

US, Saudi trapped in a bad marriage

CNN ONLINE

What do you do when it's increasingly clear that one of your longtime Middle East partners doesn't share either your values or many of your interests? This is only one of the troubling questions that President Obama confronted this week as he sat with Saudi King Salman to discuss the state of the region and the US-Saudi relationship. The Saudis sent a lower-level official to greet Obama and Saudi state television didn't even bother covering the President's arrival.

So to paraphrase Hamlet, clearly something is rotten in the state of the US-Saudi relationship.

And regardless of how this week's meetings conclude the Saudi-American enterprise will remain a delicate and fraught affair. The answers to the following five questions tell you why.

Do US-Saudi interests fundamentally diverge?

On a number of issues, they do. Over the past two decades, the two sides' interests have simply diverged in fundamental ways. The broad trade-off between access to Saudi oil in exchange for a US commitment to its security from external threats has broken down, and even though the Obama administration has sold almost \$95 billion in arms to the Saudis, on core issues such as Syria, Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Egypt and democratization in the region, there are major differences. The perception that the United States is withdrawing from the region, the Iranian nuclear deal and what must appear to the Saudis as US acquiescence in a rising Iran have combined to create a foundation of suspicion and mistrust.

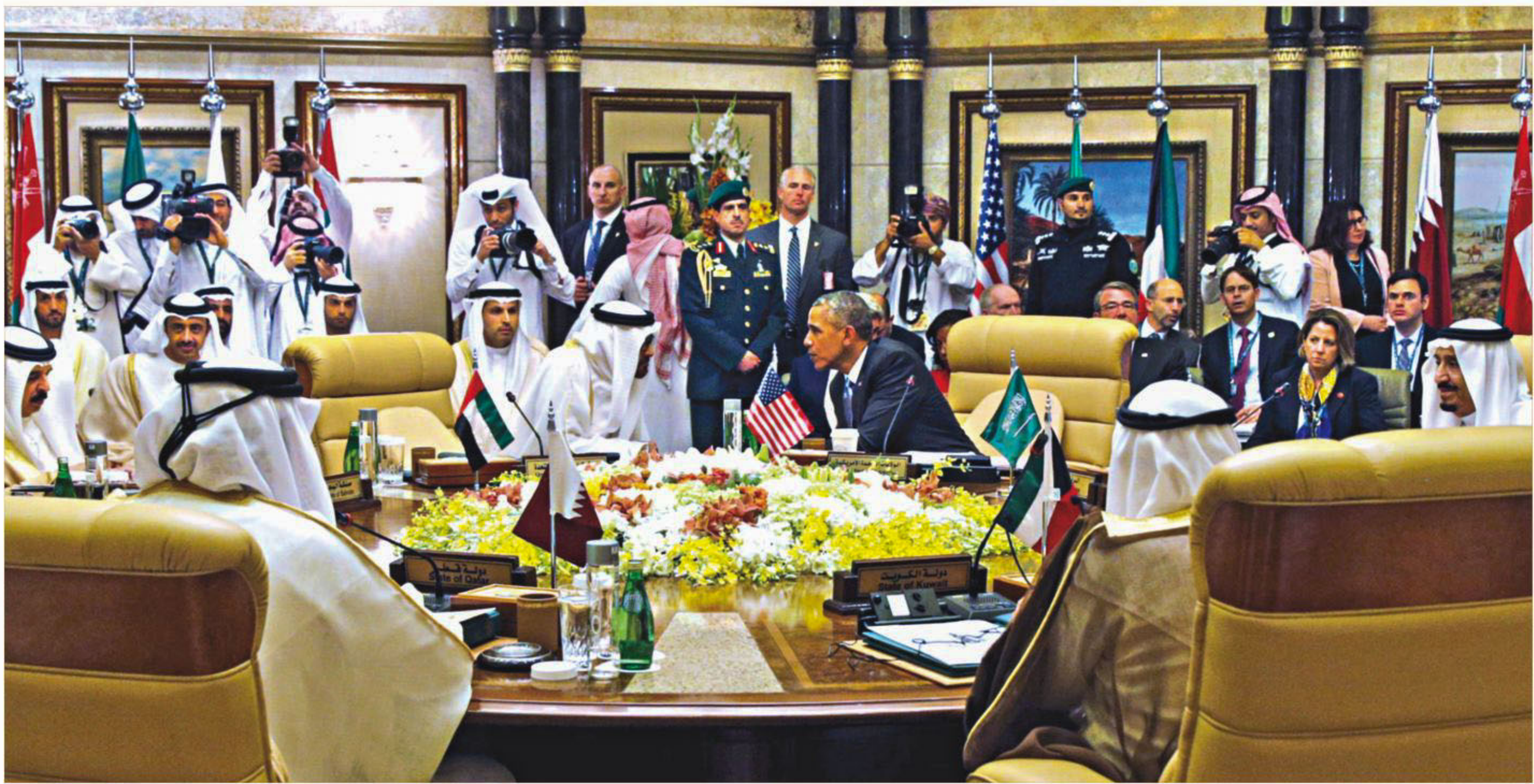
Is Saudi Arabia headed for instability or collapse?

Not really. The Saudis have many serious problems. The transition to a new King and his young, inexperienced and risk-ready son have created some turmoil within the royal family and could pose problems during the succession after Salman. Falling oil prices have created budgetary deficits and spending restrictions; the Saudis are trapped in a costly war in Yemen and pressed by a rising Iran. But the kingdom weathered the Arab spring and regional turbulence with little difficulty and remains a stable and highly functional state, with the world's largest oil reserves, low debt and high cash reserves.

Is the US-Saudi relationship too big to fail?

Probably for now. However imperfect Saudi policies, the United States still requires local friends in the region to help stabilize matters and pursue American interests. The US may increasingly be weaning itself off Arab hydrocarbons, but the rest of the world isn't. And since oil still trades in a single market, a disruption in supply will impact the economies and markets around the world, including the United States. So, stability in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf is still a vital American interest. Moreover, Wahhabis or not, Washington still needs the Saudis for intelligence sharing and operations against IS and al-Qaeda affiliates in Yemen and requires Riyadh's cooperation in trying to manage the Syrian problem.

The painful fact is that the United States is stuck in a bad marriage with Saudi Arabia, where neither divorce nor reconciliation is likely. The same Middle East mess that estranged the two sides will likely also force them to cooperate. Indeed, despite what divides them it's more than likely that for the foreseeable future the United States and Saudi Arabia will find a way to muddle through -- cooperating where they can and agreeing to disagree where they must.



US President Barack Obama speaks with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan during the summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday. The United States will deter and confront aggression against Gulf Arab monarchies, who continue to have concerns about threats from Iran, President Barack Obama said after meeting their leaders to iron out strains in their alliance.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ecuador to hike taxes

Sell assets to fund quake rebuilding; death toll nears 600

REUTERS, Pedernales/Quito

Ecuador will temporarily increase some taxes, sell assets, and may issue new bonds on the international market to fund a multi-billion dollar reconstruction after a devastating 7.8 magnitude quake, a somber President Rafael Correa said late Wednesday.

The death toll from Ecuador's weekend earthquake neared 600 and rescue missions ebbed as the traumatized Andean nation braced itself for long and costly rebuilding.

"It's hard to imagine the magnitude of the tragedy. Every time we visit a place, there are more problems," Correa said, fresh from touring the disaster zone.

The leftist leader estimated the disaster had inflicted \$2 billion to \$3 billion of damage and could knock 2 to 3 percentage points off growth, meaning the economy will almost certainly shrink this year.

In addition to \$600 million in credit from multilateral lenders, Correa, an economist, announced a raft of measures to help repair homes, roads, and bridges along the devas-

tated Pacific Coast.

"We're looking at the possibility of issuing bonds on the international market," he said on Wednesday afternoon, without providing details.

In a nationally televised address later on Wednesday, Correa also announced the OPEC nation was poised to shed assets.

"The country has many assets thanks to investment over all these years and we will seek to sell some of them to overcome these difficult moments," he said.

He also unveiled several short-term tax changes, including a 2-point increase in the Value Added Tax for a year, as well as a "one-off 3 percent additional contribution on profits," although the fine print was not immediately clear.

Four days on, some isolated communities struggled without water, power or transport, as torn-up roads stymied deliveries. Along the coast, stadiums served as morgues and aid distribution centres.

Rescuers were losing hope of finding anyone alive even as relatives of the missing begged them to keep looking.

UK to take in 3,000 refugee children

AFP, London

Britain yesterday announced plans to take in up to 3,000 of the most vulnerable children and their families from conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa by 2020.

The scheme, drawn up in coordination with the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), is aimed at children deemed at risk of child labour, forced marriage and other forms of abuse or exploitation.

It will affect children on their own and those accompanied by relatives or carers, and will see several hundred people resettled in the coming year, the Home Office interior ministry announced.

The commitment is in addition to Britain's pledge to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees from camps on Syria's borders by 2020. So far, more than a thousand -- half of them children -- have arrived.

Blast at Mexico oil plant kills 13

AFP, Coatzacoalcos

The death toll from a thunderous blast at a petrochemical plant in Mexico has risen to at least 13, an official said yesterday, in the latest accident plaguing the state-run oil giant Pemex.

The toll could rise further as another 136 people were injured, 13 of them critically, in Wednesday's explosion, which sent up huge plumes of black, toxic smoke and triggered panic among locals fearing a repeat of a 1991 blast at the same plant that caused a deadly gas leak.

The new blast at the petrochemical plant in the city of Coatzacoalcos in eastern Veracruz state was so powerful it was felt 10 kilometers (six miles) away. It shattered windows and forced the evacuation of schools and businesses.

Crews kept working Thursday to cool off one particularly hard hit area of the plant, hosing it down with water.

Investigators have yet to enter this area because of fears that structures might collapse, Luis Felipe Puente, a senior civil protection official within the state interior ministry, told Milenio television.

The blast at the Petroquímica Mexicana de Venilo (PMV) plant was caused by some kind of leak, said Jose Antonio Gonzalez, chief executive of Pemex.

Pemex said in the late afternoon of Wednesday that the situation was "completely under control."

A natural gas plant explosion killed 30 people in the north-eastern state of Tamaulipas in 2012. Even its headquarters -- a skyscraper in the heart of Mexico City -- was hit in January 2013 by a blast caused by a gas buildup that left 37 dead.

Stop isolating Russia

Gorbachev to West

AFP, Moscow

The last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev yesterday urged the West to stop isolating Russia and take a more "constructive" approach in response to President Vladimir Putin's moves towards normalising relations.

The 85-year-old who presided over the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War argued that Moscow has an "important and positive" role to play on the world stage, writing in Rossiiskaya Gazeta government daily.

"It's time for the West to stop attempting to isolate it," he wrote.

Russia and the West have seen ties slump to their worst level since the Cold War over Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its alleged responsibility for a bloody insurgency in the east of the country.

Gorbachev, however, argued that Putin in his step-by-step annual phone-in session last week had "shown a striving towards normalising relations with the West."

Putin softened his rhetoric during his annual phone-in on April 14 by pointing to examples of positive cooperation with the West and evaded some cues for populist America-bashing, even describing President Barack Obama as a "decent person."

"Can our partners reset themselves to a more constructive wavelength? That's unclear so far but I urge them to do so," Gorbachev wrote.

No one should assume that Russia will accept a "second tier role in the world," he said, adding that "everyone would only lose from a new Cold War."



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II greets wellwishers during a 'walkabout' on her 90th birthday in Windsor, west of London, yesterday. Britain yesterday celebrated the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II with tributes to a popular monarch who has steered it through the decline of empire and a wave of scandals to the Internet age.

PHOTO: AFP

One-time slave to be new face of US\$20 bill

AFP, Washington

The one-time slave turned abolitionist Harriet Tubman was named Wednesday as the new face of the \$20 banknote, the first time an African American has featured on US currency.

A sweeping redesign of the US bills to be unveiled in four years will also protect Alexander Hamilton's central place on the \$10 note, once thought threatened until Broadway's hit hip-hop musical "Hamilton" made the 18th century US finance chief a modern-day star.

Hamilton's latter-day successor, Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, announced the changes slated for the \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes after more than a year of lobbying and polling, with heavy pressure for a female figure to take place on a US banknote.

An open poll of more than 600,000 people had strongly favored Tubman, a hero to African Americans for her escape from slavery in Maryland in 1849 to help run the legendary Underground Railroad that helped thousands of slaves flee to freedom in the 19th century.

The announcement brought widespread cheers.

"A woman, a leader, and a freedom fighter. I can't think of a better choice for the \$20 bill than Harriet Tubman," tweeted Hillary Clinton, the Democrat seeking to become the country's first female president.

Clinton's rival for the Democratic nomination, Bernie Sanders, echoed: "I cannot



think of an American hero more deserving of this honor than Harriet Tubman."

The plan originally was to revamp the \$10 note in 2020, possibly having a woman share it with Hamilton, while the \$20 bill, one of the world's most circulated banknotes, would wait another decade for redesign.

Pop star Prince dies at 57

REUTERS

Prince, the innovative US music superstar whose hits included "Purple Rain" and "When Doves Cry" and whose songwriting and eccentric stage presence electrified fans around the world, died yesterday in Minnesota, his publicist said. He was 57.

"It is with profound sadness that I am confirming that the legendary, iconic performer, Prince Rogers Nelson, has died," said publicist Anna Meacham.

Prince was found dead at his home at Paisley Park Studios in Chanhassen, a Minneapolis suburb, the Carver County Sheriff's Office said on Twitter. The office said it was "investigating the circumstances of his death."

The local medical examiner declined to comment on the cause of Prince's death, which was first reported by celebrity website TMZ.

Shocked fans gathered with media crews outside Paisley Park Studios' gates to mourn the award-winning singer and musician, whose genre-defying music combined jazz, funk and disco, and influenced other musi-

cians. His hit songs also included "Raspberry Beret," "Little Red Corvette" and "Kiss."

Prince, who was on a US tour last week, was briefly hospitalized with the flu after his plane made an emergency landing in Moline, Illinois, last week, TMZ reported. A representative told TMZ that Prince had performed in Atlanta even though he was not feeling well and felt worse after boarding the plane for a flight back to Minnesota.

Prince first found fame in the late 1970s, and over the next three decades became known as one of the most inventive and eccentric forces in American pop music.

Often making a statement with bold fashion choices, the diminutive star sometimes appeared on stage sporting ruffled shirts and tight pants or elaborate costumes, including chain mail covering his face, a shimmering orange tunic or bikini briefs.

Prince was regarded as a perfectionist who from 1993 to 2000 changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol in what was seen as a protest against his record label at the time.



রোগতত্ত্ব, রোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (IEDCR)

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর
স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়

মোবাইল ফোনের মাধ্যমে স্বাস্থ্য সম্পর্কিত তথ্য সংগ্রহ

আপনারা হয়ত অবগত আছেন যে, বাংলাদেশ সরকারের স্বাস্থ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের রোগতত্ত্ব, রোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (IEDCR) ২০১২ থেকে মোবাইল ফোনের সম্মানিত গ্রাহকদের কাছ থেকে রোগ সম্পর্কিত বিভিন্ন তথ্য সংগ্রহ করছে। IEDCR এর তথ্য সংগ্রহকারীরা দ্বৈবচয়ন (Random selection) এর মাধ্যমে ছয়টি মোবাইল ফোনের গ্রাহকদের নাম্বারে ফোন করে থাকেন। এতে বাংলাদেশ টেলিযোগাযোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ কমিশন (BTRC) এর অনুমোদন রয়েছে।

চলমান এই কার্যক্রমে আপনি IEDCR থেকে আপনার মোবাইল ফোনে একটি কল পেতে পারেন। আপনার সম্মতি নিয়ে ফোনের মাধ্যমে আপনার এবং পরিবারের সদস্যদের রোগ এবং আচরণগত তথ্য সংগ্রহ করা হবে। স্বাস্থ্য সংক্রান্ত আপনার মূল্যবান তথ্য এই রোগ নিরীক্ষা কার্যক্রমের জন্য বিশেষ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। গবেষণায় প্রাপ্ত তথ্য জনস্বাস্থ্য উন্নয়নে ব্যবহৃত হবে। উত্তরদাতার কোন পরিচয় কোথাও প্রকাশ করা হবে না। IEDCR এর ওয়েবসাইটে (www.iedcr.gov.bd) নির্দিষ্ট সময় পর পর কার্যক্রমের তথ্যাদি সকলের জন্য প্রকাশ করা হবে। এ কার্যক্রমে ইতোমধ্যে অংশগ্রহণকারী সকলকে IEDCR ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছে। এ রোগ এবং আচরণগত তথ্য সংগ্রহে আপনার সার্বিক সহযোগিতা ও আন্তরিকতা আমাদের একান্ত কাম্য।



