meant by that?

What you had is you had passions that were inflamed because of the provocations from Iran, and that led to increased, more conservativeness and more radicalization among Sunnis. And as a consequence, the tensions built up. But there's a cause and an effect. The cause was the Iranian revolution and the policies that Iran adopted after the revolution. The effect was more extremism on the Sunni side.

But you say provocations. I mean, initially that revolution was celebrated on the Arab street, even here in Saudi Arabia. Before it was identified as a Shia revolution, as you've called it, it was celebrated as a show of force by Islam. It was an Islamic revolution.

I don't know that it was celebrated in Saudi Arabia at the time. We saw the events that happened in Iran. The Iranian people decide what they want for themselves and for their future. But when the Iranian state that emerged after the revolution calls for the overthrow of our government, that is unacceptable.

The Iranians look at you, and they say, "You've been busy supporting and exporting extremism." What's your response to that?

Nonsense. The Iranians are the ones who are exporting terrorism. They're the ones who are stoking the fires of sectarianism. They're the ones who are violating international laws and norms and acceptable behavior. And they are the ones who have been on an aggressive path since 1979.

I'm not denying that that may be true of the Iranians, but you alluded earlier to after the Iranian revolution, there was a counterreaction, and it led to extremism, and it led—

And we're paying the price for it. Al Qaeda's attacking us. Daesh is attacking us.

But were these movements in part spawned by religious teachings from your mosques and schools?

We're doing our best to try to curtail and push back against the extremism, because we're suffering from it. We're doing our best in order to insulate our youth from extremism thoughts and ideas that could lead somebody to become violent, extremist or a terrorist.

But you wouldn't have to do that if you didn't have a problem here. The purpose of this conversation and all my conversations is to understand why we've gotten to the point we're at. Why was it that this extremism came from your schools and from your mosques?

It was the provocation of the Iranian revolution created a reaction in the Sunni world that then translated into extremism and violence on our streets.

So you blame the Iranians?

In part, yes. And in part I blame ourselves also in hindsight, because it — are there things that we could have done? Probably. But at the time that this was, that all these forces were being unleashed, you deal with them at the time.

Thirty years later, you can go back and say, "Could things have been done differently?" Of course.

That's an important reflection on your part, I think. I think a lot of Americans feel that they never hear that from the Saudis.

But that's the reality. That's the nature of life. You learn as you go. You make decisions based on what you think is the best scenario. And the years go by, and you can have another look at it and decide that maybe things could have been done differently.

Are you doing enough now fast enough?

We're doing everything we can in order to fight the terrorists, those who finance them and those who justify their actions. We're doing our best in order to look at every aspect of our society, from education, from charities, from banks, financial regulations. We are doing our best in order to train and equip our security forces to be able to deal effectively with the terrorists.

And I think since the terrorist attacks in Riyadh, we have made great strides in this area. And I believe we have been very effective at fighting the terrorists, terror financing, and extremism. And there is still a lot more that we can do and will do.

Well, that's my next question. You've fired thousands of imams for preaching extremist views. You've revised textbooks. You've clamped down on money that has gone from Saudi citizens to support jihadi groups in Syria or elsewhere. But how much of a problem remains?

If you have one dollar that goes to support extremism or terrorism, that's a problem.

That's not a very big problem. I'm interested in how big the problem really is.

Yeah, it's substantially less than it was before. I can't tell you that it's completely stopped, because we don't know. Sometimes people transfer money from Saudi Arabia to the U.S., from the U.S. to France, from France to Greece. They pick it up in cash, and they give it to someone.

So we have called for more effective international cooperation in terms of the financing, in order to make sure that we have an audit trail. And we believe that the world has come a long way in the past 10 years in this area. Is it perfect? No. I don't think so. I can't tell you that it's perfect, but is it effective? Yes. Are the systems that we have adopted among the most effective in the world? I have no doubt they are.

You say that this was a counterreaction to the revolution in Tehran, but it emanated from Saudi Arabia. It didn't emanate from Oman or from Jordan or Lebanon in the same way that this extremism emanated from here. You had terrorist leaders like [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from Jordan. You had other examples. But generally, what is it about Saudi Arabia?

It's not about Saudi Arabia. The extremism and the violent extremism came from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood morphed into Takfir and Hijra, which then begot us Al Qaeda. And Takfir —

So Egypt and Saudi Arabia?

And other places in the Muslim world. You have in Pakistan. You have in North Africa.

So somebody's going to say watching this, and they say, "So what's wrong with Islam?"

What's wrong with Christianity? Don't you have the KKK? What's wrong with Judaism? Don't you have settlers who burn a 1-year-old baby? What's wrong with Buddhists who in Myanmar and the Rohingyas? What's wrong with Hindu extremists who attack mosques and kill Muslims? Perverts and criminals and psychopaths unfortunately exist in every religion.

There's no white supremacist organization, for example, that even comes close to doing the damage that Al Qaeda has done, or ISIS.

Because they are hugely the terrorist organizations that have been able to attract a large following and were able to commit atrocities. But if you go back in history, go back centuries and look at what happened in Europe: the pogroms in Eastern Europe, the Pale of Settlements. Look at the Crusades. Before they came to Jerusalem, how many pogroms and how many massacres did they commit?

This is a moment in history where people are trying to hijack the Islamic faith, and this is leading to a reaction among Muslims to disassociate them from our faith and to reclaim our

faith and to fight them, because at the end of the day, the victims of this extremism and terrorism are Muslim, more so than other nationalities or religions.

You still have clerics that preach hatred for those who are not Sunnis or Wahhabis.

We are working on this issue, and we are working on educating people, and we are working on promoting tolerance. We have established a national dialogue that brings in different aspects of our society to discuss different issues, whether it's extremism, whether it's terrorism, whether it's the role of women, whether it's political participation, whether it's economic reform, so that the whole country is engaged in this discussion in order to minimize the impact of intolerance and extremism.

We have launched an interfaith dialogue in Saudi Arabia that brought in all sects of the Islamic faith in a conference in Mecca in order to say: "Religion is universal. The Islamic faith is universal. The principles are the same, so we need to find a way to live with each other." This dialogue was then taken to Madrid, where we brought in representatives of all the faiths — Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam and sects from within those religions — in order to affirm the our common humanity, in order to show people that the values of religion are the same.

It's about peace and mercy and compassion and love and tolerance. It's not about killing people. No religion justifies the killing of the innocent. None. In the Islamic faith, in the Quran, it's revealed that "He who saves an innocent soul is as if he saved all of humanity, and he who kills an innocent soul is as if he killed all of humanity." This is compassion. This is mercy.

You mention a conference, so I want to mention another conference and give you a chance to respond. In 2016, 200 clerics gathered in Grozny, in Chechnya, the capital, and they denounced Wahhabism. They were led by the Grand Sheikh [Ahmed al-] Tayeb of Al-Azhar University in Cairo. They called Wahhabism "a dangerous deformation of Islam."

I believe the conference you're talking about was politicized. The reference you talk about was put in the final communiqué. The head of the Al-Azhar disassociated himself from it.

Is that right?

Look it up. The other clerics disassociated themselves from it, and we're puzzled that people would put this in there. Let's talk about what you call Wahhabism. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a preacher who lived in this region almost 300 years ago. He's part of the Hanbali school, one of the four Sunni schools in Islam. If he was preaching intolerance and unacceptance and violence, why did it take 270 years before you saw the first Saudi terrorist?

But it didn't exactly. I mean, globalization contributed to that. But in fact, you destroyed shrines; you destroyed churches; you exiled minorities. Wahhabism was intolerant of what was, what they called "nonbelievers," and that included Shia. Shia had a lesser status than Christians or Jews.

Yeah, I don't believe that's the case. We have minorities, sects in various parts of Saudi Arabia. They've been here since the advent of Islam. If the point you made about intolerance and killing people and banning people was the case, why would they still be here?

Why would those minorities still be here?

Yes.

You have no Shia shrines in the country.

We have Shia mosques in the Eastern province.

You have mosques where Shia can go worship?

Yes.

You have no Shia shrines. They've all been destroyed.

We don't have Sunni shrines either.

No, but you don't believe in shrines.

Sunni or Shia. We have—

Right, but there were structures that were destroyed and churches that were destroyed.

I don't know about the churches, but the structures, there's nothing holy about them.

But that's a form of intolerance.

Why do you think so?

Well, if somebody has something that they revere and I decide that it doesn't conform to my belief and I destroy it, I'm taking something away from that community.

Yeah, but I don't think that they were as you describe them. They were maybe historic buildings or old buildings that were demolished in order to expand. Yes. And there's an argument in our country about should some of these old structures have been preserved and built around it, or should they be demolished and you start from scratch?

I have just a couple more questions on this point. [The Saudi cleric] Muhammad al-Arifi, he has said in his sermons that "Shia are nonbelievers."

I am not aware of this, but I'm not—

It's in the press.

You cannot call people unbelievers. Anybody who believes in God is a believer.

So is he punished for this?

I'm the foreign minister. Ask me about foreign policy. This is not my purview.

Well, I'm in line to interview the minister of Islamic affairs. I hope I can do that.

Good.

But, for instance, when the grand mufti declares that the Majus, or the Zoroastrians, and by that he's talking about "Iranian Shia are not Muslims," that's a foreign policy issue. That's a provocation of your neighbor. So that does fall under your portfolio.

Not really, no.

No? But does it bother you that he would say that?

I haven't seen the this quote.

But that's been quoted everywhere.

But the Iranians have called us all sorts of things.

That doesn't justify?

Of course it doesn't. But I'm just saying, it's on both sides.

[I'm talking to the Iranians](#), and I'm bringing those things up. I mean, there's a lot of insulting going back and forth. When they attack your Wahhabism, and your grand mufti, your highest authority, attacks them as not being Muslims, I would think that somebody would want to get on the phone to the grand mufti and say, "What's going on?"

Again, like I said, this is not my purview, so this is the responsibility of other officials.

The Iranians, many of them that I talk to feel genuinely afraid of Saudi Arabia, and you in turn feel very much worried about what they're doing in all countries around your neighborhood. One thing that particularly worries them is the large arms sales that have been made to Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. What are these arms for?

It's to defend ourselves. We have always said that there are two things we don't negotiate over: our faith and our security. We want to make sure that we have the best, most sophisticated weapons in order to defend our country and our people from any hostile action.

Are they interfering with Saudi Arabia itself? Are they threatening Saudi Arabia itself?

We live in a neighborhood that is very unstable, and we have had over the years, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990; the Iranians are making threatening moves in the Gulf. Are we supposed to sit there without any defenses? Of course not.

Do you believe they have designs on Saudi Arabia itself?

I hope not. But from their actions and from their attempts to destabilize and their attempts to cause mischief, that may not be the case.

To what degree do you believe that the American invasion of Iraq contributed to sectarianism in the region?

I think the sectarianism in the region was already there. I think the Iranian interference in Iraq contributed to sectarianism in Iraq.

And that could have only happened with the U.S. deposing Saddam?

By marginalizing the Sunnis in Iraq, I think the heavy-handedness of Iran's involvement in Iraq also contributed to this. So it's not — I wouldn't say the U.S. invasion. I think it was already there.

But it pulled out the stop. I mean, Saddam Hussein served as a kind of dam or bulwark against any kind of Shia ambitions in Iraq.

Could things have been done differently? Yes.

How would you have liked to have had them done differently?

Keep the Iraqi military. Don't dismantle the Iraqi state. Make sure everybody is included in a new government, and make sure that you maintain the unity of Iraq. I think that could have been one option, but it wasn't. This wasn't done.

You were in Washington at really the peak of the sectarian war, after the destruction of the shrine in Samarra in 2006. What were you telling the Americans at that time that you would like to see them do differently?

To work with the Iraqi government to be more inclusive; to work with the Iraqi government to abandon some of the measures that [the] Iraqi government took that marginalized the Sunni community, and to a lesser extent the Kurdish community; to work with the Iraqi government to persuade them that they need to be more inclusive. That was the advice that we were giving.

You were giving this advice to the State Department?

And the White House.

To the White House, to [Secretary of State] Hillary Clinton and to Bush and then Obama.

Correct.

What did they say?

They understood. I believe they were trying to work in that direction.

They were supporting [Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-]Maliki.

We warned about the policies that Maliki was pursuing at the time. We warned that they would lead to more sectarianism and more divisions in Iraq.

And at the same time, didn't you see support coming from Saudi citizens toward the Sunnis who were being marginalized and disenfranchised by the Maliki regime?

We didn't see it, because at that point we were in control of the finances. But what we did see is we saw Saudi citizens going to fight in Iraq.

You had clerics that were calling upon them to go and take up arms?

And restart them.

Where you could?

Yes.

But continuing, I mean, Muhammad Al-Arifi has continued post-2011, -'12, -'13 calling for young men in Saudi Arabia to go fight in Syria.

Yeah, we have criminalized going into combat zones of any of our citizens, so it's a crime for a Saudi to go to Syria or to Iraq or to any place where there's combat. And when they come back, they're punished.

I went and I visited last year in 2016, I visited one of your prisons and talked to young men who had heard sermons from your mosques or seen YouTube videos inspiring them because of [Bashar al-]Assad's atrocities, him being the greatest recruiter for all of these guys, but seeing sermons being made in your mosques, inspiring them to go join jihadi groups in Syria.

That's why we took a very firm position with regards to the preaching in our mosques, and that's why many imams were dismissed.

What happens to those imams once they're dismissed?

You should ask the Ministry of Islamic Affairs that.

I mean, it seems you've still got a problem if you have people out there with these beliefs.

No, we are taking the ideological battle not only in the mosques or the schools or the media. We're also taking it to social media and now the Internet.

What's really hard for me to get my head around listening to you — and I think this is true of Americans in general — is they're ready to accept that you've made steps. But people still come up with texts from your schools, and people still come up with problems. And they just wonder where does this end, you know?

This is a work in progress. It never ends. You have to keep at it and keep at it and keep at it. You can never say, "I'm done." This goes on. And sometimes the issue of textbooks is people will pull up a textbook from several years ago and say, "Look, it's in the textbooks." The review of the textbooks is ongoing, and changes are made constantly. It's not a situation where you say, "We're done."

How did you react when you learned that when ISIS took Raqqa they downloaded PDFs of your textbooks to teach their children Islam?

ISIS is not a state, nor is it Islamic.

But they chose to use your texts. They downloaded PDFs that were posted online from the Ministry of Education, downloaded those texts and used them.

You should ask them. I mean, when you have something that's public, everybody can use them.

I don't think I can ask ISIS why they made that choice.

Yeah, no. I mean, these are Islamic textbooks, and they were available online. And I guess they downloaded them. It's not a flattering thing to do, but I don't know why they did it.

You were opposed to the nuclear deal.

We're not opposed to it.

Not now, but you were. When you learned about it, you were upset. Talks had been going on secretly behind your back in Oman. Put me there.

We expressed our concerns to the U.S. and to the other countries. Our concern was, we wanted something that prevents Iran from acquiring nuclear capability, that had a serious snap back provisions for sanctions should Iran violate those agreements. And we were concerned about what is being done about Iran's nefarious activities in the region. Those were our concerns.

But that third element was taken off — that element was taken off the table.

It was never on the table in the talks, yes—

It was never on the table.

Yes, and so our concern was, what is being done about Iran's nefarious activities in the region?

And what did the Americans tell you?

"We are dealing with this. This is only strictly the nuclear talks." The view in the U.S. was that "We deal with this separately." We deal with this between the U.S. and the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] countries. And if you recall, the Camp David summit that was held in Washington set up the blueprint for where we intensified cooperation, how we use that to deter Iran from engaging in nefarious activities, building up the capabilities and capacities of the Gulf countries, building effective missile defense system in the region, and a number of other items that the two parties discussed. And this part was supposed to deal with containing and preventing Iran from engaging in nefarious activities in the region.

And in return they, President Obama promised you more weapons.

We had weapons from the U.S. before the deal. And we were, I believe, the largest purchaser of U.S. defense equipment and have been for many years. If not the largest, then it's number two. But certainly before the nuclear deal was done, we had signed a \$30 billion deal for F-15SAs. We have we signed a \$15 billion project for Apache helicopters. We had negotiations for a \$10 or \$15 billion contract involving the Saudi navy. We had other contracts with the U.S. before the deal.

I met with Prince Mohammad bin Salman the other night, and he told me, quote: "There's no rivalry with Iran. This is Iranian propaganda. They are not worthy of our attention, and not even number 20 on our list of concerns." You buy that?

Of course. We don't—

Of course, because it's from...

No, what we have with Iran is, when you see rivalry as competition, we're not competing with Iran. We don't want to compete with Iran. We just—

You're fighting a war against them in in Yemen.

We're not fighting a war against them in Yemen. We want them to get off our case. That's what we want. We have our focus on our domestic development, improving the livelihood of our people, improving our economy, generating jobs, unleashing the potential of our youth.

But you're fighting wars with them.

We're not fighting wars with them. They're fighting wars with everybody else.

No, but you're arrayed against them. You're part of the coalition that's up against them in Syria. You're bombing their proxy force in Yemen. How can you say your “not fighting wars with them”?

The war in Yemen is not a war that we chose. It's not a war that we wanted. The Yemenese, we had worked with our Gulf partners to come with a transition from President [Ali Abdullah] Saleh to a new government, the GCC initiative. The Yemeni people picked up after that when the transition happened, established a national dialogue where all elements of Yemeni society — conservative, liberal, women, tribal, religious — got together and came up with a vision for what they want the Yemeni state to look like going forward. They then were in the process of writing a constitution, and the Houthis staged their coup, took over the government by force, imprisoned the president in Sanaa in his house. He was able to escape and go to Aden. They pursued him. They occupied the whole country. He asked for help and we responded.

A civil war broke out.

It's not a civil war. It was a coup.

Why did you feel that you needed to intervene militarily?

It was us and 10 other countries.

Why did you feel that you had to join that coalition?

Because two reasons.

I mean, you're leading that coalition.

The legitimate president asked for assistance, and our support for him was based on [Article 51 of the U.N. Charter](#) as well as [U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216](#).

How is that different than Assad asking for assistance from Iran and them getting involved?

Well, let me finish on the Yemen part.

OK.

Yemen was taken over by a militia allied with Iran and Hezbollah that is now in possession of ballistic missiles and an air force. The Iranians have no business in Yemen. I don't recall in the past 2,000 years reading about Iran building one building in Yemen, whereas Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries have been by far the biggest providers of economic assistance and developmental assistance to Yemen for the past 50 years.

You seem like you're bogged down in Yemen at this point.

I don't think so. We're not bogged down. We're making progress. The U.S. has been fighting in Afghanistan for 10 years. You've been fighting in Iraq for how many years? The coalition against ISIS in Syria has been conducting operations for how many years? Longer than our war in Yemen.

You said the other day that you've exhausted your efforts to reach an accord with your rival Iran through dialogue; that at this point, it requires action on their part. What are you asking them? What are you expecting them to do?

To conduct themselves according to international norms and respect international law and fundamental principles of international relations, good neighborliness and noninterference in the affairs of others. Look, Iran is a neighboring country. Iran has a great civilization thousands of years old. Whether we like it or not, we share the Gulf, and we will be neighbors for many, many years.

So it is our desire to have the best relations with Iran, so we can trade, so we can have people visiting, so we can have stability and peace and security. But it takes two to achieve this. It becomes very difficult if not impossible to do so if the Iranians keep engaging in this aggressive behavior. I wish that Iran can focus on improving the lot of its people, on providing better development programs domestically, on creating jobs for its people. I wish. But instead, they're using their resources to try to dominate the region, and that is something that the countries in the region cannot accept.

They say that their stance is defensive: They were meddled with by the Americans in the '50s; they were attacked by Saddam Hussein with your support and the American support in the '80s. They fear Israel; they take up a presence in Lebanon to prevent Israel from advancing. They feel like they're isolated; they only have a couple of allies in the entire region. Their posture, they say, they believe, is defensive.

I think that this is an incorrect reading of the situation.

In your most charitable moments in your thinking about this rival, what do you think is their rationale for why they do what they do?

You should ask them.

No, but I'm asking you what you think.

My sense is that it's ideological; that Iran still thinks of itself as a revolution; that they have a certain objective that they want to pursue. And the reality is, the revolution occurred in 1979. That's 38 years ago. It's over. This is it, what we see in Iran.

My advice is, they should focus on nation building, focus on improving the lives of their people, focus on being good neighbors, focus on trade and commerce rather than focusing on trying to dominate the region, trying to re-establish a Persian empire.