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## Saudi Arabia's Reputation From The Point Of View Of The American People In The United States Compared To That Of The Islamic Republic Of Iran And Turkey

Hamed Ateeq Alghamdi

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SAUDI ARABIA'S REPUTATION FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE AMERICAN  
PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES COMPARED TO THAT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC  
OF IRAN AND TURKEY.

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A Doctoral Dissertation  
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of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor

of Philosophy

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To my family, friends,  
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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The reputation of a country has a significant influence on competitiveness, public diplomacy, international perception, and international relations. The aim of this research was to investigate Saudi Arabia's reputation from the point of view of the American people in The United States, compared with American perception of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. **Method:** A sample of 378 participants completed the 33-item questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics utilizing SPSS Version 26 were used to analyze the data. **Results:** Repeated measures ANOVA and paired t-tests revealed significant differences in the perception of Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as compared to Iran. The F test suggested the difference between means of the three groups of ratings was significant ( $F(1,370) = 399.885, p=.000$ ). Post-hoc paired t-tests revealed a similar pattern. Results found that, Saudi Arabia is the most well-known among Americans, with only 9.7% showing a lack of knowledge of the country, while 90.3% indicating that they have a certain position regarding the nation. Subsequently, Turkey follows with 84.9% popularity level, and Iran being the least popular, with 83.08% having definite responses regarding the country. Americans' overall view of other nations is determined by political leadership, more than culture and military power. Comparing cultural, political leadership and military factors across Saudi Arabia, the ANOVA and paired t-tests supported these findings. Most negative information regarding the three countries reaches Americans through multiple sources of media, more so from electronic media followed by social media). The F-ratio was statistically significant ( $F(1, 368) = 787.284, p=.000$ ) for electronic media. Compared to the other two countries, Saudi Arabia has the highest level of positive perception in the eyes of the Americans.). The F-ratio was significant ( $F(1, 370) = 361.673, p=.000$ ). The post-hoc paired samples t-test indicated t-values were significant for Iran and Turkey and Iran and Saudi Arabia.

**Conclusion:** This study provides information about the American people's perceptions and how they differ among countries. The findings may serve as a guide for foreign policy.

*Keywords: Reputation, Facebook, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Information-seeking theory, The knowledge formation theory.*





# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

The reputation of a country has grown in importance given its influence on competitiveness, public diplomacy, international perception, and international relations (Charles & Cul, 2012; Saliu, 2017; Szwajca, 2017). A nation's reputation refers to the total judgements of the image of a foreign country. Given the high importance of this image, countries undertake measures to market themselves to their foreign counterparts in what is referred to as national branding (Charles & Cul, 2012). In particular, countries are focused on portraying a positive image to achieve their foreign policies. The reputation of a country as defined by another is determined through a complex, long-term process that involves interactive communication of multiple stakeholders. Although a country may engage in national branding to improve its reputation, other factors may still lead to a negative reputation (Saliu, 2017). While the reputation of a country is critical to its competitiveness and relations with other nations, it is influenced by multiple factors, some of which are not under its influence.

How people think of other countries is influenced by a wide range of factors, including personal experience, mass media, online interactions, and demographic factors. Personal experience is perhaps the most powerful determinant of a country's perception. Travelling to a country provides one with first-hand experience and more information about a country. However, most people cannot afford to travel to most countries, which suggests that most people lack this experience when forming opinions about another country. While most people lack first-hand experience about foreign countries, almost all are exposed to information on news media about these countries. The dissemination of information about these countries by news media exposes

people to indirect experience. As a result, it is one of the most important determinants of the sense of reputation formed by people about other countries. The mediated experience leads to the formation of perception about other countries (Seo, 2013). First-hand experience and news media are the leading factors that influence people's perception of other countries. In both cases, the perception formed can either be positive or negative.

Apart from personal experience and mass media, people's perception of other countries may be as a result of online interactions with people of other countries and information seeking on the internet. Personal contact with people of other countries has been established to have a significant impact in the formation of positive perceptions of those countries. (Seo, 2013). The contacts in foreign lands help individuals to understand the foreign countries based on their experiences. Online platforms also provide an avenue for people to get information about other countries and events occurring there (Luke, 2001; Seo, 2013). The information obtained also shapes perceptions about these countries (Seo, 2013). Demographic variables tend to play a role in the influence of each factor on the perception of other countries (Seo, 2013). Notably, people with high education levels and income have increased access of computing devices, more online relations, and higher likelihood of travelling to other countries (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Katy & Ronald, 2013). Age is also positively related to first-hand experience in other countries but negatively related to access to digital media (Seo, 2013).

In the U.S, mass media is the major source of news about other countries for majority of the citizens (Hunt, 2009). Individuals also rely on information provided by the government about other countries to form perceptions about other countries (Hunt, 2009). Outside the information provided by mass media, U.S citizens remain relatively uninformed regarding of affairs happening outside the U.S borders (Younos, 2008). In majority of the case, the U.S people perceives other

countries as dangerous and turbulent (Ridout et al, 2008). The focus on negative news pieces has led to the advancement of this notion (Ridout et al, 2008). The Middle East is one of the regions that is perceived negatively by U.S citizens. Americans associate countries in the region with terrorism and increased danger (Davis, 2007). Countries in Eastern Europe and Western Asia such as Turkey are also perceived negatively by more people than those that perceive them positively (Yegin & Ersoy, 2013). However, there are no studies that have investigated the differences in Americans' perception of different countries in the Middle East and Turkey.

### **Problem Statement**

U.S citizens form opinions about other countries based primarily on information obtained from mass media and government sources. However, the media has been accused of portraying other countries negatively. Besides, interest groups often use news media to influence the public about different issues with the aim of achieving a preconceived outcome (Neack, 2003). Considering that public opinion in democracies such as the U.S plays a significant role in foreign policy formulation (Stuart, 2003), there is a need to investigate the perception of the American public regarding different countries and factors that affect this perception. The lack of studies comparing the difference in the perception of the American public of countries within the same region and in other regions presents a gap in literature worth investigation.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The strong relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America and the influence of the American citizen in shaping American foreign policy is an important reason to know the American peoples' impression and knowledge of Saudi Arabia compared to Iran and Turkey and what are the factors that shape their impression (Gumley, 2011). The proposed study seeks to investigate Saudi Arabia's reputation from the point of view of the American people in The United States, compared to that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey, further what role might the American media play in shaping this perception. This study will provide information about American peoples' perceptions of other countries and how they differ among countries. The findings will help Saudi Arabia to determine whether these perceptions are helpful in acting as a guide to their foreign policy.

## **Research Questions**

In the bid to achieve the above aims and objectives, the study was premised on the following research questions:

**RQ 1:** How well do Americans know other countries?

**RQ 2:** What are the most significant factors that determine Americans' overall view of other countries?

**RQ 3:** What are the main sources of information that American people use to judge the reputation of other countries?

**RQ 4:** What are Americans' perceptions of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey? Are there any differences in the perception of these countries?

## **Chapter Summary**

The relationship between the Middle East world and Americans has, for a long time, been relatively unfriendly. The study sought to understand the level at which Americans understand these countries, which media they get information from, and their general perception of Saudi Arabia, in comparison to Iran and Turkey. This chapter has provided the foundation of the study by identifying the background of the study, research problems, aims, and questions. The next chapter will be the Literature Review in which the researcher will provide analysis of previous related studies. By so doing, the researcher will identify the existing study gaps while also providing the conceptual or theoretical framework on which the study is premised.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the literature related to the research topic will be reviewed to appraise what is currently known. The review of the literature will provide the current knowledge about the perception of the American people towards other countries. This review will lead to the identification of the existing gaps in literature, which have informed the proposed research. The literature review will help to prevent the duplication of research and provide insight into how the proposed research will complement the existing literature. The section is divided into four main subsections based on the prevalent themes in the current literature.

#### **Americans' Knowledge of the Outside World**

Americans have been reported as being inexperienced of foreign affairs. A study by (Bennett, et al., 1996) to determine citizens' knowledge about international issues in five developed countries - the U.S, Britain, Canada, Germany, and France - established that Americans were the least knowledgeable. The majority of the citizens are disengaged or uninformed about most international issues. Although citizens often provide responses when asked about international matters, such responses are usually guided by the framing of the question as opposed to the knowledge on the issues (Powlick & Katz, 1998). Mainstream Americans are inexperienced about the affairs of other nations and hardly take time to know more about them (Younos, 2008). However, scholars like Gumley (2011) report that the perception of Americans as inexperienced in global affairs is misleading. Although Gumley's 2011 study finds Americans to be less knowledgeable than citizens of most European nations, this author finds Americans still more knowledgeable than the global average (Gumley, 2011).

Americans' knowledge level about other countries differs across issues. Gumley (2011) found that Americans are highly knowledgeable about foreign policy issues when compared to other nations. However, their knowledge about global leaders is significantly low. On the other hand, a 2016 survey by the Council on Foreign Affairs (Richard & Gary, 2016) to determine the knowledge of college-aged students on world affairs found that they had little knowledge about the location of countries, with less than half correctly locating Iraq (49%) and Iran (45%) on a map correctly. Although 61% could correctly locate Saudi Arabia, only 31% knew the location of Israel on a map. The majority of the respondents were not knowledgeable about the major religions in select countries, states that the U.S has military agreements with nations with the largest influence in international organizations such as the UN, and U.S largest trading partners (Richard & Gary, 2016). While the level of knowledge of Americans on different world affairs varies, they appear highly unknowledgeable on a wide range of issues that can form their perception of other countries.

The little knowledge of Americans about world affairs can be attributed to myriad reasons, majority of which are related education and information exposure (Hunt, 2009). Americans' knowledge of the outside world is largely informed by the media and government (Hunt, 2009). Unfortunately, both sources provide skewed, and often misleading, information about the rest of the world (Hunt, 2009). The portrayal of the world by media and government is largely on the basis of foreign aid, promotion of human rights, advancement of free trade, and defense of democracy. This self-interested world engagement approach leads to biased reporting in favor of countries that advance these interests while disfavoring other countries (Hunt, 2009). In fact, the media has been accused of portraying the world outside the U.S as turbulent. The media focuses largely on news items that are likely to make Americans fear the rest of the world. For instance, the American media advances notions of increased terrorism in the Middle East, religious

fundamentalism in Europe, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destructions as though to portray the outside world as threat-laden (Ridout et al, 2008).

The situation is made worse by the recent trend towards an entertainment-centered, market driven media model (Curran et al., 2009). The American media market model faces a conflict in balancing between market pressures and responsible journalism. As competition intensifies, the American news organizations have been forced to provide information that is more responsive to the demands of their audience. However, the audience is disinterested in foreign affairs. As the media responds to the audience demands, news rooms are reducing the amount of information about the outside world (Curran et al., 2009). With majority of U.S citizens relying on an entertainment-centered, market-driven media for news on international affairs, there is a high likelihood of them lacking knowledge on a wide range of world affairs.

### **Americans' Perception towards Other Countries**

There is limited research assessing the perception of Americans towards individual countries. The majority of the existing research is generalized or focusing on regions, as opposed to individual states. The lack of data on Americans' perceptions of individual countries may be as a result of citizens' inability to differentiate between different nationalities and regions. For instance, Americans are unlikely to differentiate nationalities of the Middle East or countries in Africa and Asia (Davis, 2007). According to Ridout, et al. (2008), the perception formed by the general American population about other nations is negative. Majority of Americans learn about the outside world from the content reported on media. When covering other nations, the U.S news media has a tendency to paint a picture of violence and conflict by focusing on the two. For instance, there is increased emphasis on combat and violence in other nations and their consequences, which leads to their perception as dangerous places. Consequently, most consumers



of the American news media perceive the rest of the world to be worse than it actually is (Ridout et al, 2008). While there is limited research on Americans' perception towards other countries, news media is shown to play a major role in shaping it.

One of the regions where the perception of Americans has been studied is the Middle East. For a long time, Americans have held a negative perception towards the Middle East. As early as 1993, Americans associated the Middle East and Islam with unfavorable opinions. While 56% of Americans reported not having heard of anything about Islam at the time, 22% of them expressed unfavorable opinions (Davis, 2007). Those that had heard about Islam termed it antidemocratic and a threat to the U.S. The rise in the number of Americans expressing unfavorable opinions about the Middle East, Islam and Muslims rose rapidly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. Although there had been prior attacks by Islamic extremists in 1993, 1998, and 2000 targeted at the U.S, these events had not been considered meaningful in influencing the opinions of U.S citizens. After 2001 terror attacks, Middle Easterners were perceived negatively. The unfavorable perception was collective as opposed to being targeted on any particular country (Davis, 2007). Prior to the 9/11 terror attacks on the U.S, there was limited association between the Islamic world and threats to the U.S although a few people still held these views. The association of the terror attacks with Islamic ideology most probably shaped the views of Americans towards Muslims and the Middle East.

In recent years, there has been an improvement in the perception towards Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East among Americans. In 2016, 62% of Americans perceived Muslims favorably, up from 53% in 2015. Favorable attitudes towards Islam had also risen to 44% from the recorded 37% a year earlier (Telham, 2016). However, the improvement in favorable perceptions can largely be attributed to Democrats and Independents as Republicans maintained a relatively lower

level of favorable attitude towards Islam and Muslims. The percentage of Americans that felt Islam was compatible with the Western world increased from 57% in 2015 to 64% in 2016. However, only 42% of Republicans agreed with this statement when compared to 82% of Democrats and 71% of Republicans. The growth in the favorable attitude towards Muslims and the Islamic world among U.S citizens is largely attributed to the reduced association of terror activities with the Islamic ideology. Contrary to the case in the past, more American citizens are associating terror activities to extremist groups as opposed to Islam (Telham, 2016). As more Americans continue to view terrorism as a criminal act and not a religious aspect, they are perceiving Muslims, Islam, and the Middle East more favorably.

Like for other countries, there is very limited research about the perception of the American public towards Turkey. According to (Yegin & Ersoy 2013), the perception of Americans towards Turkey is largely indifferent. Americans neither describe Turkey as a close ally like Britain or an enemy like North Korea. An estimated 43% of Americans have a favorable perception towards Turkey while 46% have unfavorable perception. Most U.S citizens do not view Turkey as having a major influence on the U.S. In fact, only 18% feel that the U.S would be affected if Turkey was to pursue an independent foreign policy direction (Yegin & Ersoy, 2013). The perception of the latter as playing an insignificant role in influencing American affairs is perhaps the major reason for the indifference in public opinion.

### **Factors Influencing Americans View of Other Countries**

Americans' view of other countries is influenced by a wide range of factors, some of which are specific to those countries while others are external (Ridout et al, 2008). The main non-country-specific factor that influences them is exposure to American news media. Heavy consumers of news media are more likely to perceive threats in the rest of the world than light consumers of

news media (Ridout et al, 2008). Party affiliations also determine the perception of Americans towards other countries and their leaders. In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, Americans were divided on party lines with respect to their perceptions. While Republicans perceived Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, more favorably, Democrats held more unfavorable views than favorable ones. Consistently, many Republicans (40%) blamed Palestinian extremists as contributing the most to causing the conflict while Democrats placed majority of the blame on the Israeli occupation (Telhami, 2015).

Given the high reliance on news media for news about the outside world, the perception of U.S citizens about other countries is largely informed by media reports (Mitchell et al., 2019). For instance, their perception of countries in the Middle East appears to arise from violence events in them. In 2012, a survey by the University of Maryland and the Program on International Policy Attitudes to obtain the perception of Americans towards the Middle East showed that it had dipped significantly since the start of the Arab Spring. For instance, the percentage of Americans that perceived Libya and Egypt positively were 19% and 39%, respectively. The negative perception of the two countries was also informed by the attacks on U.S embassies in both countries during this period. Differences in culture between the U.S and Arab countries also appear to be a major contributor for the negative perception. In 2012, 47% of Americans expressed negative views about Arabs. A reported 43% of Americans also felt that differences in religion and culture were the leading causes of conflict between the U.S and the Middle East (Telhami & Kull, 2012). To further illustrate this phenomenon, the escalation of conflict between Israel and Palestine led to a large number of Americans forming perceptions about the two countries after the conflict had been reported for about a year in the news. Both countries were perceived negatively in terms of their contribution to the conflict (Telhami, 2015).

## **Influence of Public Perception of the Outside World on Foreign Policy**

Although public opinion on policy is not always informed by facts, it plays a significant role in influencing foreign policy. In the U.S, media focus on foreign policy issues generates a lot of focus from the public members, who rely on news media for such information. Politicians have been noted to pay more attention to foreign affairs that generate that generate more public opinions than others. For this reason, their prioritization of real-world events is partly dependent on the public opinion. Politicians tend to align their support of a foreign policy with public opinion, especially when they are vying for elective seats. The government also aligns its actions on matters foreign policy with public opinion. For instance, military spending is directly affected by public preference and the facts about the issue at hand (Stuart, 2003). Negative perception towards the outside world is likely to generate unfavorable opinions directed at foreign actors (Stuart, 2003) such as governments and organizations. Such opinions may lead to policymakers formulating policies that are unfavorable to the foreign actors, although these opinions may have been generated based on incomplete or inaccurate information from the news media.

Neack (2003) attributes the large influence of public opinion on foreign policy in the U.S to the nature of democratic systems. Democratic systems allowed increased public participation in the policymaking process. However, the formation of public opinions is not always rational. Often, interest groups such as non-governmental organizations and political parties influence public opinion with the aim of pushing for a preferred policy direction. These interest groups do this through the dissemination of information that is likely to shape public opinion either in favor or against a certain policy (Neack, 2003). The existence of interest groups geared towards to pushing certain policy directions suggest that public opinions on foreign affairs are not independent. The

policies that are formulated, and which are influenced by public opinion, may not reflect the best interest of those affected by them.

### **The reason for choosing Iran and Turkey for comparison with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The reason the researcher chose these countries in comparison with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is due to political conflict between these countries and Saudi Arabia in the form of the Cold War. (Modebadze, 2019). The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran has roots throughout history, and more recently the conflict has intensified with the support that the Houthis meet in Yemen from the Iranian government. (Modebadze, 2019). Saudi Arabia has been described as a supporter of terrorism, while President Trump has stated that Iran is the largest supporter of terrorism around the world, and cause of the conflict in the Middle East (Michael, 2017).

As for the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the break in the Ankara-Riyadh relationship dates back to when democratic hopes sparked by the Arab Spring in Egypt, and the Khashoggi affair. (Chico, 2018). The Turkish-Saudi conflict is manifested by Turkey's support for Qatar and the intensification of its military presence in the Arab Gulf region, as well as the support of Hamas and the support of the elected Egyptian president, Mohamed Morsi, and this enhances the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood, and these are all groups that threaten stability in the Middle East (Chico, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Various models can be used in explaining how individuals access information and how they use the same in making conclusions about different phenomena. In this regard, the study will be based on the principles of the information-seeking theory (Hydén, 2015). According to the information-seeking theory, individuals tend to search for information in both human and

technological contexts (Halder et al., 2017). A person can gain information from interacting with other people, both physically and virtually. At the same time, technological advancements have made it possible for people to access a lot of information online (Anwar & Asghar, 2016). Part of these efforts includes differentiating information based on factors such as quality and relevance (Singh et al., 2015). An understanding of how this theory can be used in analyzing the perceptions of Americans concerning other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran is crucial.

Accordingly, the theory of information-seeking will provide a baseline that can be used to determine the various ways through which Americans access information about other nations. The researcher will examine the primary channels that provide Americans with information about the beliefs, attitudes, and cultures of countries in the Middle East. This approach is meant to allow the researcher to determine the manner and extent to which physical interactions influence American perceptions of other states. Equally important, the model will enable the researcher to establish the degree to which the media, along with various other modern technologies, including social media, impact how people utilize information (Halder et al., 2017). The theory of information-seeking offers useful insights that can be used in understanding how Americans obtain information and how they use the information in making judgments about foreigners.

The study will also take into account the fundamental principles of the knowledge formation theory (Castleberry, & Nolen, 2018). In line with the model, various factors tend to influence the decision by an individual to seek knowledge (Hydén, 2015). Efforts to understand the perceptions of a person need to consider how the individual formed conclusions about the given phenomenon. Additionally, it is imperative to analyze the specific motivations that implore a person to look for information needed to create knowledge. This theory also underscores the fact that access to limited information is bound to influence the kind of knowledge that a person has

regarding a specific issue (Anwar & Asghar, 2016). Besides, in some instances, individuals end up forming inaccurate conclusions about a subject based on the kind of information that they rely on in search of knowledge. The theory offers a reliable foundation that can be used in assessing the knowledge of Americans concerning countries in the Middle East.

## **Reputation**

Scholars in international law have maintained a relentless debate regarding when, how, and whether compliance matters in international law. One of the areas of contention entails states and citizens' concerns of reputation. According to Brewster (2019), understanding why states comply with international law remains a challenging issue. The multidimensional nature of reputation makes analyzing the issue problematic. Regardless, reputation, which depicts adherence to international laws and values, plays a crucial role in the advancement of a state's position in the global arena.

Broadly, understanding reputation calls an evaluation of the "what" and for "whom" of the issue. According to Crescenzi (2017), the concept of reputation refers to the behavioral and intentional characteristics associated with international cooperation and conflicts. Brutger and Kertzer (2018) define reputation as the beliefs regarding tendencies or traits of an actor. In this case, actions that affect others' beliefs adversely would lead to a reputation cost. In most cases, the study of reputation from the first-order beliefs focuses on how the way a country judges another based on state actions. An emphasis on second-order beliefs depicts the ways through which domestic constituencies regard leaders' characteristics in another country (Dafoe & Zwetsloot, 2017; Terhalle & Depledge, 2013). From another perspective, reputation can be understood as the degree to which states cultivate their positions to preserve their international honor. Therefore,

some authors have observed credibility addiction even among states that claim or are viewed as reputable at the global level.

Conventionally, reputation has become a key dimension in understanding the actions of states. For instance, some states gain a reputation for their aggression or untrustworthiness. On the other hand, states can gain their reputation for being honorable. According to Crezcenzi (2017), some states enhance their reputation not because they intend to comply with international law but because they intend to save face. Countries could gain their reputation from a myriad of sources. For example, reputation could emerge from their interactions, contracts, behaviors, or statements aligned with the global conceptualization of international law.

From the above perspective, small and medium powers tend to focus on building their reputation by observing regulations established by the great powers. In this case, reputation could influence leaders' actions, especially during conflicts (Kelley, 2017; Renshon, Dafoe, & Huth, 2018). Indeed, Crezcenzi (2017) observes the prominence of reputation in world politics. Based on classical theories, reputation plays a role in depicting states' willingness to fight for their honor or punish other states (Crescenzi & Donahue, 2017). In this case, reputation is used as a component of deterrence and bargaining processes. For instance, a state may follow international regulations in the process of bargaining for another aspect of its domestic activities considered as non-adherent (Wohlforth et al., 2018). As such, states could consider improving their reputation to gain international benefits, for instance, aid or peace during agreements. Indeed, small states may experience an exponential multiplication of its benefits by improving their reputations.

### **Chapter Summary**

Broadly, reputation depicts adherence to international values, norms, and roles. Different perspectives have emerged to characterize the dimensions of reputation from an international



perspective. The emergent theme, in most definitions, entails the beliefs that constituents of one state hold towards another state. Reputation tends to influence politics because of the degree to which public opinion influences leaders' actions. On this note, small states tend to adhere to some of the international regulations to enhance the image they hold in other states. Based on information-seeking theory and the knowledge formation theory, it is evident that America consults various media in getting information pertaining to other country. Such information is then used to form the perception they have towards the said country.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

American public opinion on countries in the Middle East varies. Saudi Arabia is a significant ally of the United States government. The research aimed to know the reputation of Saudi Arabia among Americans in comparison to that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

#### **Research Design**

This study used the survey research design. This is a type of research that investigates phenomena at a particular point in time. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i) How well do Americans know other countries?
- ii) What are the most significant factors that determine Americans' overall view of other countries?
- iii) What are the main sources of information that American people use to judge the reputation of other countries?
- iv) What are Americans' perceptions of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey? Are there any differences in the perception of these countries?

Each of the questions incorporated in the survey must therefore seek to conceptualize each of the research questions. The main objective of the study is to ascertain the norms and perceptions of the American public towards these Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Hence, it is imperative to ascertain whether a positive relationship with these of the countries is part of the perception of the citizens towards these countries.

The first and perhaps most important endeavor of the survey was ensuring reliability in the research design and a viability of the deductions made. Hence, the survey first endeavored to

ascertain the influential social aspects within society. This was achieved by identifying the race, gender, level of education, and marriage status of each of the participants. Failure to account for these factors may bias the overall deductions made from the survey.

Questionnaires were designed to measure the perspectives of Americans towards the Countries of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. These questions include:

- 7) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of Saudi Arabia.
- 8) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 9) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name Turkey.
- 10) You usually hear positive news about Saudi Arabia.
- 11) You usually hear positive news about The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 12) You usually hear positive news about Turkey.
- 13) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.
- 14) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 15) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey
- 16) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.
- 17) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 18) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.
- 19) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.

- 20) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Republic of Iran
- 21) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.
- 22) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.
- 23) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.
- 24) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.
- 25) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.
- 26) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.
- 27) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.
- 28) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.
- 29) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.
- 30) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.
- 31) You have developed a positive overall impression of Saudi Arabia.
- 32) You have developed a positive overall impression of The Islamic Republic of Iran
- 33) You have developed a positive overall impression of Turkey.

The complete research protocol including research participant advertisement, study information given to research participants and consent waiver, full questionnaire, and link to optional sign up for financial incentive drawing are included in Appendix A.

### **Financial Incentives**

Studies face difficulties and problems. One of the difficulties encountered in some studies is the difficulty of getting a sufficient number of research participants. In order to overcome this problem, financial support of \$500 was provided by Amazon gift cards. The amount was distributed in the form of draws on ten gift cards for ten participants, \$50 each. Participants were asked to provide a valid email optionally to participate in the drawing through another website link, in order to draw the prizes prepared for this study.

### **Population and Sample**

The researcher advertised for research participants on Facebook (Vepsäläinen et al., 2017). In this study, a snowball strategy was used to reach research participants. An invitation through Facebook was sent inviting research participants and requesting that those invited and share the invitation with others (Robins, et al, 2010).

Three hundred and eighty-four people completed the survey; however, 6 respondents were removed from the sample for submitting incomplete questionnaires. Moreover, according to Mullinix et al., (2015) a sample size of 378 is large enough to provide accurate and generalizable perceptions that reflect the study population.

The sample population constituted included 62.01 percent male and 37.83 percent female. This translates to 235 male participants and 143 female participants for a total of 378 people. The average age of the participants was 30 years with participants ranging in age from 18 years to 65 years old. All members of the sample were citizens of the United States.

## **Variables**

For the particular research study, items 7 to 9 were selected for answering the first research question.

RQ1: How well do Americans know other countries?

Items 22 to 31 were analyzed for answering the second research question:

RQ2: What are the most significant factors that determine Americans' overall view of other countries?

For RQ3, items 10-21 were selected.

RQ3: What are the main sources of information that American people use to judge the reputation of other countries?

Items 31-33 were utilized for answering the final RQ.

RQ4: What are Americans' perceptions of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey? Are there any differences in the perception of these countries?

## **Reliability**

Internal consistency of scales used to measure responses for eliciting data to explore the research questions furthermore is critical. Therefore, the items for each RQ were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha values for the first three items (RQ1) was .836. For RQ2 Items, it was .865. Cronbach's alpha for the RQ3 was .882, while for the last RQ, the Cronbach's alpha value was pegged at .825. With high Cronbach alpha ratings, the items in the questionnaire were considered to be effective measures of the research questions under study. Therefore, the questionnaire was established as a reliable measure for eliciting participant ratings and offering insights into key aspects of the research questions.

## **Chapter Summery**

This study aimed to investigate Saudi Arabia's reputation from the point of view of the American people in The United States, compared to that of American perception of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. It is informed by the knowledge of the American people regarding other countries and their likelihood to perceive other countries negatively due to the reliance on mass media for news on foreign countries. In this regard, this study employed the quantitative method and survey strategy to gather the views of American people about Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, and its influence on foreign policy. The data was collected through a survey on Facebook using seven-point Likert scales.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

Gender wise, males were higher (62.01) as compared to females in number (37.83%). Most respondents were employees as opposed to retirees or self-employed. Married subjects were higher in number than divorcees or singletons.

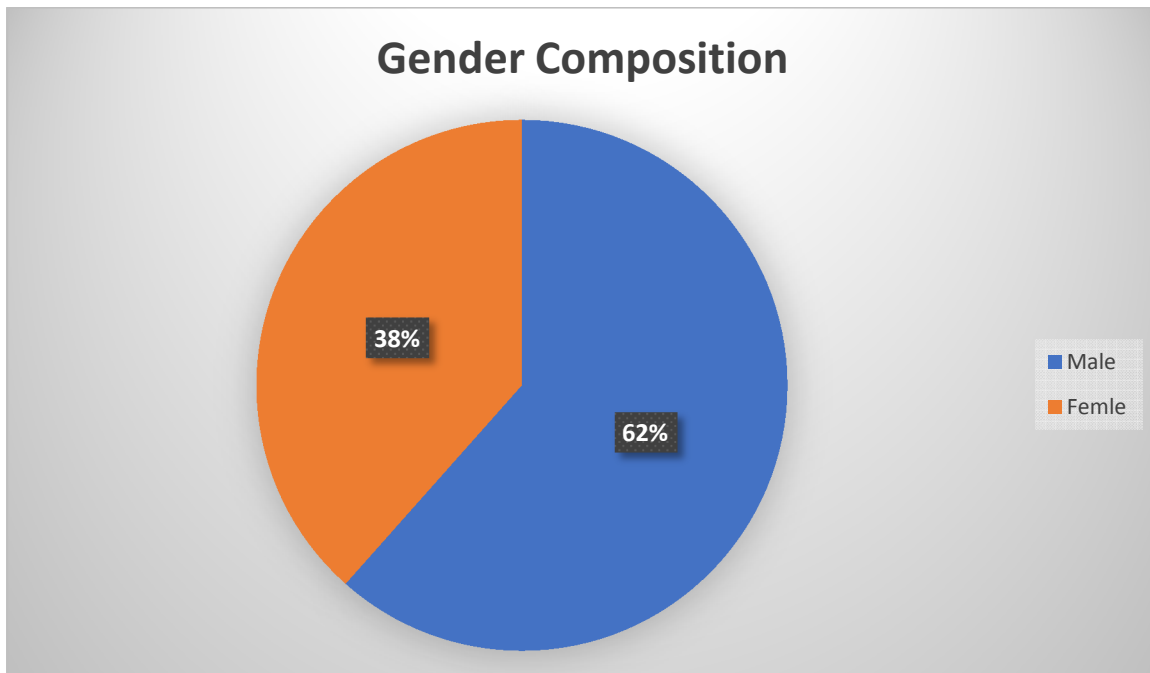


Figure 1. Gender Composition of Males and Females in the Sample



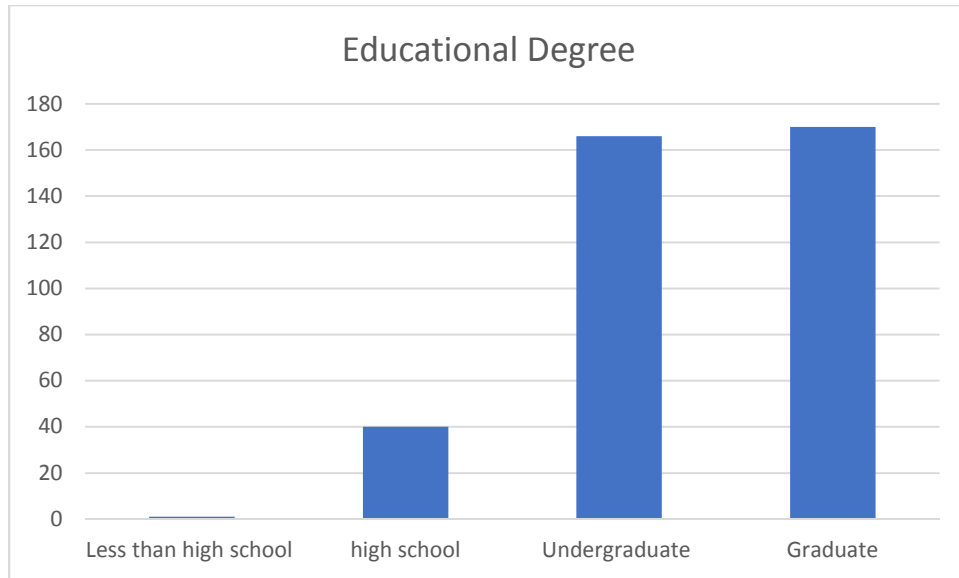


Figure 2. Educational Degree

The highest educational degree was a graduate. The composition of the sample comprised highly educated persons.

The composition of the sample was predominantly White Americans, followed by Asian-Americans, Blacks, Indian Americans and Others. Only 2 Pacific Islanders were part of the study.

### **How Well Do Americans Know Other Countries?**

RQ1: How well do Americans know other countries?

The first research question involved whether Americans know other countries well. A three-item scale was used to examine the research question and the data was collected from  $n= 378$  respondents and analyzed using SPSS Version 26 (Statistical Package for Social Science Software). The results of the descriptive analysis are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

*Perceptions of Americans Regarding Other Countries*

How Well Do Americans Know Other Countries	<i>n</i>	M	SD
You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of Saudi Arabia.	378	4.97	1.53
You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of The Islamic Republic of Iran.	378	4.39	1.86
You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name Turkey.	377	4.93	1.69

As seen from Table 1, participants had a more positive first impression of Saudi Arabia ( $M=4.97$ ,  $SD=1.53$ ) followed by Turkey ( $M=4.93$ ,  $SD=1.69$ ) and Iran received the least favorable rating ( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=1.86$ ). The findings also showed the perception of neutral or friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey are more positive initially and more Americans rate Iran negatively. Therefore, specific ethnic groups differed with respect to perception of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran while Americans in general perceived Saudi Arabia and Turkey positively to begin with and saw Iran in a more negative light.

Figure 3 shows the higher ratings for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as compared to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

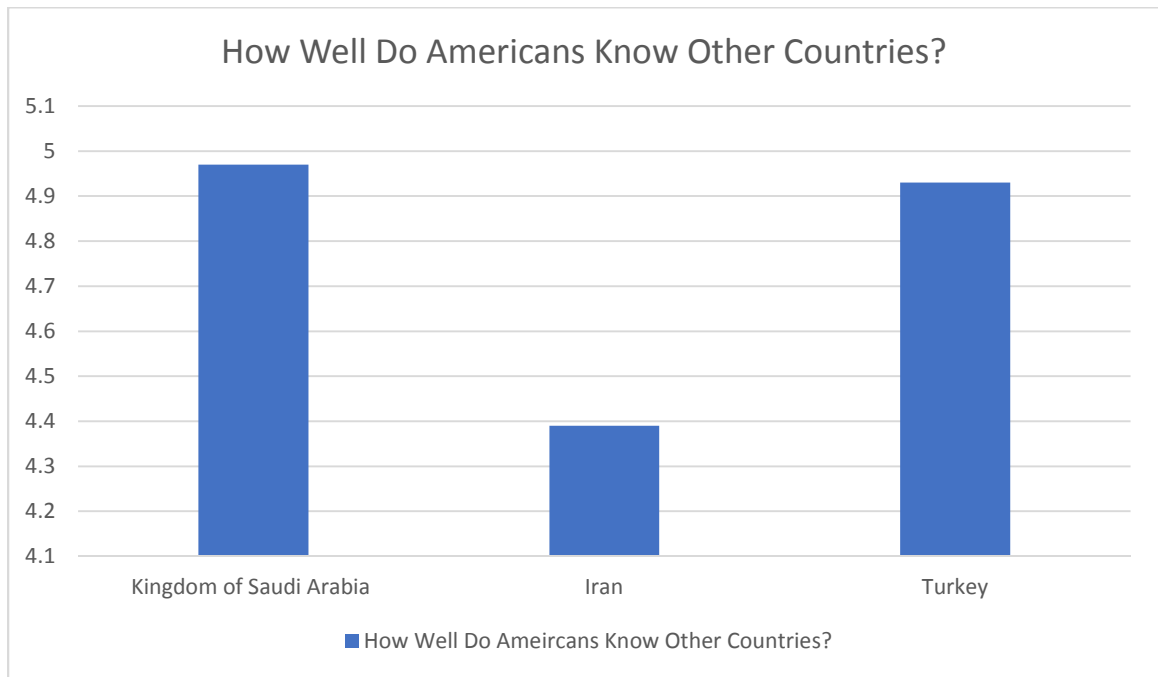


Figure 3. Higher ratings for KSA and Turkey compared to Iran

A One-Way ANOVA (Repeated Measures) revealed the three sets of ratings differed considerably (see table 5 in Appendix B). The F test suggested the difference between means of the three groups of ratings was significant ( $F(1,370) = 399.885, p=.000$ ). Post-hoc paired t-tests revealed a similar pattern (see Table 6 in Appendix B). While Saudi Arabia had a higher mean score ( $M=4.97, SD=1.53$ ) than Turkey ( $M=4.93, SD=1.69$ ). Additionally, Iran had a lower score ( $M=4.39, SD=1.86$ ) compared to Turkey ( $M=4.93, SD=1.69$ ).

Additionally, the t-tests revealed paired samples were moderately highly correlated yet significant for all three comparison pairs (See Table 7 in Appendix B). The results revealed  $t(376) = 7.371, p=.000$  for perceptions of Saudi Arabia versus Iran, indicating the difference between mean scores was statistically significant. Secondly, the perception of Turkey versus Saudi Arabia did not show statistically significant difference between means as  $t(376) = -.415, p=.678$ .

Perceptions of Iran versus Turkey showed statistically significant difference in mean scores  $t(377) = 7.665, p = .000$ .

### **Most Significant Factors Determining Overall View of Other Countries**

RQ2: What are the most significant factors that determine Americans' overall view of other countries?

The second research question inquired which factors were most significant in perceptions of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. Another 9 items were utilized to ascertain which of the three factors, cultural, political leadership or military, influenced perceptions of the other countries, across three nations.

The results of the descriptive statistics are presented below (See Table 2) The findings agreed with previous research pointing to equal role of cultural, political leadership and military factors in impacting perceptions of another nation (Ridout et al., 2008; Telhami & Kull, 2012; Telhami, 2015).

Table 2

*Participants' Responses to Factors Influencing Perception of Other Countries.*

Factors influencing Perception of other countries	N	M	SD
The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.	377	5.13	1.49
The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.	378	4.98	1.56
The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.	378	5.02	1.54
The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.	377	5.35	1.33
The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.	377	5.38	1.37
The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.	377	5.24	1.37
The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.	377	4.63	1.74
The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.	377	4.70	1.73
The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.	376	4.57	1.77

Figure 4 shows how factors responsible for shaping perceptions of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Iran and Turkey influence public opinion. As can be inferred political leadership is the single most influential factor impacting the perception of Middle Eastern nations, follows by cultural factors and lastly by military powers.

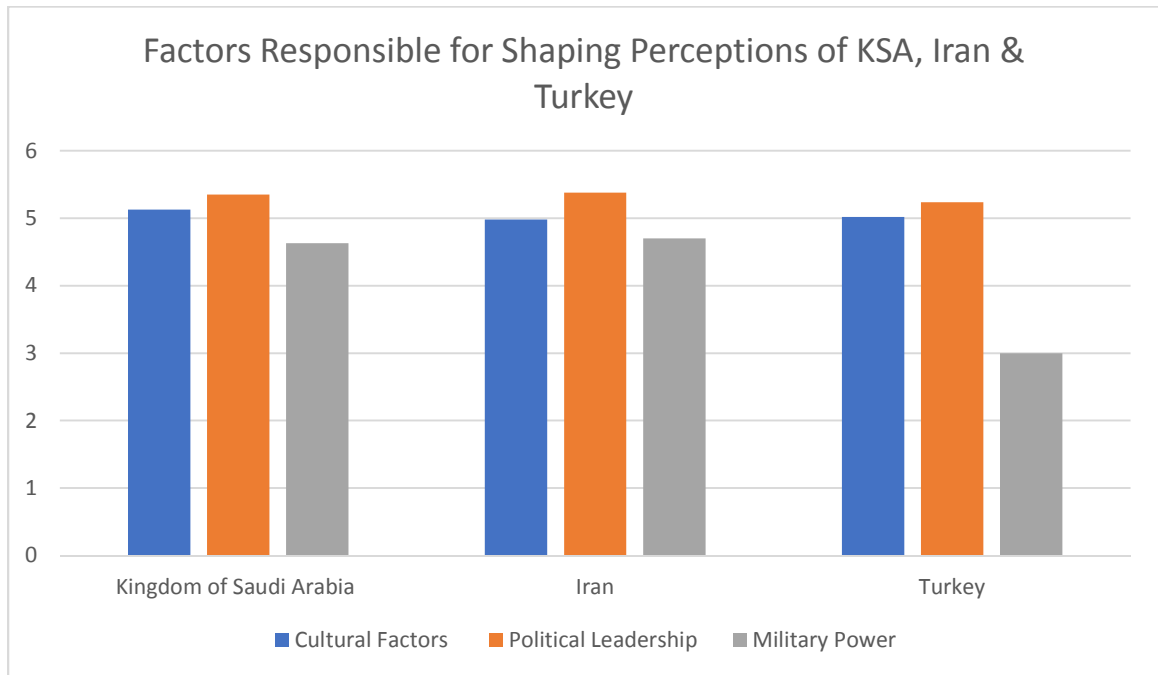


Figure 4. Higher ratings for political leadership as the most influential factor across the three nations

Among Americans, the results showed mostly high to moderate ratings for assigning the primacy of cultural, political leadership or military factors in impacting the perceptions of the US nationals towards Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. Regarding culture as an important factor, Saudi Arabia appeared to be most impacted by this factor ( $M=5.13$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ), followed by Turkey ( $M=5.02$ ,  $SD=1.54$ ) and Iran ( $M=4.98$ ,  $SD=1.56$ ).

Regarding political leadership, the results showed high to moderate ratings for Iran the most ( $M=5.38$ ,  $SD=1.37$ ) compared to Saudi Arabia ( $M=5.35$ ,  $SD=1.33$ ) and Turkey ( $M=5.24$ ,  $SD=1.377$ ). Finally, military factors were considered most least important in Turkey's case

( $M=4.57$ ,  $SD=1.77$ ), as against Saudi Arabia ( $M=4.63$   $SD=1.74$ ) followed by Iran ( $M=4.70$ ,  $SD=1.73$ ).

Comparing cultural, political leadership and military factors across Saudi Arabia, the ANOVA yielded the following results. Table 8 in Appendix B shows the difference between mean ratings on these three factors was statistically significant ( $F(1, 369) = 456.30$ ,  $p=.000$ ). This suggests the ratings across the different factors differed significantly from each other, a finding similar to the case of Iran (See table 9 in Appendix B)

The result showed the F ratio was statistically significant ( $F(1, 368) = 943.384$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The difference between means of the three factors in Turkey's case showed a similar pattern as did Iran's (see Table 10 in Appendix B). Paired t-tests were also carried out (see Table 11, and 12 in Appendix B). Differences between means of cultural factors and military factors, as well as political leadership and military factors were statistically significant.

The same levels of analysis were carried out for Iran (see Tables 13, and 14 in Appendix B) and Turkey (Tables 15, and 16 in Appendix B). The t-value is significant for political leadership and military factors on the one hand and political leadership and cultural factors, on the other ( $p=.000$ ). T-test values were statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ) for culture and political leadership and for culture and military factors, suggesting the mean of the perception of ratings differ considerably across these factors for Turkey.

### **Sources Influencing Perceptions of Another Country**

RQ3: What are the main sources of information that American people use to judge the reputation of other countries?

The third research question sought to explore the relative importance of information sources American people utilize to judge the reputation of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey

and Iran. There were significant between group differences regarding use of electronic media, print media, or social media sources. The descriptive table presented below indicates ratings for this RQ3.



Table 3

*Participants responses regarding sources*

Participants responses	n	M	SD
You usually hear positive news about the KSA.	377	4.67	1.77
You usually hear positive news about The Islamic Republic of Iran.	378	4.12	2.04
You usually hear positive news about Turkey.	377	4.69	1.62
Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.	376	4.81	1.59
Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.	378	4.82	1.63
Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey	376	4.64	1.68
Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.	378	5.10	1.45
Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.	378	5.29	1.43
Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.	375	4.95	1.47
Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.	378	4.75	1.48
Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Republic of Iran	378	4.81	1.48
Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.	377	4.70	1.48

Figure 5 shows that electronic media is the most highly rated source of information about the three Middle Eastern nations. Additionally, the next largest source of information about KSA, Iran and Turkey are social media.

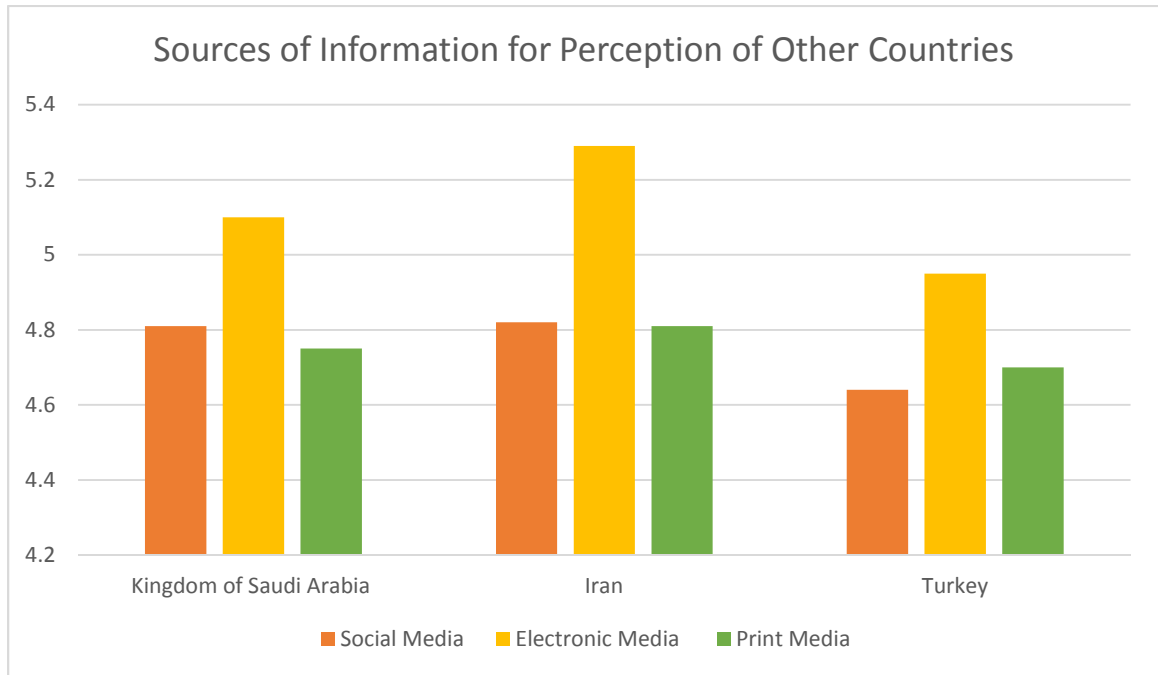


Figure 5. Higher ratings for electronic media, followed by social media

Repeated measures one-way ANOVA yielded the following results for social media, electronic media and print media (see Tables 17, 18, and 19 in Appendix B). For the values in Table 17, the F-ratio was significant ( $F(1, 368) = 580.646, p=.000$ ). The F-ratio was statistically significant ( $F(1, 368) = 787.284, p=.000$ ) for Table 18, as well. The significance of the F-ratio indicates significance in the difference between means ( $F(1, 370) = 611.483, p=.000$ ) for print media. A comparison of factors using paired samples t-test suggests the electronic media was critical for shaping opinions about other countries (See Tables 20, and 21 in Appendix B).

## Perception of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran Overall

RQ4: What are Americans' perceptions of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey? Are there any differences in the perception of these countries?

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for RQ4. The mean rating for positive overall impression of Saudi Arabia was the highest ( $M=4.80$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ), followed by Turkey ( $M=4.75$ ,  $SD= 1.57$ ) and Iran ( $M=4.31$ ,  $SD= 1.94$ ).

Table 4

*Overall perception of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey.*

	N	M	SD
You have developed a positive overall impression of Saudi Arabia.	378	4.80	1.71
You have developed a positive overall impression of The Islamic Republic of Iran	377	4.31	1.94
You have developed a positive overall impression of Turkey.	378	4.75	1.57

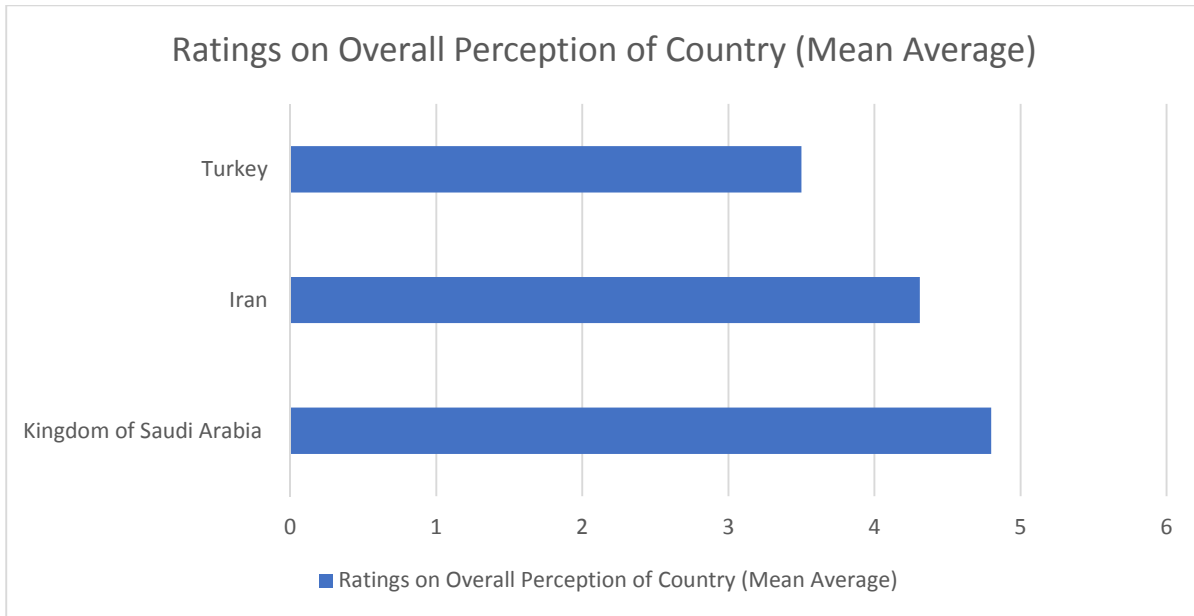


Figure 6. Overall Perception of KSA More Positive Than Turkey Followed by Iran

A repeated measures one-way ANOVA was carried out to assess the perception of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran overall (see Table 22 in appendix B). The F-ratio was significant ( $F(1, 370) = 361.673, p=.000$ ). The post-hoc paired samples t-test was also carried out (See Tables 23, and 24 below in Appendix B). T-values were significant for Iran and Turkey and Iran and Saudi Arabia, suggesting the difference in means of ratings for these nations was statistically significant.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

Prior research has suggested Americans are relatively inexperienced in terms of international affairs with comparative research across different countries suggesting a lack of understanding of other cultures and nations (Bennett et al., 1996). This aspect of ignorance, according to researchers, is discernable across college aged students and educated individuals (Richard & Gary, 2016). Respondents were not able to perceive the differences between countries or locate them correctly, according to researchers (Richard & Gary, 2016). However, the subjects in the present study showed good understanding of the difference between Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. American media has emphasized notions of increased terrorism in the Middle East, although in recent years, it has been attributed to extremism rather than religion or Middle Eastern culture. This aspect of change has triggered a positive perception of certain Middle Eastern nations.

In the present study, the research tool utilized sought to examine if perceptions and public awareness of different countries among Americans differed. The purpose of this research was to understand the reputation of Saudi Arabia at the point of view of American citizens, and how this reputation compares to that of Iran and Turkey. and ascertain how effective the countries were in managing their reputational integrity and the impact of world affairs on perceptions of countries, cultures and communities other than one's own. The final sample comprised 378 participants chiefly American males, whose responses were analyzed using SPSS.

The findings of the research study showed a higher positive perception of Saudi Arabia in comparison to Iran and Turkey. The results suggested that American citizen's perceptions were more influenced by political leadership than culture and military factors and among sources of news such as social media, electronic media and print media in impacting attitudes towards and perception of countries in the Middle East, electronic media had the largest influence and was rated

more positively and highly by the research participants, regarding the role of this media source in shaping public perceptions about KSA, Turkey and Iran.

The first RQ sought to examine how well Americans know other countries. Research revealed Americans knew and responded to Saudi Arabia and Turkey more positively than Iran. Using Repeated Measures ANOVA and paired t-tests, the results revealed a linear association between the level of friendliness of the nation and its positive perception among Americans. More American citizens reported knowing about Saudi Arabia and Turkey, compared to Iran. They also held more positive initial perceptions of KSA, and Turkey as opposed to Iran.

The participants expressed consensus with respect to RQ2 that there were incremental differences in factors impacting their perception of Middle Eastern nations. The research study found political leadership impacted the perception of the nation, with more emphasis on some factors than others for hostile nations such as Iran. Higher ratings for political leadership, followed by culture and then military power suggests the role of able leaders in shaping public perception about Middle Eastern nations.

The third RQ sought to examine which sources were considered most vital in impacting the perception of other nations. Research results showed more emphasis on electronic media sources, as compared to print media, for different countries. Social media was the among the largest sources of influence for spreading negative news about nations, among online media platforms. While receiving news about the nations, electronic or online media played a critical role in disseminating data shaping the perceptions of the three countries in the Middle East.

The fourth RQ examined whether the overall perception of friendly or neutral nations like Saudi Arabia and Turkey were more positive than Iran. Results were in line with the research suggesting the support for the theory of information seeking (Halder et al., 2017) and knowledge

formation theory (Castleberry & Nolan, 2018). The theories hold that primary channels that impact attitudes and beliefs towards other nations are impacted by media and modern technologies in such ways as to constitute multiple factors that influence decision making to seek knowledge (Hyden, 2015).

### **Implications of Practice**

The current study sought to understand how American people living in the US perceive Saudi Arabia relative to that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. The study also sought to know how the American people shape the perception and, subsequently, the public policy. They surveyed Americans to understand the three nations, but the results could not be generalized to other nations because the study focused only on three Middle East countries. Three primary sources of the knowledge shape the way the Americans perceive Saudi Arabia: political leadership, culture, and military power. According to the findings, political leadership has the most significant impact on the American people's understanding of other nations. It suggests that Americans believe in their leaders' decisions and actions, and the leader's view of other countries could be consistent with that of the masses.

The second important finding is the source of information and influence on the American people. Social, electronic, and print media have been shown to shape public perception. In terms of Saudi Arabia, forging a positive public perception will mean focusing on the electronic and social media that lead to disseminating harmful information of other countries. For the Saudi government to build a positive reputation with the US, it is necessary to invest in social media to ensure news published provides a positive outlook. Since Americans have a better perception of Saudi Arabia relative to Turkey and Iran, the Saudi leadership should invest in social and other online media to sustain the positive image. The findings are consistent with Ridout et al., (2008)

observation, who opines that the general American population forms a negative perception about other nations because of the influence of content reported in the media.

Furthermore, negative news about other countries has the power of generating negative opinions of governments and organizations. The perception may compel policymakers to pass unfavorable verdicts and policies. For instance, although Iran and Turkey are within the same region as Saudi Arabia and have been engrossed in economic and social conflicts, negative opinions on online media underline the different perceptions.

In addition, from the results, it is highly likely that global institutions should endeavor to ensure better international cooperation to ease an exacerbation of negative perceptions towards other minority groups. To enhance this, they could collaborate with media institutions in respective states to ensure that content released to the public adheres to moral, ethical, and legal stipulations. Doing this will prevent the imposition of misleading content to the public. Holistically, this will not only improve bilateral relations, but also the interaction of a diverse population. Thus, social cohesion and tranquility will be guaranteed.

### **Contributions**

The research study offered many valuable contributions for theoreticians and practitioners in the field of public relations, perception and impression management on a global scale. Scholarship has effectively established the relationship between compliance and positive perception of states, although the nature of reputation management is also termed as multifaceted (Brewster, 2019). In this context, the reputation plays a critical role in advancing the position of the state in global arenas. The present study, through its detailed examination of factors and sources that impact public perception of Middle Eastern nations, namely Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran, lead to a deeper understanding of the complex mechanisms through which impression management



operates on an international scale. The study also builds important groundwork for understanding how perceptions of neutral or friendly Middle Eastern countries are changing the attitude of Americans towards Islam and Middle Eastern culture. Post 9/11, there have been efforts to restore racial equality and ensure an egalitarian approach towards communities of color and marginalized minorities who are Middle Eastern immigrants. Research on public perceptions can help in facilitating such an outcome more effectively.

### **Research Limitations**

The research study did not control for many confounding variables, such as political affiliation or cultural preferences, despite previous research establishing a difference in perspectives on Israel and Palestine among Democrats and Republicans in America (Telhami, 2015). The research study did, however, have a representative sample that offered deeper insights into the processes underlying public perception of global Middle Eastern powers. The research also utilized descriptive and inferential statistics, thereby building on existing bodies of knowledge and contributing to theory and practice.

### **Future Research**

Future research should focus on building on the concept of reputation, impacting behavioral and intentional characteristics that influence global conflict and cooperation (Crescenzi, 2017). An emphasis on higher order beliefs can impact reputation in ways that promote reputational integrity of nations. Future research could focus on designing interventions or applications for impacting the perception of Middle Eastern nations and work towards highlighting the critical role of PR professionals in promoting international relations.

Research should also focus on more qualitative studies, that seek to highlight the value of individual perspectives and worldviews to gain an enriched and comprehensive dataset that considers individual differences. Future research studies could also consider how participation in world affairs can impact reputation.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore Saudi Arabia reputations in the eyes of Americans, and how it compares with two other Middle East countries – Iran and Turkey. To achieve this goal, the researcher formulated four research question which guided the process of research. Data collection was accomplished through an online survey using the snowball strategy to select adult Americans (Robins, et al, 2010). The collected data were then analyzed statistically using SPSS. In establishing how well Americans know other countries, the researcher used the “neither agree nor disagree” Likert scale model to ascertain the extent of knowledge of the three nations. The collected data revealed that Saudi Arabia is the most well-known of the three nations for Americans with more than 90% of the respondents showing an indication that they know the country. Turkey is the second most well-known to Americans, and Iran comes last. Nevertheless, even disregarding the ranking, this study revealed that most Americans are fully aware of these three Middle Eastern countries. However, American knowledge of other countries in the world was not established by this study as it focused only on the three countries.

The study also revealed that the three major factors that determine the reputation of a country in the eyes of Americans are political leadership, culture, and military power. Using the cases of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, the results showed that the most prominent factors determining reputation for Americans are political leadership, followed by culture. Military power is the least prevalent factor for reputation. On the other hand, the study has also shown that Americans learn about other countries and form perceptions based on three primary media forms: social, electronic, and print. Most negative information regarding the three countries reaches Americans through electronic media, followed by social media. Print media is the least prevalent source of negative news about Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Due to these three major sources

of information, Americans already have pre-informed perceptions about these three countries. Compared to the other two, Saudi Arabia has the highest level of positive perception in the eyes of the Americans. On the other hand, Iran is the least liked country, by Americans responding to this survey instrument, among the three. Therefore, the study has provided an indicator of the overall reputation of Saudi Arabia from an Americans perspective, as well as an analysis of how the country's reputation compares to Iran and Turkey.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Institutional Review Board

Study Information Sheet

Title of Project: Saudi Arabia's Reputation from the Point of View of the American People in the United States, Compared to That of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

Principal Investigator: Hamed Ateeq Alghamdi

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Advisor: Dr. Kalbfleisch, Pamela,

Phone Number: 701/777-6369,

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### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this research study seeks to investigate Saudi Arabia's reputation from the point of view of the American people in The United States, compared to that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. And what role might the American media play in shaping this perception, Therefore, consolidating foreign policy towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### **Procedures to be followed:**

In the survey, I will ask six demographic questions and 27 questions about the study topic.

**Risks:**

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

**Benefits:**

- This study will provide information about the formation of American people's perceptions and how differ among countries. The findings will help to determine if these perceptions are helpful in acting as a guide to foreign policy.
- This research might help Saudi Arabia to determine whether these perceptions are helpful in acting as a guide to their foreign policy.

**Duration:**

It will take about 10 minutes to complete the questions for survey.

**Statement of Confidentiality:**

If this research is published, there will be no information indicating the identity of the study participants, and the participants will not be asked for information that indicates their names. Therefore, responses are recorded anonymously.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

**Right to Ask Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Hamed Alghamdi. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Dr. Pamela Kalbfleisch at 701-777-6369 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or [UND.irm@UND.edu](mailto:UND.irm@UND.edu). You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website “Information for Research Participants” <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html>

**Compensation:**

For your participation in this survey, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Target gift card from Amazon end of the survey.

**Voluntary Participation:**

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.



You must be 18 years of age older to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey, or participant in the interview implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

## **Questionnaire**

This survey is designed to help us to know Saudi Arabia's reputation compared to that of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey from the point of view of the American people in The United States. The questions we ask will address several aspects of Saudi Arabia's reputation compared to the Republic of Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. Your answers will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be shared with others. Your responses will be treated confidentially, and your identity will be withheld (you cannot be inferred from your responses). Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop participating at any time and withdraw your consent to the use of the information you provide for research purposes.

### **Personal Information**

Please tick where appropriate

34) What is your age?

35) What is your sex?

- a. Male
- b. Female

36) What is your highest educational degree?

- a. Less than high school
- b. High school
- c. Undergraduate
- d. Graduate

37) What is your profession?

- a. Employed
- b. Self-employed

- c. Businessowner
- d. Unemployed
- e. Retired

38) What is your marital status?

- a. Married
- b. Single
- c. Divorced
- d. Widow

39) What is your racial identification?

- a. White
- b. Black or African American
- c. Asian
- d. Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander
- e. American Indian or Alaska native
- f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Survey Questions**

40) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree

g. Strongly Disagree

41) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name of The Islamic Republic of Iran.

a. Strongly Agree

b. Agree

c. Slightly Agree

d. Neither Agree nor Disagree

e. Slightly Disagree

f. Disagree

g. Strongly Disagree

42) You perceive a positive first impression when you hear the name Turkey.

a. Strongly Agree

b. Agree

c. Slightly Agree

d. Neither Agree nor Disagree

e. Slightly Disagree

f. Disagree

g. Strongly Disagree

43) You usually hear positive news about Saudi Arabia.

a. Strongly Agree

b. Agree

c. Slightly Agree

d. Neither Agree nor Disagree

- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

44) You usually hear positive news about The Islamic Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

45) You usually hear positive news about Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

46) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree

- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

47) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

48) Social media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

49) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

50) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Islamic Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

51) Electronic media such as TV is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree

- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

52) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

53) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding The Republic of Iran

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

54) Print media is the biggest source of negative information and news regarding Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree



- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

55) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

56) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

57) The culture of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

58) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

59) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree

- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

60) The political leadership of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

61) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

62) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about The Republic of Iran.

- a. Strongly Agree

- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

63) The military power of a country is the most significant factor in shaping your opinion about Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

64) You have developed a positive overall impression of Saudi Arabia.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

65) You have developed a positive overall impression of The Islamic Republic of Iran

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

66) You have developed a positive overall impression of Turkey.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Slightly Agree
- d. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- e. Slightly Disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly Disagree

## Appendix B

Table 5

*ANOVA Results*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	2422.583	1	2422.583	399.885	.000
American perceptions	216.124	5	43.225	7.135	.000
Error	2241.535	370	6.058		

Table 6

*Paired Samples Statistics*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Saudi Arabia-Iran	4.9735	378	1.53279	.07884
Pair 2 Saudi Arabia-Turkey	4.9682	377	1.53125	.07886
Pair 3 Iran-Turkey	4.3942	378	1.86142	.09574
	4.9363	377	1.69517	.08731

Table 7

*Paired Samples T-Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair								Lower	Upper
1	Saudi Arabia-Iran	.54377	1.43246	.07378	.39870	.68883	7.371	376	.000
2	Saudi Arabia - Turkey	-.03183	1.48898	.07669	-.18262	.11896	-.415	376	.678
3	Iran – Turkey	-.57937	1.46951	.07558	-.72798	-.43075	-7.665	377	.000

Table 8

*Test of Between Subjects Effects: Saudi Arabia*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3158.387	1	3158.387	943.384	.000
American perception	165.722	5	33.144	9.900	.000
Error	1232.039	368	3.348		

Table 9

*Test of Between Subjects Effects: Iran*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3147.124	1	3147.124	836.180	.000
American perception	151.736	5	30.347	8.063	.000
Error	1388.803	369	3.764		

Table 10

*Test of Between Subjects Effects: Turkey*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	2730.556	1	2730.556	518.891	.000
American perception	171.372	5	34.274	6.513	.000
Error	1936.521	368	5.262		



Table 11

*Paired Samples Statistics for cultural, political and military factors in Saudi Arabia*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Saudi Arabia- Culture	5.1360	375	1.49693	.07730
	Saudi Arabia- Political Leadership	5.3440	375	1.33907	.06915
Pair 2	Saudi Arabia- Culture	5.1360	375	1.49693	.07730
	Saudi Arabia- Military	4.6267	375	1.74568	.09015
Pair 3	Saudi Arabia- Political Leadership	5.3501	377	1.33865	.06894
	Saudi Arabia- Military	4.6340	377	1.74390	.08982

Table 12

*Paired Samples Test for cultural, political and military factors in Saudi Arabia*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Saudi Arabia- Culture - Saudi Arabia- Political Leadership	-.20800	1.69126	.08734	-.37973	-.03627	2.382	374	.018
Pair 2	Saudi Arabia- Culture - Saudi Arabia- Military	.50933	1.99580	.10306	.30668	.71199	4.942	374	.000
Pair 3	Saudi Arabia- Political Leadership - Saudi Arabia- Military	.71618	1.77799	.09157	.53612	.89624	7.821	376	.000

Table 13

*Paired Samples Statistics for Iran*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Iran-Culture	4.9841	377	1.57093	.08091
	Iran-Political Leadership	5.3820	377	1.37705	.07092
Pair 2	Iran-Culture	4.9814	377	1.56836	.08077
	Iran- Military	4.7003	377	1.73752	.08949
Pair 3	Iran-Political Leadership	5.3777	376	1.37635	.07098
	Iran- Military	4.7074	376	1.73422	.08944

Table 14

*Paired Samples Test for Iran*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Iran-Culture -	-	1.73536	.08938	-.57362	-.22214	-	376	.000
	Iran-Political Leadership	.39788					4.452		
Pair 2	Iran-Culture - Iran- Military	.28117	1.95848	.10087	.08283	.47950	2.788	376	.006
Pair 3	Iran-Political Leadership - Iran- Military	.67021	1.67738	.08650	.50012	.84031	7.748	375	.000

Table 15

*Paired Samples Statistics for Turkey*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Turkey-Culture	5.0239	376	1.54815	.07984
	Turkey - Political Leadership	5.2420	376	1.37693	.07101
Pair 2	Turkey-Culture	5.0213	376	1.54560	.07971
	Turkey-Military	4.5771	376	1.77220	.09139
Pair 3	Turkey - Political Leadership	5.2427	375	1.37871	.07120
	Turkey-Military	4.5760	375	1.77444	.09163

Table 16

*Paired Samples Test for Turkey*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Turkey-Culture -	-	1.62818	.08397	-.38319	-.05298	-	375	.010
	Turkey - Political Leadership	.21809					2.597		
Pair 2	Turkey-Culture -	.44415	1.90496	.09824	.25098	.63732	4.521	375	.000
Pair 3	Turkey - Political Leadership -	.66667	1.70037	.08781	.49401	.83932	7.592	374	.000
	Turkey-Military								

Table 17

*Social Media as a Source: ANOVA*

	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3405.805	1	3405.805	580.646	.000
Perception s of Americans	186.721	5	37.344	6.367	.000
Error	2158.521	368	5.866		

Table 18

*Electronic Media as a Source: ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3714.067	1	3714.067	787.284	.000
Perception s of Americans	50.665	5	10.133	2.148	.059
Error	1736.066	368	4.718		

Table 19

*Print Media as a Source: ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3265.056	1	3265.056	611.483	.000
Perception s of Americans	33.194	5	6.639	1.243	.288
Error	1975.640	370	5.340		

Table 20

*Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pair 1	social media KSA	4.8112	376	1.59298	.08215
	electronic media KSA	5.0931	376	1.44936	.07475
Pair 2	print media KSA	4.7513	378	1.48076	.07616
	electronic media KSA	5.1005	378	1.44958	.07456
Pair 3	social media KSA	4.8112	376	1.59298	.08215
	print media KSA	4.7553	376	1.47647	.07614
Pair 4	social media Iran	4.8228	378	1.63931	.08432
	electronic media Iran	5.2910	378	1.43469	.07379
Pair 5	electronic media Iran	5.2910	378	1.43469	.07379
	print media Iran	4.810	378	1.4858	.0764
Pair 6	social media Iran	4.8228	378	1.63931	.08432
	print media Iran	4.810	378	1.4858	.0764
Pair 7	social media Turkey	4.6408	373	1.68314	.08715
	electronic media Turkey	4.9544	373	1.46851	.07604
Pair 8	social media Turkey	4.6347	375	1.67791	.08665
	Print media Turkey	4.6907	375	1.48262	.07656
Pair 9	electronic media Turkey	4.9492	374	1.46454	.07573
	Print media Turkey	4.6979	374	1.48888	.07699

Table 21

*Paired Samples Test for different types of media across 3 countries*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	social media KSA - electronic media KSA	-.28191	1.84761	.09528	-.46927	-.09456	-2.959	375	.003
Pair 2	print media KSA - electronic media KSA	-.34921	1.57728	.08113	-.50872	-.18969	-4.304	377	.000
Pair 3	social media Iran - electronic media Iran	-.46825	1.92713	.09912	-.66315	-.27335	-4.724	377	.000
Pair 4	electronic media Iran - print media Iran	.48148	1.54883	.07966	.32484	.63812	6.044	377	.000
Pair 5	social media Iran - print media Iran	.01323	1.86901	.09613	-.17579	.20225	.138	377	.891
Pair 6	social media KSA - print media KSA	.05585	1.83290	.09452	-.13001	.24172	.591	375	.555
Pair 7	social media turkey - electronic media turkey	-.31367	1.74003	.09010	-.49083	-.13651	-3.482	372	.001
Pair 8	social media turkey - Print media Turkey	-.05600	1.64156	.08477	-.22269	.11069	-.661	374	.509
Pair 9	electronic media turkey - Print media Turkey	.25134	1.59790	.08263	.08887	.41381	3.042	373	.003

Table 22

*Perception of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey Overall: ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	2317.598	1	2317.598	361.673	.000
Perception of Americans	191.738	5	38.348	5.984	.000
Error	2370.956	370	6.408		

Table 23

*Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Perception of KSA	4.81	377	1.714	.088
	Perception of Iran	4.31	377	1.945	.100
Pair 2	Perception of KSA	4.80	378	1.712	.088
	Perception of Turkey	4.7540	378	1.57914	.08122
Pair 3	Perception of Iran	4.31	377	1.945	.100
	Perception of Turkey	4.7560	377	1.58076	.08141

Table 24

*Paired Samples Test*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	KSA - Iran	.493	1.649	.085	.326	.660	5.810	376	.000
Pair 2	KSA - Turkey	.05026	1.49450	.07687	-.10088	.20141	.654	377	.514
Pair 3	Iran - Turkey	-.44297	1.48845	.07666	-.59371	-.29224	-5.778	376	.000