



THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARAB: A CASE STUDY OF MUHAMMAD BIN SELMAN'S (MBS) VISION 2030

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Abstract

Muhammad bin Salman has consistently exploited the ideas of change, transparency, and accountability to promote Vision 2030. The kingdom will probably see more movements in the direction of liberalism, democracy, pluralism, or freedom of speech soon. The Middle East (ME) experienced a variety of political upheavals in the years following the Arab Spring; some nations, particularly those that led to a new political era, felt the effects of this upheaval immediately. In Saudi Arabia, however, the government chose to appease the rivals by making a few economic and social accommodations. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently pursuing a modernization strategy beneath of the direction of youngest leader Muhammad bin Salman, which includes two components: first, a move toward social liberalization; and second, the launching of new revenue streams and a reduction in reliance on oil money. Behind every action is a long-term plan to keep their people loyal and increase Saudi Arabia's power in the Middle East. This article assesses the objectives of Muhammad Bin Salman's Vision, also known as Saudi Vision 2030, and tactics that describe significant adjustments to the social structure and modifications to the al Saudi monetary and budgetary



measures and policies. The political, religious, familial, and institutional difficulties so as to could undermine the hallucination and its possibility of achievement are highlighted in this study.

Keywords: Arab spring, Muhammad Bin Salman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Middle East, Oil, Political, Social, Religious, Strategic, modernization

Introduction

The kingdom of Arabia is the most critical country in the Muslim world. The kingdom emerged on the world map in 1932. Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, from where it spread around the world very quickly. Islam spread; it transformed the life of the converted people by putting the stamp of Islamic culture based on the teaching of the Holy Quran. Muhammad bin Salman, also called to as MBS, were chosen by his father, King Salman, to serve as the Saudi Arabian kingdom's crown prince in June 2017. Before 2015, MBS had never had a position in the government; nonetheless, he was appointed not only as the deputy crown prince but also as the head of the "Super Committee," a grouping of the Saudi ministries and agencies that govern economic policy. His goal has been to lessen Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil revenue and diversify the country's economy ever since. "Saudi Vision 2030" is the name given to this idea. The Vision's goal of increasing the private sector's contribution to economic growth is another crucial element (Sadia, 2022).

In light of this, Bin Salman announced the Vision of 2030 on April 25, 2016. Developing public service sectors including health, education, infrastructure, recreation, and tourism is part of an ambitious plan to lessen Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil, diversify its economy, and increase government spending. Its objectives include bolstering economic and investment activity, expanding non-oil industry, commerce between goods and consumer goods, and raising government expenditure on military manufacturing equipment and munitions. The moderate Islam of MBS be primarily political and quietist and reflects views of a religious school that teaches unconditional obedience to the ruler. Making an essential change in the school curriculum and textbook will take time. The old syllabus of Saudi Arabia's school system propagates views that are hostile to science, modernity, and women's rights. The world now views Saudi Arabia as a rising economic power and a new Saudi Arabia as a result of the implementation of Vision 2030. Arabia has had a persistent radicalism problem since 1932. In particular, women's independence in education, health, sports, and entertainment. Since assuming power in 2015, MBS has moved on with implementing significant changes in the country's ultra-conservative society. The limits on women being required to wear the complete hijab have been lifted. Women are now permitted to drive and can travel unrestrictedly without the assistance of a male family



escort. The barriers to gender segregation are being removed, and women now have access to sports (Amin, 2021).

Although the religious establishment is a significant barrier to critical and scientific thought, the Saudi government is executing Vision 2030 and wants to see its populace become more independent, engaged, and educated. It is unclear, however, if they would prefer a more cynical and free-thinking citizenry who would challenge the current authoritarian political order and demand political liberalization, freedom of speech, and expression. Vision 2030 is a national transformation plan focusing more on economic diversification and introducing a framework for citizen involvement in economic aspects. However, there is a need for equal attention when introducing political reforms in the nation. It must not be encouraged that economic transformation and political liberalization go hand in hand. Without popular political support, there is a risk that the very spirit of the Vision may be muzzled. Because of this, political and economic efforts must be coordinated in order to prevent these twofold diversifications as modern concept of Islam. (Shammari, 2021).

Al Saud will not want to create a separate private sector, but a robust monitoring mechanism is necessary to uphold the function of the state. It will also alter the composition of many organizations and groups. For instance, the introduction of movie theatres and music venues has strengthened the liberal opposition to the already powerful religious police and clergy. Therefore, it is evident from the explanation above that Vision 2030 will revolutionize the economic system and result in social reforms before political ones. Making individuals dynamic, liberal, and participatory while also expecting them to be loyal to an authoritarian system sounds like a complex undertaking (Ross, 2017); Saudi Arabia's present efforts to improvement the educational structure are tactical, not only in attempts to reduce the sheer number of extremist precepts by developing more promote-leaning modules, but also by giving moderate religious clerics the authority to take part in the historical move toward to instruction reform and endorse humanistic and reasonable Muslim country.

Muhammad Bin Salman wants to promote a moderate kind of Islam that is acceptable worldwide. MBS opposes Islamic radicalism, which has caused problems for people. Everyone has the right to practice their religion if they want. The crown prince despised the right of women to receive education in all areas of life. The Saudi monarchy wants a free state where everyone may contribute to the country's prosperity. The tourist sector is the primary driver of the nation's economy in the twenty-first century.



Geography of KSA

The Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, the Persian Gulf, and Yemen are all to the west, east, and south, respectively, of Saudi Arabia, which takes up the majority of the Arabian Peninsula. Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen make up the entirety of its 4,431 kilometres of land boundaries. A land bridge connects the Saudi mainland to Bahrain's Persian Gulf Island. Saudi Arabia is a giant with an area of 2.15 million sq. km but is primarily a desert with minimal agriculture. The majority of the Arabian Peninsula, the original home of the Arabs, the birthplace of the Arabic language, and the traditional center of Islam, is occupied by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Red Sea and the Persian Gulf area are from the western and eastern borders of Saudi Arabia, respectively. Its neighbors are Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The nation has maritime borders with Iran, Sudan, Eritrea, Bahrain, Egypt, and Egypt.

Geography of Saudi Arabia, MAP



Source: https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/saudi_arabia_admin-2013.pdf

Research Question



This article's research topic is that Saudi Vision 2030 has political consequences and is a blueprint for economic and social diversification. The topic of the Vision's realization is a supporting query with the study also discussed.

Research Methodology:

The article used different research methods like historical and descriptive research methodologies to write this research paper. Books, journals, research papers, websites, newspapers, and other secondary sources have all been used.

Religious Clerics and the Saudi State:

The Saudi regime has used the force of Islam to justify its authority. Clerics have always worked with the government to run the country; the relationship was created by an understanding between Mohammed Abdel Wahab, an influential cleric. The clergy has all impacted the court, school system, and social and family policies. The Al Sheikh family enjoys a more privileged status and has authority over the educational system, while the king picks the council of senior Ulema and other clerical elites. King Abdullah appointed two extra moderate clerics to the senior Ulema council in 2016 to lessen the influence of fundamentalist and traditional clerics. This law was passed with the intent of implementing Vision 2030 and starting the social liberalization process. In Saudi Arabia, clerics advocate political obedience, which tends to avoid political demands but assisted Al Saud in legitimizing his power. The involvement of clerics in advocating political submission and denouncing opposition to the government as un-Islamic legitimized the authority of Al Saud and undermined criticism of the government (Butt, 2022).

The appearance of Moderate Islam in Saudi Arabia

The expression "modest Islam" began to be used in Saudi Arabia following the activist do violence on September 11, 2001. This caused it to be first associated with international efforts to combat radicalism and put pressure on the government to review religious and academic programmes. The Saudi government decided to follow a moderate interpretation of Islam after a wave of terrorist assaults struck the country in May 2003. To combat radicalization and distance itself from accusations that it sponsored terrorism, the state initially used the term. Later, it placed the adage in a historical framework to create a narrative that centered political power at the core of the moderation strategy. However, there was fierce competition as more religious authorities began to use the phrase for their own ends, leading to a parallel discourse on moderation that was frequently at odds with the state's strategy. After the crown prince's speech in 2017, moderate Islam adopted a new



draw near that focused on reorganizing and pollinations the religious landscape rather than responding to the state's immediate religious challenges, such as radicalism.

Those academics exempt from the 2017 crackdown swiftly revised their arguments to suit the leadership and support the new religious perspective. However, their efforts to get involved have generally failed. This is because moderate Islam is simply one part of the state-led effort and is not only focused on changing the religious sector. The state's new strategy is therefore highly regulated and centralized in many ways, which may help explain why it has ignored religious experts despite their shifting viewpoints. (Alhussein, 2020).

Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS)

The young and genetics Prince Muhammad bin Salman was born in the residence of Salman bin Abdul-Aziz in Saudi Arabia on August 13, 1985. King Salman bin Abdul-third Aziz's wife, Fahda bint Falah Al Hithlain, gave birth to six sons, the eldest of whom is he. He is King Salman bin Abdul-seventh Aziz's son. Mohammed bin Salman, who has taken control of his father's government, is the de facto monarch of Saudi Arabia. In June 2017, King Salman ousted his nephew Muhammad bin Nayef and replaced him with Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince. Saudi Arabia entered a new era when Muhammad bin Salman (MBS) became a kings vice under the Saudi crown. At the early age of 36, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman Al-Saud serves as Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, First Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Defense. Prince Muhammad bin Salman was almost unknown in diplomatic and political circles at the start of 2015. Prince Muhammad was quickly appointed to several significant roles upon his father's ascension to the king in January 2015. He was nominated Minister of Defence and Secretary-General of the Royal Court simultaneously. Then, by royal decree, Prince Muhammad was appointed chair of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs and handed command of Saudi Aramco. (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Internal changes by MBS Vision 2030

The dynastic changes made by King Salman are seen as revolutionary. Since the death in 1953 of King Abdul-Aziz, the initiator of contemporary Saudi Arabia, only his child has ruled as king and crown prince. This is the first time that power has been given to the next generation in the Saudi royal family. King Abdullah died on January 23, 2015. He was the king since 2006 but had been ruling Saudi Arabia since 1995 when his older brother King Fahd had a stroke and was ruling after that. In 2015, King Muhammad bin Salman turned out to be a moderate reformer and tried to give more rights to women while mindful of the



opposition of the traditional Wahhabi clergy. The Saudi Vision 2030 will change how residents and the state interact, expanding on its current focus on the economy. The following is part of this:

- A commitment to openness in communications, government, and public input. More liberties in social life in terms of entertainment and movement, an environment where customs are kept locally.
- A thriving culture carefully considers civil liberties, women's right to vote, and their ability to run for governor in the 2015 municipal elections.
- Women in Saudi Arabia are permitted to drive and work outside the home.
- We are increasing the chance for ladies, enhancing the business climate through regulatory changes, encouraging a culture of innovation and free venture, and fostering the expansion of small- and medium-sized businesses.
- Making the Public Investment Fund the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world and constructing megaprojects will maximize investment prospects, privatize specific businesses, luring foreign direct asset, make longer the community globe to new sectors, and privatize chosen industries.
- The Saudi Vision 2030 is a national conversion initiative in addition to an economic development plan. Even though political reform is not explicitly mentioned, it has political implications. The government is attempting to include contemporary material in the curricula, such as science, philosophy, music, and the Chinese language, which will aid in the Kingdom's development of a contemporary financial system dominated by the private sector (Ghafar, 2018).

MBS Idea of 2030

Under the direction of King Salman and (MBS), the Saudi government unveiled Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to expand the country's market and decrease reliance resting on lubricate while also moving toward privatization. The overall result of Vision 2030 will be political liberalization. However, Saudi Arabia's circumstances will fight against these changes due to the government's authoritarian rule and Wahhabism, a conservative branch of Islam, which will be a crucial barrier to liberalization. When discussing Vision 2030, some Saudi intellectuals are more concerned with economic issues than political freedom but are equally concerned with religion. However, some Western intellectuals contest the notion that Saudi Arabia has a social contract since, in their view, the relationship between the Saudi government and its inhabitants is imposition rather than one based on a contract. According to these philosophers, Saudi Arabia's situation differs from Western nations. They contend that although the social contract is understood differently in eastern cultures



than in western ones, the Abayaa, which means allegiance, is essentially the social contract (Nazer, 2005).

Soon after gaining control, MBS decided to take action to improve Saudi Arabia's reputation. He has made an effort to portray a moderate Islam. In his speech to a conference in Riyadh in October 2017, MBS outlined his plan for an open-minded nation with moderation as its guiding principle and Islam as its structure. In Saudi Arabia, the succession is changing, breaking a long-standing custom. However, MBS's rise represents more than just a change in the ruler. It is a change of direction, a change of temperament, and a change of style on the inside and outside. Muhammad Bin Salman decided to take action to modify the perception of Saudi Arabia shortly after gaining control. He has made an effort to portray a moderate Islam. According to reports, MBS outlined his Vision for a tolerant nation with Islam as its constitution and moderation as its approach during the meeting in Riyadh in October 2017. We merely seek to revert to the Islam we formerly practiced—a moderate Islam that is accepting of the entire globe along with all major faiths. We will not spend the next 30 years arguing for extreme viewpoints. Today, we will obliterate them. Since taking office in 2015, MBS has enacted significant changes in the country's ultraconservative culture, and the need for women to wear the complete hijab is no longer in place. Women have access to sports since they are permitted to drive and can move around without a male family escort. Separating people based on gender is prohibited (Shahid, 2021).

The end to Islamic extremism has been demanded by crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) on numerous occasions. King Salman's accession to the throne in 2015 marked the beginning of a drive to "restore the Kingdom to a path of restraint and forbearance which MBS has been leading. The Kingdom's plan for socio-economic change, Vision 2030, has been utilized by the MBS to realign the educational system with economic rather than religious very important as compared to Islam. (Survey of 2017–2018).

Three Main Pillars:

Vision 2030 has three main pillars. It has built around three major subject matters, which set out specific objectives that are to be achieved by MBS:

- An energetic civilization: current system, cultural and entertainment, sports, Umrah, UNESCO tradition sites, existence expectation.
- Employment, women in the labour, and a thriving economy. overseas direct investment, governmental investment fund, private sector non-oil export, and global competitiveness



A determined homeland non-oil revenue, administration efficiency e-government, family unit saving, and income, nonprofits (Shahid, 2021), the Vision, 2030, 80 large projects are anticipated to be developed by 2030 to achieve these goals. The Saudi Arabian public investment fund is responsible for funding the majority of these projects

SAUDI VISION 2030 OBJECTIVES

- There are several ways to increase tourism, including encouraging residents to participate in more sports and lead healthier lifestyles, increasing access to and the value of health care services with an emphasis on preventative health, and creating safer, more livable, and more sustainable cities with better infrastructure and services. Increasing interest in and accessibility to the Holy Mosques and other historical and cultural monuments, creating a local entertainment industry, and highlighting the importance of health care services are some more approaches to accomplish this.
- Enhancing family support, enhancing young people's moral education, and modernising the social safety net to provide more specialised aid to the elderly, disabled, and poor are all ways to promote environmental sustainability. Priorities that must be addressed include increasing the number of opportunities for women and people with disabilities to enter the workforce, fostering an environment of innovation and entrepreneurship and the growth of small- to medium-sized businesses, improving the business environment through regulatory reforms, revitalizing "economic cities," and enhancing the quality of education and adapting it to the workforce needs of a modern economy.
- The process of privatizing particular industries and attracting foreign direct investment, removing many oil subsidies to aid in the modernization of the oil sector, utilising downstream opportunities in oil and petrochemicals, utilising mining of other natural resources, building renewable energy and military-industrial sectors, and further developing the retail, tourism, and manufacturing sectors.

The primary promoting transparency while tolerating corruption in no way; strengthening the lines of contact between the government and its citizens; creating e-government services; and generally raising the standard of services; finding ways to cut costs in the government while maintaining a balanced budget, boosting the revenue from fees without imposing income or wealth taxes on the general public; altering bureaucratic institutions so that more swift decision-making is possible; improving performance and productivity among government institutions and personnel by fostering a more results-oriented culture and implementing feedback. Ensuring the availability of food and water, giving people the tools to manage their finances and promote social responsibility, getting businesses to place more emphasis on giving back to society and economic sustainability, and creating a nonprofit sector that is more effective and has significant, quantifiable social, political and



economic impact on society, (KSA Vision 2030) after the completed of Vision 2030 project the Programs to Develop the Financial Sector, Fiscal Balance, Hajj and Umrah Programs, housing Programs, and Programs to develop human Capital the National Companies Promotion Program and the National Character Enrichment Program are all six, National Transformation Program, Privatization Program, Public Investment Program, Quality of Life Program, Strategic Partnership Program, National Industrial Development and Logistics Program, achieving better workforce utilization and job prospects, especially in the private sector, but also creating budgetary balance, enhancing the government's performance and capabilities, and improving the quality of education and tailoring it to workforce needs for developments.

The current religious direction of Saudi Arabia has generally been seen as a deviation from the conventional attitude it has upheld both at home and internationally. It is essential to understand the new "moderate Islam" perspective to understand the kingdom's recent actions, which range from restricting domestic religious freedom to reevaluating the function of the Muslim World League. Additionally, the new strategy is said to have played a crucial role in changing the social climate to carry out the nation's diversification goal.

Conclusion

Since Saudi Arabia is where Islam originated, it is the center of the religion. Islam's center of gravity has been in Makah and Madina since the Holy Prophet Muhammad's birth (AS) birth. Saudi Arabia has started several domestic reforms to help with its goal of diversifying the economy away from oil since the release of the countries economic and social reform plan, Vision 2030. The economy of Saudi Arabia is primarily built on oil money, and hydrocarbons account for about 85% of its exports. However, the governmental finances mainly depend on oil money, which accounts for 30 and 40 percent of the actual GDP.

Consequently, oil has a significant role in the economy indirectly. It is essential to highlight that the public sector, which includes the state-controlled oil industry, accounts for about two-thirds of the GDP. In contrast, the private sector primarily depends on government contracts. It was obvious that a social and religious scene revamp would be necessary to put diversification ideas into action when Vision 2030 was announced in 2016. Before the crackdown on religious scholars, complaints about the newly created Entertainment Authority and the introduction of movies and other entertainment events came to light. Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Sheikh claimed in January 2017 that attending concerts and movies was corrupt and detrimental since it would lessen segregation and promote gender mixing.



As the country's strategic direction for the following 15 years, Vision 2030, was unveiled in April 2016, Bin Salman assumed the initiative to restructure Saudi Arabia's economy. Saudi Arabia's economy will be reformed as part of the Vision 2030 initiative to make it more diversified and privatized. It outlines objectives and actions in several areas, including expanding non-oil revenue streams, privatizing the economy, and promoting sustainable development. Saudi Arabia's reliance on a reinter economy, which poses a sustainability issue in the future due to the country's dependence on oil resources, is one of the primary drivers behind this economic restructuring through Vision 2030. The country asserts to have a proven reserve of 266.58 billion barrels of crude oil; however, Matthew R. Simmons, an energy analyst, believes the actual quantity to be far lower because the last non-Saudi Arabian report by the General Accounting Office in 1978 only mentioned 110 billion barrels.

Moderate Islam takes a top-down strategy to resolve numerous local and international problems. Controlling the religious sector also addresses security issues while reducing the influence it once held. However, there is still an inconsistent emphasis on religion; even though modern textbooks stress the value of maintaining religious teachings and Islamic identity, religion is only occasionally and inconsistently used in the social sphere due to the recent easing of traditional norms. The Saudi government is cognizant of the significance of religion for the country's legitimacy, the role of the kingdom in the larger Muslim world, and its significance to the West in preventing religious extremism. The state is also concerned that its desire for religious legitimacy won't lead to the resurgence of oppressive elements. By centralizing thought security and ensuring that a consistent message is spread across all of its institutions, the leadership is, in turn, maintaining itself and safeguarding the legitimacy of its religion. At times, the security conundrum facing the government is brought to light by religion.

Furthermore, it undermines the latest argument for moderation, which attempts to downplay the significance of religion, particularly in the political sphere. By presenting the populace with a progressive religious discourse, moderate Islam may be best pursued. In addition to addressing the state's more pressing security issues, this could have long-term socioeconomic benefits. The infrastructure and education spending has increased due to the current oil boom, which is good news for growth in both areas. But from 2003 to 2015, government spending grew steadily, which led to these advancements. This decade saw significant growth in the economy's dependence on oil revenue and state spending.

The Vision is a strategic strategy to diminish Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and increase public service sectors like healthcare, education, infrastructure, leisure, and tourism. The key goals include boosting foreign commerce in non-oil products,



increasing economic and investment activity, and promoting the Kingdom's softer, more secular image. It also includes raising government support for the military and producing tools and munitions.



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