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**Investigating the Effect of the U.S.-Saudi Relations on the
New Saudi “Openness” Tendency**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

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Dedication

Imam as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: “The best deeds are: Salat in its stipulated hour, goodness towards parents and Jihad in the way of Allah”. Even though we know very well that there are no words to describe our gratitude to them, yet we would be honored to dedicate this humble dissertation to our dear parents who raised us well and supported us unconditionally during this long journey.

To our brothers and sisters, adorable friends, and to everyone who showed us support and love. You make our lives a wonderful experience, this dissertation is dedicated to you.

Last but not least, we are privileged to dedicate this work to every teacher from primary school to the last year of our educational career at university.

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We are very hopeful that this modest piece of research will be a successful venue for our dear colleagues at the University of Guelma and even to readers from beyond its walls.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines and investigates the effect of the U.S.-Saudi relation on the newly adopted modernization plan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Initially, it explores this latter's history of establishment and describes its institutions, culture, education, labor and life style, such as family, art, poetry and music. In order to assess this relationship, this research runs a background check on the history shared between Saudi Arabia and the United States. This latter was the one to discover oil in Saudi Arabia, which augmented its interest in the region. It provides vital statistics regarding oil production of Saudi Arabia. It also demonstrates the extent to which the U.S. needs oil. Further, it exhibits, with statistics, oil production as well as consumption status of the United States. In addition to that, it analyzes and exemplifies, to an extent, the U.S. support to the Kingdom during intense events, such as military protection and arms deals. In a different context, this research defines and analyzes the globalization era and attempts to relate it to the recent events occurring in Saudi Arabia. The objective behind building a historical overview in this dissertation, is to validate the relationship between U.S.-Saudi political ties and their influence on the social change happening in the Kingdom. Thus, this research digs deep to the roots of this sudden change. It explains the way Bin Salman came to power, and his strategic plan to reform Saudi Arabia's social lifestyle in particular. Furthermore, the U.S. support to Bin Salman indicates that it is implementing its soft power strategies in order to tighten its grip over Saudi Arabia socially. Hence, this dissertation links the dots and gathers evidence to demonstrate the United States' ideological strategy and its benefits from culturally invading Saudi Arabia.

الملخص

يتحرى هذا البحث تأثير العلاقات الأمريكية السعودية على التوجه الجديد الذي تنتهجه المملكة في إطار سياسة العصرية والانفتاح. حيث تتناول المذكرة تاريخ تأسيس المملكة السعودية، كما تصف المقومات الاجتماعية والثقافية والتعليمية التي بني عليها المجتمع السعودي، وكذا الطبيعة التاريخية للعلاقة التي تجمع بين السعودية والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. حيث كانت هذه الأخيرة أول من اكتشف البترول في الصحراء السعودية. يقدم هذا البحث إحصائيات مهمة بالنسبة للإنتاج البترولي السعودي وكذا الإنتاج والإستهلاك الأمريكي لهذه المادة الحيوية. وتشير هذه الإحصائيات إلى مدى الإدمان المتواصل للوم.أ على الطاقة البترولية. من ناحية أخرى، يبين ويحلل هذا البحث، مع تقديم أمثلة، مدى التعاون الاستراتيجي والإقليمي بين الدولتين فيما يخص التحالفات السياسية والعسكرية. وبصفة خاصة يدرس هذا البحث تأثير العلاقة الوطيدة التي تجمع بين الدولتين على التغييرات والإصلاحات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والثقافية القائمة حديثاً في المملكة، والتي سلكها محمد بن سلمان، لاسيما مشروع "رؤية 2030"، بعد أن ظفر بولاية العهد في المملكة، وبدعم غير محدود من نظيره الأمريكي، الرئيس دونالد ترامب. وبالتالي، يحاول هذا البحث تفسير هذا الدعم بتسليط الضوء على خطة الانفتاح التي تنتهجها المملكة بتوجيهات أمريكية، باستعمال طرق "القوة الناعمة" المطبقة بقوة في الشرق الأوسط.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADIPEC	Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference
ARAMCO	Saudi Arabian Oil Company
CASOC	California-Arabian Standard Oil Company
CE	Common Era
CFR	Council of Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EIA	Energy Information Administration
FBP	Fiscal Balance Program
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GPD	Gross Domestic Product
ID	Identity
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MbS	Mohammed Bin Salman
MENA	The Middle East and North African countries
NTP	National Transformation Program
OPEC	The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zone
QME	Qualitative Military Edge

TIFA	Trade and Investment Framework Agreements
TV	Television
U.S.	United States
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USS	United States Ship
WW II	World War Two

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Introduction

It is the largest state in Western Asia, predominated by a Muslim Wahhabi population that speak Arabic, Saudi Arabia, a land that hosts the holiest city for Muslims and a place that witnessed both the birth of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and the cradle of Islam 14 centuries ago. It is a land full of legendary tales and famous stories that carry a whole civilization in its pocket. This country, before its establishment, had known a lot of tribal and religious disputes; however, once it was established by Abdul Rahman Al Saud on 23 September, 1932, much ink has been spilled about it ever since.

The discovery of oil was like a breath of fresh air for Saudi Arabia. The new Middle Eastern blood kept the Saudi heart alive, while made the American mind plot for new geopolitical plans that shall serve both near and long-term agendas. The U.S. invested in Saudi Arabia's economy and sought for political and strategic cooperation during a long-life history shared between the two states. It cannot just be overlooked that Saudi Arabia was a pillar of support to the United States; while this latter was the former's tower of strength. It is, however, highly important to note that this relation was, since the beginning, built upon costs and benefits. Hence, history gathered the two states in a room full of overlapping mutual interests and goals that serve them reciprocally.

Saudi Arabia and the United States were for the most part of their diplomatic, military and economic relationship, in the same side of the ring. Despite some bumps along the road, the Saudi-American relation proved its resilience over history. It is common in the world of politics to encounter an electrified atmosphere over religious or historic controversial sites; however, it does not seem to comply to orthodox methods of hard power. Hence, the United States, after dominating the Kingdom both economically and politically, laid an eye on the Saudi social norms and values. It was not an easy task to control a public imbued with the richest Islamic morals and

values. Over history, Saudis were always known for their strong religious ties; a problem that could hinder the American influence on the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. In the meanwhile, the United States is up for new challenges in order to access the public through a more or less soft power.

Even though many assume that the Middle East has always been a focal point of war and terror, not one super power seemed to hesitate in capturing any opportunity to overarch its dominance over it; a theory that begs loads of questions regarding the value of the region, both economically and politically. Similarly, the United States had many incentives to be a major player in the region. Thus, far from media lenses, the two states closed many important political and arms deals.

In a different context, the American soft, if not manipulative, power is considered to be a support to the hard power, which can be expressed to the public through words like: adjusting, modernizing, civilizing and so on and so forth. These streams of changes cannot come out of thin air, as economy and intelligence are the two pillars that permit the U.S. to operate and implement its geopolitical/ideological plans and policies for further exploitation.

This research needs to be conducted because of the recent and the totally unexpected cultural reforms in Saudi Arabia. They are not just any casual reforms in a government seeking the betterment of the Saudi lifestyle, nor is the pace compared to the number of changes. However, various reasons lay behind this drastic change in the Kingdom's moral policies, which begs further questions regarding the matter. Therefore, this research is conducted objectively in order to explore and fully comprehend this drastic change and its outcomes. It investigates the extent to which economy and politics are involved in the matter.

This research runs a background check on the shared history between the two nations in order to fully comprehend the turns this relation had to take through the decades. Further, it

examines the way, American imperialist economic policies towards Saudi Arabia, developed dramatically through the years. It explains and exemplifies the firm control on the Saudi internal affairs as well as foreign policies, which may evidently be demonstrated in the recent cultural reforms. A living proof is portrayed in the Saudi Crown Prince, who is ready to put everything at stake for the sake of the bilateral relation with the USA—even if that means derailing the Saudis from their standards and morals, which they have rooted in their blood since the cradle of Islam.

This research attempts to answer some inquiries regarding the impact of the U.S.-Saudi economic relations on the Saudis cultural lifestyle. Among the other inquiries that will be examined in this work are: How was life in Saudi Arabia before conducting economic relations with the U.S.? How did Saudi Arabia come to the world map? How is Saudi Arabia' social structure shaped? What is the status of work and labor in Saudi Arabia? What are the details of oil discovery in the Kingdom? Is the United States dependent on Saudi oil? What is the United States status of oil production and consumption? Does the United States protect and military assist Saudi Arabia? What is openness in the globalization era? What are the goals of Vision 2030? Did the United States support MbS during his different campaigns? What was the reaction of the Saudi public after the application of alien social reforms? Does the United States benefit from the social reforms in Saudi Arabia?

The topic is controversial, yet very interesting, even at the highest levels, from politicians, officials, economists, sociologists, to scholars and researchers. Therefore, before this research can be further examined, it is highly important to state previous works conducted about the topic. It is important to state a brief literature review to shed light on previous works that dealt with the similar aspects found in it.

In their book entitled *CultureShock! Saudi Arabia: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette*, North and Harvey discuss the uniqueness of Saudi Arabia and the first impression of

foreigners about it. Moreover, they explore its land, history, food, entertainment and even work.

In the same context, William A. Rugh, in his article “Education in Saudi Arabia: Choices and Constrains”, describes the Saudi educational system and the constraints both students and teachers face during their careers. Similarly, in their article “Saudi Arabian educational history: impacts on English language teaching”, Tariq Elyas and Michelle Picard analyze the status of English language in Saudi Arabia’s educational system, clarifying the difficulties both teachers and students encounter because of the country’s conservative nature and refusal to the language of ‘disbelievers’. They exemplify how religion creates difficulties for education and language apprehension in particular.

Al-Asmari, M.G.H, in his article entitled “Saudi Labor Force: Challenges and Ambitions”, discusses in depth the most common constraints in Saudi labor force, while providing key statistics to enrich the study. In a different context, Sorkhabi Rasoul, in his article entitled “The Emergence of the Arabian Oil Industry” profoundly investigates the details of oil discovery in the Middle East, while focusing on Saudi Arabia as his area of interest.

Christopher M. Blanchard, a specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, discusses in his congressional document “Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations”, the trends in the U.S.-Saudi relations, the priorities and prospects between the two governments, while presenting, in statistics, the bilateral interactions in regards of economy and military support. Similarly, Thomas Clayton, in his congressional report “Arms Sales in the Middle East: Trends and Analytical Perspectives for U.S. Policy” investigates and reports from both official and unofficial open sources recent state-to-state arms sales from the United States to the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, providing vital statistics to the research.

In order to draw a clear picture regarding Mohammed Bin Salman’s rise to power, it is imperative to refer to Ben Hubbard’s article “MBS: The Rise of a Saudi Prince” on The New

York Times, which happens to be the title of his book too. In his article, Hubbard narrates the growth of Mohammed Bin Salman since his childhood to the day he reaches his position as Crown Prince. He reports a very detailed description of Mohammed's personal life and emphasizes on his relation with some politicians, his wealth extravagance and his involvement in suspicious matters.

This research is conducted through the historical and the qualitative methods. It aims at understanding and analyzing the impact of the Saudi-American economic relations on the Saudi lifestyle. On the one hand, the historical method is important to explore past events regarding the topic, through a detailed chronological research on the emergence of Saudi Arabia, its economy and culture. On the other hand, the qualitative method is important to explicate the impact of the U.S.-Saudi economic relation on cultural reforms in KSA.

This dissertation includes three chapters. The first chapter entitled "The Historical Evolution of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Life" deals with the historical progress of the Kingdom, its emergence and the different cultural aspects that makes it a unique state, such as religion, food, art, etc. Further it examines the status of both work and labor in Saudi Arabia and their ties to the Islamic teachings. Moreover, it explores women's participation in the labor force and clarifies the Saudi need for the integration of women in the national economy. The second chapter entitled "An Overview on the U.S.-Saudi Relation" deals with the U.S.-Saudi economic relationship. It investigates oil discovery in the peninsula and later loop the circle around Saudi Arabia. It also demonstrates the U.S. status regarding oil production and consumption and its dependence on it. Finally, it explores and exemplifies the U.S. political and military assistance to Saudi Arabia and the congressional reactions concerning the matter. The final chapter entitled "Saudi Road Map Towards Openness" deals with the openness tendency in the globalization era. Further it examines the U.S.' role in promoting for openness in the Middle East. Moreover, it

introduces MbS' Vision 2030. Furthermore, it explores in depth the new cultural reforms, the reasons behind them and the public reaction. Finally, it demonstrates the influence and the gain of the United States from these reforms.

Chapter One

The Historical Evolution of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Life

Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula as it occupies 2,149,690 square kilometers; an area large enough to cover the majority of the Peninsula (Verner 18). Further, despite the large size of the country, its population is relatively small, as the Kingdom's estimated population was around 33,091,113 Saudi in 2018 (US Cong. Research Service 2). Saudi Arabia shares borders with Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait from the North, the Persian Gulf, Qatar, the United Arab of Emirates and Oman from the east with a part of Oman from the Southeast, in addition to Yemen from the South and Southwest, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba from the West, which makes a total border length of 4,000 km (Ochsenwald et al).

Because of its vast desert, Saudi Arabia is one of the hottest countries in the world. Further, in spite of its land's size, the country is divided into four main areas: Hijaz, Asir, Najd, and the Eastern Province (Al-Hasa). The western coast is a set of two mountain ranges separated by a gap around the area of Mecca. Additionally, Hijaz stretches along the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aqaba in the north to Asir under the holy city of Mecca. Starting from south of Mecca, Asir also stretches along the Red Sea, to the borders of Yemen. Moreover, Najd is the largest region in Saudi Arabia, which hosts the capital of the country, Riyadh. Furthermore, a highland rises from 600 meters in the east to approximately 1500 meters in the west. Al-Hasa, the eastern province was named after the huge oasis, which is to be found in that region with its enormous springs of water (Library of Congress 51-53). Finally, The Eastern Province extends along the Persian Gulf. See (fig. 1).



Fig.1. Saudi Arabia Region Map

Source: “Saudi Arabia Region Map.” Global City Map. Web. Accessed 28 Apr. 2020.

1. Prospects for the Birth of Saudi Arabia

The land in which today’s Saudi Arabia was established, was the very land that hosted the cradle of Islam hundred years ago. Consequently, Islam shaped the history and reality of Saudi Arabia. Historically, the birth of the Kingdom dates back to the 18th century, when both Imam Muhammad Bin Abd Al Wahhab (1703 - 1792) and Muhammad Bin Saud (1697- 1765) formed a resilient alliance (Etheredge 45).

1.1. Emergence of Saudi Arabia

The Muslim scholar, Muhammad Bin Abd Al Wahhab, preached against leaders, scholars and traditions that were deviating from the teachings of the Quran and Sunna, while advocated to return to the original Islam. As a result, scholars opposed Abd Al Wahhab's views, wronged and oppressed him. Thus, he sought protection in Ad-Dariyah, from Al Saud—Muhammad Bin Saud was the leader of Ad-Dariyah (Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters* 14). In 1744, they formed an alliance and took an oath to restore the true practices of Islam in Arabia (I. Bowen 59). In light of this event, Bin Saud and Bin Abd Al Wahhab established the first Saudi state under the Wahhabi spiritual guidance and Al Saud's political rule (Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters* 13, 14).

Further, in 1765, Abdul Aziz Bin Muhammad took over his deceased father's mission. By 1773, he captured Riyadh, and for fifteen years, he continued to expand, until he ruled over the whole Najd region. By the early 19th century, the Saudi-Wahhabi state controlled most of the Arabian Peninsula, including the two holy cities, Makkah and Medinah ("History of the Kingdom"). These conquests (capturing the holy cities) echoed to the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world. During 1812-1813, the Ottoman Empire ordered the Egyptian forces to regain control over the holy cities and the Hejaz region. Later, in 1818, it sieged the capital of the Saudi-Wahhabi state, Ad-Dariyah, and turned it into an uninhabitable land, through the destruction of the water wells and cutting down date palms (Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters* 14; "The Kingdom of Saudi"). Consequently, the event marked the end of the first Saudi state.

Turki (1755–1834), a cousin of Saud Bin Abdul Aziz established the second Saudi state few years after the decline of the first one. Cordesman adds that in 1824, Al Saud Family regained control over the central region of Arabia. Moreover, Turki ruled Najd region for ten years and changed its capital to Riyadh. In 1834, Faisal succeeded his assassinated father, Turki. Four years later, the Egyptian forces defeated and captured Faisal Bin Turki, and regained control

over Najd (15). The following five years witnessed the Egyptian declaration of independence from the Ottoman rule and withdrawal of its forces from Najd region. Consequently, Faisal managed to escape from his captivity in Cairo and returned to Najd in order to reclaim his rightful reign. Al Saud family remained in control and protected Arabia from any external threats (“History of the Kingdom”). Yet, the internal conflicts over the throne had weakened the Saudi state.

By 1871, Muhammad Bin Rashid, a tribal leader in Hail, had established a political body that had been spreading its influence to Northern Najd. He came to an agreement with the Ottomans to capture Al-Hasa from Al Saud (“History of the Kingdom”). In 1891, with the help of the Ottoman Empire, Al Rashid house captured the capital of the Saudi state, and forced Abdul Rahman Bin Faisal—ruler at that time—and his family out of their fortress. Finally, House Al Rashid terminated the second Saudi state, while Abdul Rahman, sought refuge with Bedouin tribes of the Empty Quarter. Later he traveled to Kuwait and stayed there with his son Abdul Aziz until 1902 (“The Kingdom of Saudi”).

According to Vassiliev, the establishment of the last Saudi state (the modern state) was quite an event. Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, was born on 15 January 1876 in Riyadh and spent his early life with his father in exile in Kuwait. In December 1901, Abdul Aziz and some of his men (around forty Wahhabi warriors) started marching from Kuwait to Riyadh with the goal of recapturing the Saud family’s stronghold from Al Rashid. They arrived, raided and captured Riyadh in January 1902 (*The History of Saudi*). Since then, he settled in Riyadh, and sought after Wahhabi connections. Besides, he declared himself as the head of Al Saud and a Wahhabi imam. For the next twelve years, he spread his conquest around Riyadh in Najd region, and forced the weakened Ottomans out of the eastern region of Al-Hasa. Abdul Aziz was successful in uniting tribes including warring ones under his rule. By 1924-1925, he captured

Hejaz region together with the holy cities. Finally, on 23 September 1932, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became an official Islamic state. It chose Arabic as its national language and the Holy Quran as its constitution (US Cong. Fed. Research Div., *Saudi Arabia* 21).

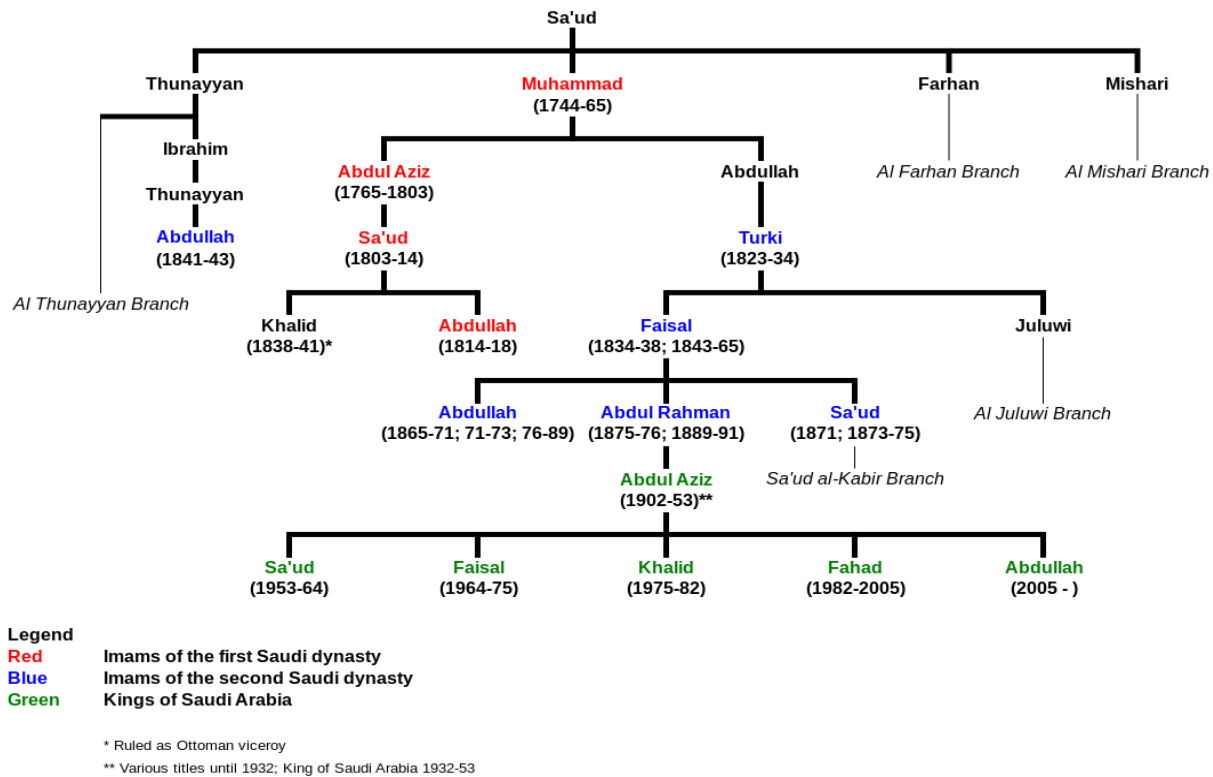


Fig.2. Family Tree

Source: “Family Tree.” House of Saud, 14 Sept. 2014. Web. Accessed 12 May 2020.

The family tree above displays all the rulers of Al Saud and the period of their rule starting from the first Saudi state until present day. In red are the rulers of the first Saudi state; in blue are the rulers of the second state; and in green are the kings of modern Saudi Arabia. See (**fig. 2**).

1.2. Ruling Family

After the establishment of the country in 1932, Abdul Aziz ruled Saudi Arabia as a monarch until his death in 1953. After that, six of his sons succeeded him: Saud, Faisal, Khalid, Fahd, Abdullah, and Salman—the current king—respectively. After Abdul Aziz’ death in 1953,

his son Saud succeeded him. Moreover, Saud's time in power was marked for his government's financial corruption, extravagant spending and distribution of wealth. By 1964, the royal family and clerics, responded to the public's dissatisfaction by removing Saud from power and appointing his half-brother Faisal as king. Afterwards, Faisal promoted modernization, adopted Western technology and improved public education. During the period between 1947 and 1973, Saudi Arabia remained neutral towards the Arab-Israeli conflict; however, it joined the Arab oil boycott of the United States. Despite his efforts, Faisal's reign was not satisfactory (both from inside and outside the country) and in 1975 his nephew assassinated him; therefore, Crown Prince Khalid was crowned king of Saudi Arabia. During his reign, revenues from oil were by hundreds of billions and the government started a series of building schools and infrastructures (US Cong. Fed. Research Div. "Country Profile" 3).

In 1979, Juhayman al-Utaybi accompanied with several hundreds of Wahhabi descendants took over the great mosque of Makkah. He accused Al Saud of corruption because of their transactions with the West, and called for the return to the original practice of Islam. Two weeks later, the great mosque was recovered from the insurgents. Saudi authorities beheaded the survivors in their hometowns ("A Chronology: The House of Saud"). Moreover, in 1982, King Khalid passed away, and was succeeded by King Fahd—ex-crown prince. After his coronation, King Fahd continued to develop the infrastructure. Unfortunately, the mid-80s had witnessed an oil prices crash and brought about the Middle Eastern economy to a tough spot. In 1988, Iraq and Iran came to an agreement whereby both states stipulate to a ceasefire; yet, Iraq invaded Kuwait—one of the Gulf Cooperation Council members—on 2 August 1990. In 1991, after the Gulf War broke out, King Fahd refused Osama Bin Laden's offer to help fight back Iraq and asked the U.S. and a multinational coalition for reinforcements to defend the Saudi Arabian

borders. In 1992, he announced the country's first written constitution (US Cong. Fed. Research Div. "Country Profile" 4).

Abdullah was the sixth King of Saudi Arabia. He ruled from 1995 to 2005 as de-facto replacement ruler, when his half-brother Fahd was incapable of leading the country due to his health condition. Further, Abdullah was crowned King as soon as his brother Fahd met his death on 1 August 2005 (Hahn 14). Good relations with the United States and Britain, especially in arms sales, marked his reign. Moreover, the newly crowned king granted women more rights, such as the right to participate in Olympics and the right to vote in the municipal elections ("Kings of Saudi Arabia"). Earlier, before 09/11 attacks, Abdullah visited the United States several times and formed good relations with President George W. Bush and his family. Therefore, despite the media's attempts to magnify the news of the 15 Saudi hijackers in order to shakedown the special relationship, Saudi Arabia and the United States had proved the tight diplomatic relation and sought for demolishing "Islamic extremism" (US Cong. Fed. Research Div. "Country Profile" 4).

2. Institutions of the Society

Besides all physiological needs, such as air, water, food, sleep, clothing, and reproduction, as well as, safety needs, such as personal security, health, etc., humans are in need for love and belonging. Emotional and spiritual stability is as much important as the physical one, through the development and growth of a healthy society based on institutional norms and customs. In Saudi Arabia, these social guidelines are primarily taught in family, mosques and tribes.

2.1. Family

North and Tripp view the Saudi family as a large, extended group of people composed of several related generations, three to four generations, living under the same roof—the head of the

family is the oldest one. The younger generations ought to build a relationship based upon respect towards the elders, while also take care of them when they become too old. Since, foreign labor is available in cheap prices in Saudi Arabia, most Saudi families, both rich and working classes, tend to hire servants of Indonesian, Philippines, or Egyptian origins (52). Moreover, the Saudis build high walls in order to protect their properties from sandstorms, which are very common in the region, while also to protect their families from any undesired outdoor contact. Therefore, this protectionist nature of Saudis might isolate members of the family—especially females—from any alien connection. In the same context, Saudi parents expect their children to live with them even after reaching adulthood. Moreover, married men are even supposed to share their parents' house or at least live in the same neighborhood (52).

2.1.1. Marriage

Marriage is an important aspect in the Muslim family, and is critical in understanding conjugality in the Saudi culture. Conventionally, and unlike western countries, Saudi families opt for arranged marriage within the same tribe or family, i.e. young men and women are encouraged to marry cousins or other relatives, typically first cousins, from the father's side, or second cousins, from the mother's side, as a secondary choice. Exceptionally, marriage outside the tribe or family can happen at times, in order to serve a higher purpose, usually with the intention of settling disputes and differences between rival tribes (Rahaman 5). In the same context, according to McKay Betsy, marriage between close relatives is very common in Saudi Arabia, which eventually results in several and different types of chronic diseases. For example, "it causes type two diabetes (affects about 32% of adult Saudis); hypertension (affects 33%); and higher rates of severe genetic diseases such as, cystic fibrosis or Thalassemia – a blood disorder, sickle cell anemia, spinal muscular atrophy, deafness and muteness" (qtd. in Rahaman 5). Despite the fact

that mothers used to influence, or even choose their sons' future wives (sometimes at a very young age); recently, Saudi men favor choosing their brides out of their own choice (Al-Saif qtd. Achoui 5).

Further, Achoui assumes that marriage in Saudi Arabia yields to the Sharia law, as the husband is required religiously as well as legally to offer his future-wife a dowry regardless of its value. Usually, the dowry is a set of jewels and/or other valuable items, in order to assist her in hard times. In addition, the responsibility of providing lies on the husband's shoulders, even if his wife works and is rich, unless she decides voluntarily to support her husband financially, he has no right to reach into her purse (5).

2.1.2. Polygamy

For several reasons, Islam has permitted polygamy; Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself had several wives together after the death of his first wife Khadija. Thus, Quran and Sunna stipulate that any Muslim has the right to marry up to four women at a time as long as he is able to be just and equal in his treatment towards them. This is clearly stated in Quran:

And if you fear that you cannot deal justly with orphans, then marry from the women who seem good to you, two or three or four. But if you fear that you cannot do justice (to so many), then one (only) or, the (captives) that your right hand possesses. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice (An-Nisa: 03).

And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear Allah - then indeed, Allah is ever forgiving and Merciful. (An-Nisa: 129)

Arguably, scholars question the legitimacy given to polygamy through these Quranic verses; yet, others believe that polygamy was a custom to a particular period to resolve a specific issue (Yamani 12-13).

Achoui argues that polygamy in modern Saudi Arabia is no longer common as it used to be in times of war and conquests. It is decreasing due to a number of factors namely, urbanization, development, education, and cost of living. Generally, educated and working women refuse the idea of polygamy and tend to stipulate monogamy in marriage contracts. In Islam, men are the ones to provide financially for their families, whether they are monogamous or polygamous. It is imperative for them to treat and to provide equally for their wives and children (5-6). In 1989, Al-Saif' statistics showed that only 4.8% of Saudi parents are open to giving their daughters' hands as a second wife (Achoui 6). Furthermore, and in 1991 Gharib made a research whereby he concluded that 86.8% of husbands in the Gulf are monogamous, 9.6% have two wives, 1.1% have three wives, while only 0.33% have four wives (Achoui 6).

2.1.3. Divorce

Considered that Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam and most of its population is Muslim, its divorce rules are built on the Islamic rules extracted from the Holy Quran and the Prophet' Sunna. According to the latter rules, any married Muslim couple should preserve their marriage and fight for its success, so they spend their lives together in peace and harmony. However, if the couple could not hold onto their marriage and everything is falling apart, where problems and issues are left unsolved, they may divorce each other respectfully and in accordance with the Islamic rules regarding divorce (Bahammam and Rezzouk 218). In the patriarchal Saudi Arabia, A man may divorce his partner unilaterally and with no restrictions just "by pronouncing talaq", while the woman may divorce her husband only through court and in a limited number of

situations. First, through “faskh”, in which the woman requests to divorce her husband from the court. Second, through (khul’) or “redemptive divorce” where the woman pays an amount of money to the husband, which they agreed on, to get her divorce. Moreover, women in Saudi Arabia renounce their financial rights to avoid disagreements and obtain their divorce faster. In addition, matrimonial assets do not exist in Saudi Arabia (“Thematic Report” 21).

For the last decade, divorce cases in Saudi Arabia have grown significantly despite the awareness campaigns carried out by the government. The number of cases has known a continuous increase each year from 34.6 thousand cases in 2011 to reach 57.5 thousand cases in 2017 as shown in the graph below (see **Fig. 3**). Moreover, an article by the Daily Times reports that the home quarantine and curfew to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic helped Saudi women discover their husbands’ acts of polygamy, which made divorce cases in Saudi Arabia rise by 30% in February (“Wives Detect Polygamy”).

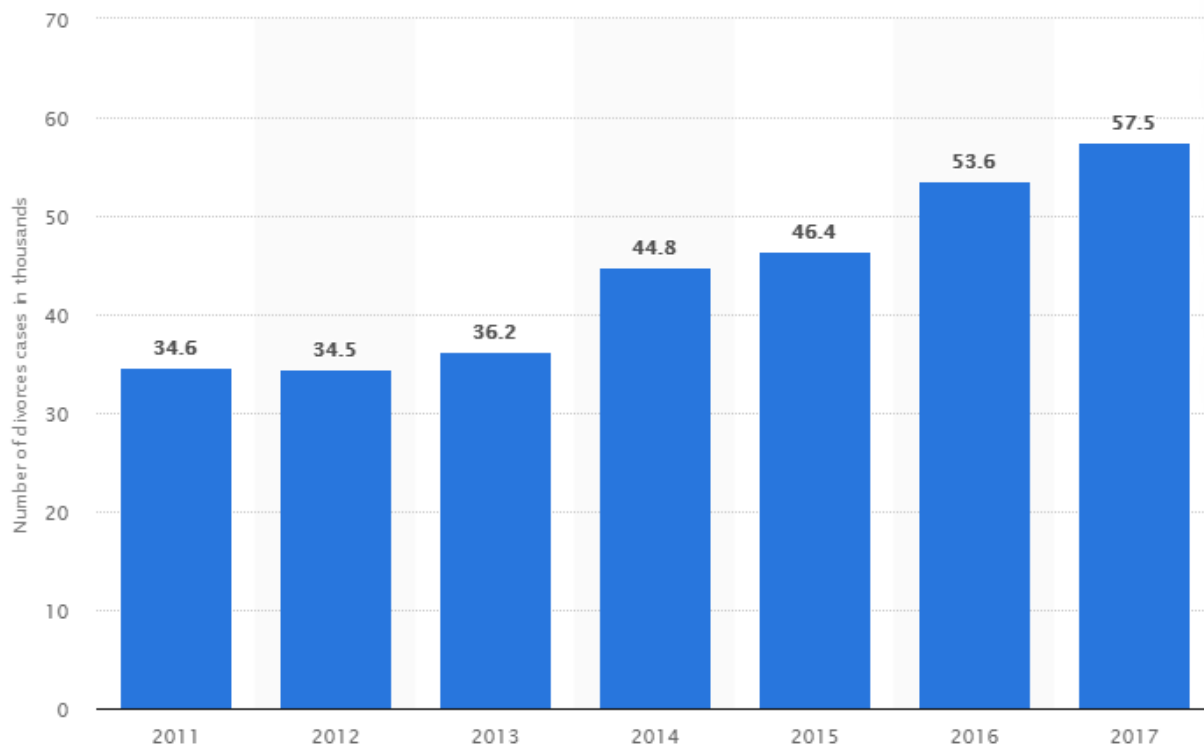


Fig. 3. Number of Divorce Cases in Saudi Arabia from 2011 to 2017

Source: “Number of Divorce Cases in Saudi Arabia from 2011 to 2017”. Statista. Web. Accessed 06 Sept. 2020.

2.2. Mosque

Every religion has its peculiar, sacred building devoted to worship whatever its adherents believe in. Likewise, Muslims have their own sacred place in which they worship their God. This special place is known as Al Masjid, which literally translates into the “mosque” in English. Mahmud asserts that Saudis (mainly men) carry out their daily prayers, weekly Jumu’ah and the two Feasts prayers in mosques. Even though Islam in present time is still a lifestyle, where its laws and regulations are parts of every Saudi’s life, mosques are solely oriented to serve specified purposes. In addition to being a holy place to practice daily prayers, mosques generally play the

role of a preschool for Saudi children, as they are taught Islamic morality, ethics, and values (280).

Formerly, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made his own house Islam's first mosque after he and his followers emigrated to Yathrib– Medina in modern day Saudi Arabia– in the seventh century. The Prophet (PBUH) emigrated from Mecca to Medina because people from his mother tribe oppressed him and his followers and even killed some of them (Collins 8). His home was a typical Arabian style house with a large courtyard surrounded by long walls, and a roof supported by columns, which inspired mosque building for centuries (Weisbin). Furthermore, the mosque did not function only as a place for prayer and education; it was a place for the poor to get food and alms, and served military purposes such as strategizing and distributing bounties on the Prophet's followers; and finally it satisfied the judicial needs of the new community. The second mosque in Islam came to existence after few years from the establishment of the first one, precisely in 628 after the Prophet (PBUH) and his followers conquered Mecca and destroyed the idols inside the Kaaba (Collins 10).

Moreover, Saudi Arabia is the homeland of the two holy cities for Muslims, Mecca and Al Medina, where they hold respectively the two holy mosques, the Great Mosque (Masjid Al-Haram) and the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid an-Nabawi). The first is the largest mosque in the world and the second mosque to come to existence. It surrounds Kaaba, the direction of prayer, and the destination of millions of Muslims around the world for pilgrimage (Hajj) in the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. The second is the site where Muslims visit the Prophet Mohammed's tomb, and it is the second largest mosque in the world (North and Tripp 32).

2.3. Tribe

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, a tribe is a social group comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with slaves, dependents, or adopted strangers (“Tribe”). The tribe is central to every Bedouin social identity, considering the numerous tribal associations Bedouins had experienced. However, not all tribal people are Bedouins; they can be agriculture or urban individuals. Generally, a tribe or a tribal group brings together those of the same patrilineal lineage so it creates a solid association in order to defend its individuals and enforce law and justice through applying order over chaos. Furthermore, lineage is what links nomadic people to their tribes. For example, when someone is forsaken by his lineage, he is to cut all links with his tribe. Although all lineages within a tribe are equal in status, tribes are not. Despite the fact that adopting strangers from lower-status tribes violates the patrilineal lineage, it became a casual event. For examples, when a man from a lower-status tribe joins his wife’s tribe, their children will take their mother’s descent (Library of Congress 68).

Every tribe in Saudi Arabia has a leader, known as ‘sheikh’. Every sheikh has to be well familiar with tribal matters, known for his good reputation, wisdom, and excellence in problem solving. Moreover, like any leader, the sheikh is expected to be just, capable in management and decision-making. Further, whenever there is a public matter, a general agreement is imperative, yet the final word comes back to the sheikh (69). That is to say, the sheikh listens to every side of his tribesmen’s arguments, about a particular issue, then he makes a final decision which meets their expectations that justice will be served. Moreover, way before the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom, raiding was common as an income and a source of wealth and status; however, some sheikhs saved their people a lot of trouble, by paying stronger allies in the region in exchange for protection. In fact, the sheikh of the protector tribe cannot accept to protect a weaker tribe, unless he distributes the payment among his tribesmen. During the 1920s, Abd al

Aziz challenged the protector-protected relationships between tribes, and freed weaker tribes from payment (70). By the rise of the new country, tribes became less independent from the government, and the settlement of nomads undermined their trade and industry profits. In spite of the decline of the tribe's economic importance, it (the tribe) is critical to the construction of the Saudi identity (70).

The relationship between the ruling family and the leaders of the tribes is similar to the relationship between the sheikh and his tribesmen. While a sheikh is expected to solve disputes and give good advice to his folks, the ruling family is expected to intervene in disputes between tribes, and to ensure the wellbeing of citizens. Likewise, the ruling family opts for a consensus policy regarding domestic affairs, where general agreements are required. Precisely, the king and the governors of provinces gather and hold a hearing session, so citizens' voices can be heard. Furthermore, the King can express indirectly his deepest gratitude to the sheikh, through institutions of the state. For example, the King can offer free healthcare, good wages, and grants for nomads to settle in houses (69, 70).

3. Education and Labor in Saudi Arabia

Since Saudi Arabia is one of the fewest nations that is still attached to Islamic teachings, it is evident that its position vis-à-vis education and work is similar to that of Islam (Cavendish 96). Therefore, in order to comprehend how the Saudi Kingdom views both education and work, it is highly important to note the way Islam views both concepts.

First, education is a core value in the Islamic religion, as it occupies a significant position in every Muslim's life. It is transparent in the Prophet of Islam' (PBUH) saying (Hadith): "Every Muslim, man and woman, is duty-bound to acquire learning" (M. W. Khan). Moreover, the Islamic religion frequently emphasizes the importance of learning. For instance, Quran orders Muslims in the first five verses of Surat al-'Alaq, to read: "1. Read: In the Name of your Lord

who created. 2. Created man from a clot. 3. Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous. 4. He who taught by the pen. 5. Taught man what he never knew”. in Surat al-Baqarah Allah says: “And He taught Adam the names, all of them; then he presented them to the angels, and said, “Tell Me the names of these, if you are sincere.” (Itani 1-238). Furthermore, historically Muslims framed learning according to four main aspects:

1. Time: “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”,
2. Place: “Seek knowledge even if it is far as China”,
3. Gender: “Seeking of knowledge is a duty of every Muslim”, and
4. Source: “Wisdom is the lost property of the believer, he should take it even if he finds it in the mouth of a mushrik” (Rizvi).

Each one of these aspects magnifies the value of knowledge in Islam, and urges every Muslim—by any means possible— “even if it is far as China”, to dig deep into the different sciences whether they are material or spiritual, and to peruse all avenues possible that lead to valuable knowledge.

Second, work, and unlike the western view towards it as a necessity to one’s survival, Islam has a broader view regarding this concept. Hence, it (Islam) not only urges Muslims to work, it also considers work as an obligation and a duty—excluding those, who are mentally/physically unable to work. Moreover, because of work’s utmost significance in the Islamic religion, the word ‘amal’ which literally translates into ‘work’ in Arabic, is mentioned in 360 Quranic verses (Mufti). Furthermore, Islam enumerates various advantages of work. First, it grants every Muslim individual/state with financial independence, as it is mentioned in the Prophet Muhammed’ saying: “Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David (PBUH), used to eat from the earnings of his manual labor.” [Sahih al-Bukhari 2072, Book 34, Hadith 25] (Stefan 75).

Second, according to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), those who work and help others will be rewarded by God: “Never does a Muslim plant, or cultivate, but has reward for him for what the beasts eat, or the birds eat or anything else eats out of that.” [Sahih Muslim 1552 c, Book 22, Hadith 9] (Kheyamy). Finally, work will exempt anyone from begging or pleading other people for mercy and food to feed themselves and their loved ones, as Prophet Muhammed says: “It is better for anyone of you to take a rope (and cut) and bring a bundle of wood (from the forest) over his back and sell it and Allah will save his face (from the Hell-Fire) because of that, rather than to ask the people who may give him or not.” [Sahih al-Bukhari 1471, Book 24, Hadith 74] (M.K.R. Khan).

Saudi Arabia has derived all its laws and values from Qur’an and Sunnah—the collection of practices of the Prophet Muhammad(PBUH)—and “has adopted the Qur’an as its constitution”. They are these values which highlight the obligation, duty and importance, as an area of interest, education and work has in the Kingdom since its establishment. (North, and Tripp 67-68).

3.1. Education in Saudi Arabia

Since the 7th century, Muslim preachers in the Arabian Peninsula taught young boys and girls Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet in mosques and ‘Kuttab’ (equivalent of schools nowadays), in the western region of Hijaz (W. A. Rugh). In the past, education in the peninsula was of two lineages, traditional and formal. The former, usually produces an individual who masters Qur’an and Hadith, which are till now the center of their educational system, while also masters his regions’ history and the art of survival in the desert. However, the latter was chiefly directed for religious and simple courses including basic math and Arabic language (Tripp and Winder 122).

According to Dakhiel the very first school that was established on the Saudi land was called *Alsulatiyah* School in 1872. Moreover, in the beginning of the 20th century, Mecca was known for three types of schools: schools that were established by the Ottomans in 1905; Hashimite schools that were established in 1913; private schools that were established after the first two ones. In 1924, the department of general knowledge (*Modeeriat Al-Maarif Al-Ammah*), supervised the first establishment of a formal educational system. Later on, in 1945 King Abdul-Aziz Bin Abdulrahman Al Saud ordered his government to establish new schools, as education was accessible exclusively to the children of wealthy people. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia—announced the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953. The policies of the ministry and *Modeeriat Al-Maarif Al-Ammah*, were derived from the general policy of the country, which necessitates the integration of Islamic values and traditions (71). Moreover, it was not until 1964 that education was provided for girls, followed by building schools all over the Kingdom by the end of 1990s (Rabaah et al. 3).

Since the Wahabi movement is the first to encourage education (mainly religious), it was hard for girls to get proper education. To them, members of society should educate themselves in accordance with the laws of Islam (*Sharia*); thus, women are supposed to know ‘enough’ to be good wives and mothers and nothing more. However, in the 1960s, Crown Prince Faisal’s wife, Iffat, inspired him to fund and promote girls’ education in the Kingdom (Library of Congress 97). Decades later, and according to a study made by UNESCO in 2010/11, statistics proved that females’ status in education in Saudi Arabia is no longer as it used to be in the past, and that they make almost half of the total students in all levels. (qtd in. Rabaah et al 3- 4) See (**Table. 1**)

Table.1. Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia.

Level	Age	Number of Students
Pre-primary education	3-5	Total: 106,301 in
		1,521 Kindergarten
Primary School	6-12	Total: 2,493,125
		Girl: 1,227,699
Intermediate School	12-15	Total: 1,188,342
		Girls: 553,415
General Secondary School	15-18	Total: 1,096,174
		Girls: 490,122
University and college	18-22	1 Million in 2010/11
		Compared to 7.000 in the 70s

Source : Rabaah, Alqassem., et al. “Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia: Report.” *World Journal of Education*, 22 Sept. 2016, Pdf. Accessed 4 May 2020.

Despite the remarkable progress achieved in the field of education, the Kingdom’s educational system received harsh criticism. For instance, Elyas and Picard believe that rote learning is highly adopted as a learning method. This latter hinders the learner’s level of critical thinking. Further, this sort of uncalculated decisions might seem as small fragments compared to the huge size of the other educational material, yet the collateral damage it prints in the unconscious mind of children will forcibly lead to radicalism (137). Hence, the Saudi educational system needed quality rather than quantity, and deduction rather than memorization; however, the reluctance did not stop at this point

Since the Kingdom was unenthusiastic about modernist approaches and alien notions to its educational system, the use of the English language was severely opposed. For some preachers, the use of English signifies the abundance of Islamic teachings (Azuri). Hence, teaching English should be stripped off any cultural connotation, which would be nearly impossible for any language instructor to apply it that way. In the same context, W. Rugh confirms that “Pedagogy in most Arab schools and universities is typically based more on rote learning than it is on critical thinking, problem solving skills, analysis and synthesis of information, and learning how to learn” (408). Therefore, teachers of English language in Saudi Arabia suffer from a teacher-centered pedagogy, the lack of cognitive skills and problem solving, which promote for memorization and absence of authenticity in teaching a foreign language. In other words, the educational setting encouraged in Saudi Arabia promoted for a “decontextualized or even Islamized English” (Elyas and Picard 143).

Later on, despite the anti-English voices and opposition to any western cultural integration in Saudi educational programs, the international community and political atmosphere, as well as the economic necessity, pressured the Kingdom to promote English. As this latter is a lingua franca, and since Saudi Arabia’s economy is one of the largest in the world, it is evident that teaching English is unavoidable to administer and control multi-national oil and gas companies alongside with investments abroad (Alzahrani 6-7).

Finally, this is a famous saying amongst Muslim:

“من تعلم لغة قوم أمن مكرهم”

“He whoever learns other people’s language will be secured from their cunning”.

This saying is used in Saudi Arabia as a motto to promote learning foreign languages, for what benefits it can bring to them (Elyas and Picard 141).

3.2. Labor in Saudi Arabia

Away from urbanism, and the complexity of the western industry, the Saudi labor force has gone through a tremendous journey since oil discovery. The majority of the population has had a traditional nomadic lifestyle, which did not require any special training nor a high college degree (Fallatah and Syed 8). However, the rapid development and growth in the energy sector obliged the Saudi government to take firm action to sustain and create new jobs for the locals (Library of Congress 133). The first wage of workers in Saudi Arabia came to existence after the creation of the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO). This latter opened the door for further side projects, such as: railroads, small factories, etc. Furthermore, Aramco was the main reason behind the increase in Saudi and non-Saudi labor forces, as statistics show the magnificent growth in the number of workers in the company since 1935 (Al-Asmari 21-22). See **(Table. 2)**.

Table. 2. The Increase in the Number of Aramco Workers from 1935 till 2000.

Year	Number of workers
1935	141
1940	3050
1945	11196
1950	16866
1955	20534
1987	43481
2000	62676

Source: Al-Asmari, M.G.H. "Saudi Labor Force: Challenges and Ambitions." *KAU: Arts & Humanities*, 2008, Pdf. Accessed 5 May 2020.

According to Wilson, in the beginning of the 1970s the Kingdom adopted a ‘five-year development plan’, which paved the way for new methods and mechanisms to create a healthy industry and job opportunities. He assumes that because of oil riches, Saudi Arabia started constructing airports, schools, and hospitals, etc. (178). Moreover, Al-Asmari believes that the success of Saudi Arabia, since adopting this plan, depended on the capital of Saudi Arabia and the expatriate employees. In the same context, the same author claims that foreign work force was considered to be better than its Saudi counterpart, which explains the heavy dependence on foreigners from neighboring Arab countries, such as: Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine; as well as, non-Arab countries, such as: Pakistan, India, Japan and Philippines, etc. (22). The following table illustrates the Saudi and non-Saudi labor force increase between the years 1975 and 2000. The number of workers is in thousands. See (**Table. 3**)

Table. 3. Saudi vs non-Saudi Labor Force between 1975 and 2000.

Year/%	Saudi	Non-Saudi	Total
1975	1439.7	484	1923.7
%	74.8	25.2	100
1980	1818.7	1694	3512.7
%	52.7	47.3	100
1985	1621.1	2721	4342.1
%	37.3	62.7	100
1990	1923.2	3848.6	5771.8
%	33.3	66.7	100
1995	2357.1	3628.2	5985.3
%	39.4	60.6	100

2000	3172.9	4003.4	7176.3
%	44.2	56.8	100

Source: Al-Asmari, M.G.H. “Saudi Labor Force: Challenges and Ambitions.” *KAU: Arts & Humanities*, 2008, Pdf. Accessed 5 May 2020

During the oil boom, Saudi Arabia’ substantial development and industrialization, demanded a huge number of workers (Budhwar and Mellahi 107). Consequently, the employment rate skyrocketed between the years 1970-1995 (Al-Asmari 23). Furthermore, the majority of workers were foreigners who did not abide to the Saudi values nor practiced their Islamic devotions. Therefore, the Saudi population as well as the government were concerned about the aftermath of the new inhabitants’ impact on the Saudi social lifestyle. Thus, Saudi Arabia decided to limit their visas, “... the Saudis adopted the practice of controlled labor contracts whereby foreign workers are brought into the Kingdom for stipulated periods of time on specific jobs, under block visas. Many Yemenis have entered on this basis and are increasing as a percentage of the foreign work force” (23).

A considerable progress has been made since the 1980s, as the Kingdom sought for the Saudization in the labor market. In the developmental plan of 1985-1995, the Kingdom worked through reducing the number of the foreign labor force. Moreover, during the same period, only 20% of foreigners were employed in the public sector; whereas, 90% of them were employed in the private one. As a result, the Saudi government instructed all private firms and companies to reduce the non-Saudi employees at a rate of 5% per year, while replacing them with Saudi employees accordingly (Mahdi, Barrientos 75). Despite the measures taken by the government—which enhanced to some degree the Saudi participation in the private sector—statistics show the majority of Saudi nationals work in the public sector. See (**Fig. 4.**).

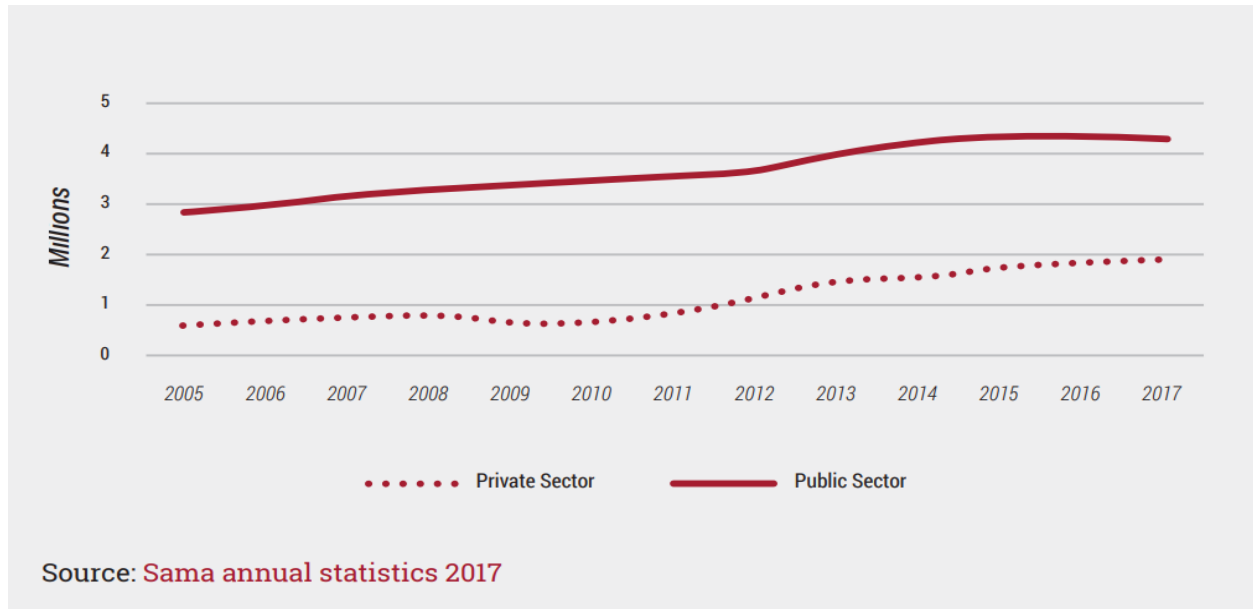


Fig. 4. Saudi Nationals' Participation in each of the Private and Public Sectors

Source: "The Labor Market in Saudi Arabia: Background, Areas of Progress, and Insights for the Future". *HarvardKennedySchool*. Web. Accessed 6 May 2020.

The native Saudi workers were massively dominated by expatriates in the private sector, which gave them (expatriates) precedence in the general percentage of working force (total number of workers in both sectors combined). Further, from the beginning till the end of the new millennium, foreign workers sustained their superiority over their Saudis counterparts. See (Fig. 5)

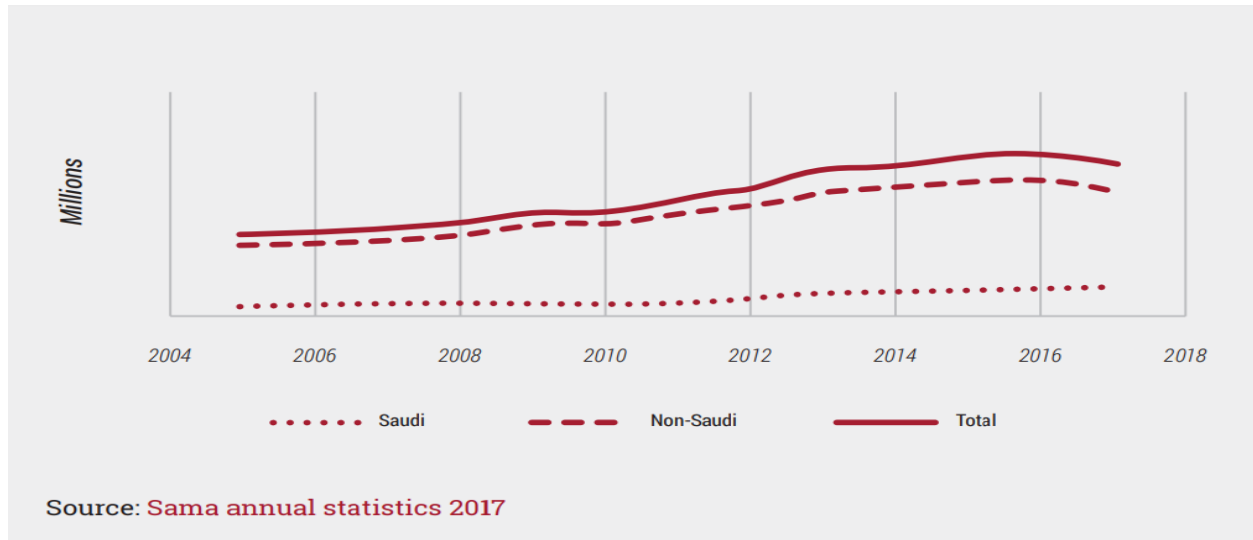


Fig. 5. Saudi vs non-Saudi Participation in both of the Private and Public Sectors

Source: “The Labor Market in Saudi Arabia: Background, Areas of Progress, and Insights for the Future”. *HarvardKennedySchool*. Web. Accessed 06 May 2020.

In the same context, regarding the last quarter of 2019, stats show that the total number of civil workers in Saudi Arabia is 13,390,975, most of which are non-natives. The following graphic representation illustrates the Saudi dependency on expatriates. See (**Fig. 6**)

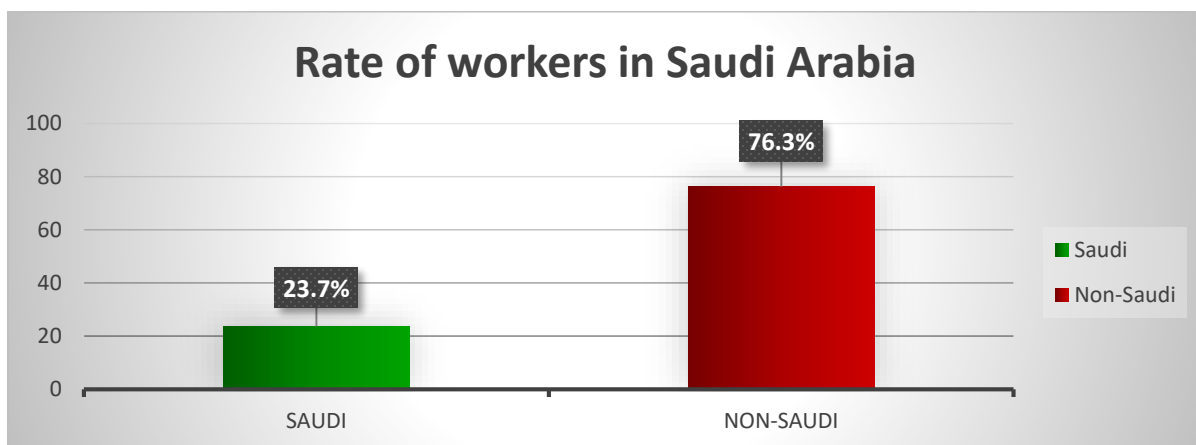


Fig. 6. The Rate of Saudi and non-Saudi Workers in Labor Force

Source: “The General Authority for Statistics”. *Maal*, 13 Apr. 2020. Web. Accessed 06 May 2020.

It is no secret that the Kingdom developed its educational system over the years; yet, the foreign labor force is still invading the country. This situation begs the following question; why does Saudi Arabia need this tremendous number of expatriates? In order to answer this question, we have to analyze briefly the social structure of the Kingdom.

To begin with, Saudi Arabia is patriarchal and conservative, both religiously and traditionally. Further, it is also full of gender stereotyping, orthodox cultural values, and social constraints. For example, Saudi conservatives believe that women's primary job is to be good wives, mothers and householders, or else practice a work that serves the Saudi social nature, such as teaching or nursing (Alwedini 169). Moreover, the conservative nature of the Saudi community considers any working woman as deviant to the cultural norms, which causes her social issues. Ironically, the *Sharia* law, which is the main source of most of the traditional values in Saudi Arabia, does not prohibit women from working nor studying (Al-Asfour et al. 186). Furthermore, according to Human Development Report in 2015, the constraints of *Sharia* law, such as the prohibition of mixed gatherings in workplaces/schools, as well as, the regressive traditional norms of the Saudi community, result in the lack of women's participation in the economy of the country. As a result, Saudi Arabia prevents itself from gaining an extra 20% of workforce (qtd. in Al-Asfour, 186). Moreover, the General Authority for Statistics shows that unemployment rate among women is relatively high compared to men, in the period between 1999 and 2017. See (**Fig. 7**). The same source proves that men are still the dominant gender in native Saudi labor force. See (**Fig. 8**).

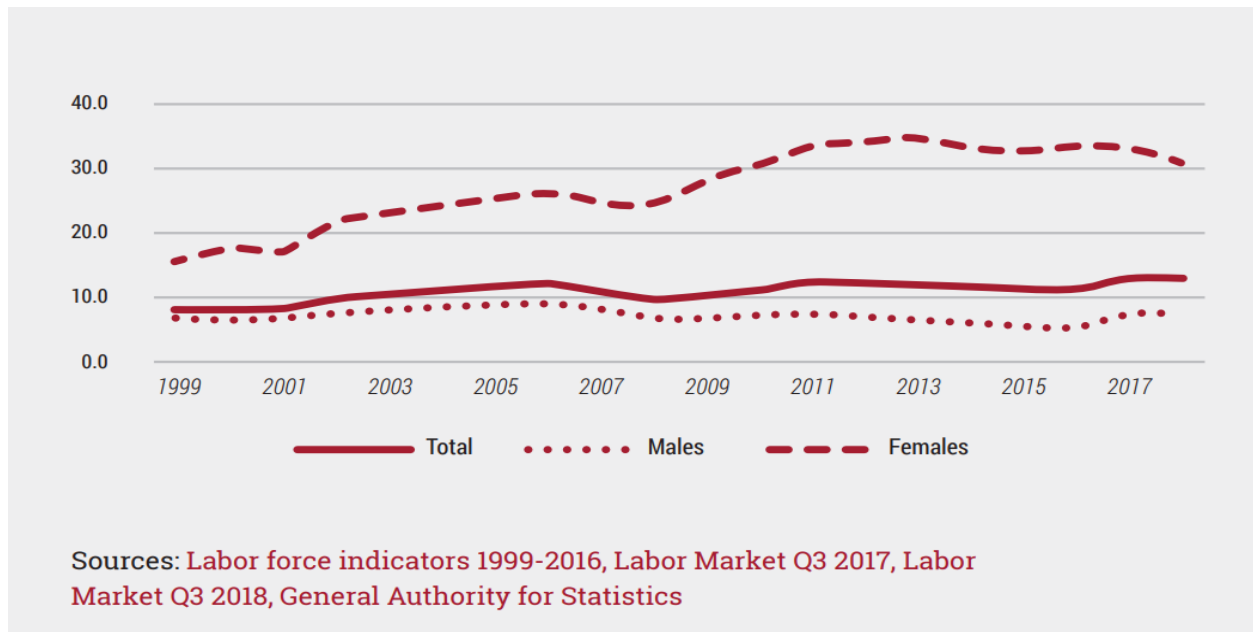


Fig. 7. Unemployment Rate by Gender in Saudi Arabia, 1999-2017

Source: “The Labor Market in Saudi Arabia: Background, Areas of Progress, and Insights for the Future”. *HarvardKennedySchool*. Web. Accessed 06 May 2020.

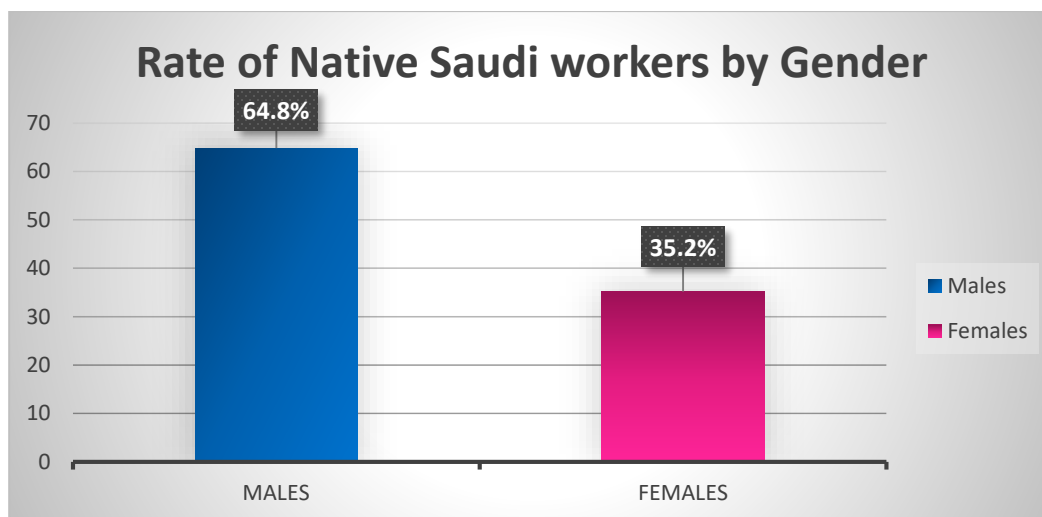


Fig. 8. Rate of Native Saudi Workers by Gender

Source: “The General Authority for Statistics”. *Maal*, 13 Apr. 2020. Web. Accessed 06 May 2020.

To conclude, education and work are highly interrelated, and each one serves the other reciprocally. Saudi Arabia aims to come up with new developmental plans to reduce the number of Saudi workers in the public sector in its 2030 vision. Moreover, the feminine category' school enrolment rates are raising, thus, women will have all the means to contribute in the development and Saudization of the Saudi economy. Finally, Saudi Arabia is running through developmental plans in order to achieve economic, political, and mostly social reforms, gearing towards a dynamic change in different sectors.

4. Food, Clothing and Art

Food and clothing of Saudi Arabia reflect its history, traditions, religion and the lifestyle of its people. For centuries, Arabs of the Peninsula have traded with many different regions of the world, including Africa, India, central Asia and the Levant countries. Moreover, Makkah, Madinah, Jiddah and Taif, in the western Arabia, were the most common routes for trading.

4.1. Food

Trade with other countries has not only been economically beneficial for Arabia, but it also brought new ingredients and dishes to its humble cuisine. Furthermore, the Bedouin's basic diet, dates and milk, developed in urban centers into dishes made with a steadily increasing range of ingredients, and a variety of flavorful Saudi dishes soon emerged. Of higher importance, additionally, the emergence of Islam affected Arabia's cuisine. First, it prohibited some foods and drinks, such as, pork and alcohol, as it is clearly stated in these two Quranic verses: "He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 173), and "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters

[to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful” (Surah Al-Maidah: 90), and provided a method to slaughtering animals (*Dhabiha*). Second, pilgrims to Makkah and Madinah were from places that are more distant and much greater in number compared to pagans who used to come for the annual pagan festival. Moreover, emigrants from different regions stayed in Arabia for different reasons; therefore, they collectively left their unique imprint on the culture and cuisine of the Hijaz region. The nomadic lifestyle and mobility nature of Saudi traders was a vital element in the spread of the newly adopted dishes to most of the Arabian Peninsula.

First, Hijaz region became an urban area whereby foreign cuisine blended in and became indistinguishable from the Hijazi native dishes. Furthermore, Makkan cuisine specializes in meat recipes made of lamb, vegetables, spices, and rice. In special occasions, Makkan professional cooks, typically cook *mabshur*, lamb pressed onto skewers, grilled and served on top of a bed of rice and a yogurt salad called *samn baladi*. In religious holidays, marriages, funerals, during the month of Ramadan, and when receiving special guests, traditional rice dishes are very popular (Anishchenkova 286). Meanwhile, people of Jeddah show their hospitality through serving their guests different dishes of fish in the same meal “beginning with a fish soup, and fish salad, accompanied with fish patties, fish cooked Indonesian style in coconut milk, and fish baked with tamarind sauce *tahinah* or coriander leaf (cilantro), and ending with *sayadiyah* or *biryani* with fish or shrimp” (Nawwab). According to Anishchenkova, Hijaz region is rich with local desserts made of dairy products such as “*labaniyyah*, a sweet made with milk; *jubniyyah*, a delicacy made with Taif goat cheese; and *ridha al-walidayn*, a milk pudding” (287). In addition to Syrian, Egyptian, Indian and Euro-American desserts, Turkish desserts also prevail due to the strong presence of the Ottoman Empire then.

Second, Najd is the central region of Arabia, located between the Hejaz region and the eastern province. Isolated by its deserts of red sand, it maintained its local characteristics until the advent of Islam—many of the inhabitants went as far as China to spread the religion, while traders went to different countries to exchange merchandises (287). Subsequently, these factors contributed in the development of the Bedouin's diet into a unique cuisine. According to Anishchenkova, Najdis are known for their time-consuming cookery, because they usually combine rye bread or whole-wheat with meat and vegetables in a decent amount of their dishes. Evidently, Najdis share plates with other regions of the Arabia, but they have many variations of all dishes. *Haris*, for instance, is prepared all around the Arabia, but Najdis put more time and effort in preparing it (287). Additionally, according to Nawwab, in celebrations or when welcoming a special guest, Najdis usually serve a spit-roasted lamb dish called *kuzi*, in which they stuff the lamb with saffron-tinted rice cooked with nuts and raisins, hard-boiled eggs, and chickens stuffed with cooked macaroni. After, they sew the lamb and roast it until the meat is mushy. Then, they slice the lamb to reveal the stuffing, and finally serve it in large trays with a green salad. Similarly, the hospitality attribute of Najdis is that they usually do not eat until their guest has finished, just in case he needs anything. Evidently, people of Najd adopted different foreign sweets as well; however, more than a few still desire the local ones, which are mainly made of dates.

The Eastern Province, as its name suggests, is located far in the east coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Some of its inhabitants were anglers and divers who relied on treasures of the sea (Nawwab). She adds that other elements of the population lived in villages around oases, in addition to the nomads who relied on these villages for essential products such as dates. Moreover, like other parts of the country, the population comprised of merchants, who traded with neighboring countries and traveled overseas for goods. They merchandised with countries

that are famous for their spices like Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and India. Comparing its culinary to other regions (Hejaz and Najd), the Eastern Province's food is spicier and relies more on fish as it is quite available in the region. *Hubul* and *muhashsha* are two traditional fish dishes; the first one is fried mackerel roe served with rice, and the second is served with three layers, the top layer is the rice, the middle layer is a meaty fish and the bottom layer is *hashwah*, a mix of browned onions and spices. Moreover, there are two special rice dishes served with fish, *shilani* and *muhammar* (Nawwab). In spite of the differences in cooking, Nawwab asserts that all regions of Saudi Arabia share an essential part of a meal, an Arab cardamom-flavored coffee served with dates. The Saudis serve coffee with dates when welcoming guests, again after finishing a meal and again before the guest leaves.

In conclusion, many factors shaped and developed the Saudi Arabian cuisine, including the coming of Islam, the social and commercial ties with foreigners and the geography of the country. In short, it does not matter which region or location in Saudi Arabia, the meal is always large and nutritious. Moreover, the main ingredients of any Saudi Arabian meal are rice, some vegetables, meat, dates, dairy products, and spices.

4.2. Clothing

The nature of the Saudi Arabian geography and the coming of Islam affected the way of dressing for both men and women. Since the desert occupies most of the Saudi land, Arabia is marked as one of the hottest countries in the world. Thus, the clothing of its inhabitants covers most of the body, to protect the skin from the sun, and to be loose for aeration. However, the coming of Islam had a special influence on clothing in Arabia. Islam stipulated modest, decent and proper clothing for both men and women (Abdul-Wahid). Muslims, be it men or women derive their rules from Quran and Sunna in order to appear modest and decent in respectful

clothes. As it is clearly stated in Muslims' holy book "Tell the believing men to restrain their looks, and to guard their privates. That is purer for them. Allah is cognizant of what they do" (Surah An-Nur: 30). For men clothing must not be of silk, see-through, tight fitting or resembles the clothing of women; it must cover whatever between the navel and knee, and all their garments should be above the anklebone. Over and above, it must not resemble the clothing that is specific to the non-Muslims (Abdul-Wahid).

Moreover, the Saudi men wear a loose full-length garment with long sleeves called *thobe*, and under it, they wear white pants. The headdress comprises of three elements, *taqiyah*, *ghutra*, *agal*. The first one is a head cap worn out directly on the head. The second is a square scarf made of cotton, folded into a triangle and placed over the *taqiyah*—it is either white or checkered white and red. The third element is a double cord made of woven black goat's hair or sheep's wool, which is used to hold the *ghutra* in place. In summer, the *thobe* is lightweight, white and made of cotton; whereas in winter, it comes in wool and in darker colors. In special occasions or sometimes in winter men wear a *bisht*, a cotton or wool cloak worn above the *thobe*, it comes in many colors decorated in gold. Furthermore, Saudis generally wear leather sandals; otherwise, they wear modern shoes (US Marine Corp. Intel. Act. 51-52).

In the same context, women too are obliged to abide to the Islamic rules regarding clothing. As Quran clearly states, "O Prophet! Tell your wives, and your daughters, and the women of the believers, to lengthen their garments. That is more proper, so they will be recognized and not harassed. Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (Surah Al-Ahzab: 59), and: "and they are to draw their veils over their heads and chests and not to reveal their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons..." (Surah An-Nur: 31). For women, clothing must be loose, not translucent and covers the entire body except the face and hands and

it should not be perfumed not to attract the attention of the opposite gender. Furthermore, it must not resemble the clothing of men or clothing specific for non-Muslims (Abdul-Wahid).

All Saudi women wear *abaya*, a full-length cloak over their clothes when outside, the cloak is typically black and decorated with sequins, beads or thread. Further, women cover their hair with a *tarhah*, a lightweight black scarf, and when they cover their faces with a gauze veil, it is either the whole face or they leave an opening for the eyes. Unlike men, Islam allows women to wear clothes made of silk and jewelry made of gold (US Marine Corp. Intel. Act. 52).

4.3. Art

The definition of art has always been controversial and differs from one community to another, depending on its cultural background. Thus, philosophers and scholars have never been on agreement on its definition. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia has known many forms of art including poetry, music, and calligraphy.

4.3.1. Poetry and Music

For centuries before the rise of Islam in Arabia, folk literature was essential and held a great position in the life of nomads. They passed down their history, values and social background orally from one generation to another. Specifically, Poetry of the Hejaz and Najd regions was prevailing for the reason that their use of language was entertaining and artistically amusing. Furthermore, competitions in Makkah were common, where poets contested to achieve the perfect poem. In fact, poets were the symbol of chivalry of their tribes in which they held honorable ranks. Just before the coming of Islam, poets were perfect users of archaic Arabic. Iqbal and Saifullah describe them as “were a proud and boastful people who were characterized by epic tales, heart-rending poetry, and eloquent prose” (qtd. in Altwaiji 166). Afterwards, the revelation of Quran in the 7th century brought change to the already aesthetic Arabic and levitated

it to even higher levels of linguistic exquisiteness. Kamal Gholitabar states, “The Quran has had a significant impact on Arabic language in various ways. It influenced the dynamism Arabic language [has] ... beautified the Arabic language as Arabic was originally used by nomads and desert settlers ... aroused the grammarians to establish some principles and grammatical rules for this language” (qtd. in Altwaiji 166). Well ahead, a different kind of poetry had grown among Bedouins known as the *Nabati Poetry*; it is rhythmical and deals with various social themes like fights, and praise. *Nabati Poetry*, generally, performed with a drumbeat and sometimes accompanied with *Rababah*, a lute like instrument played with a bow, for a tuneful ambience and a dance. *Nabati* music usually starts with drumbeats and people lining in a single line to perform a sword dance (Altwaiji 166).

Altwaiji adds, around the 1950s, Saudi music either was a form of poetry without instruments or accompanied with *sawt*, a drum, and the *rababah* or *oud*. Besides, pearl divers and camel drivers’ music and songs give a unique impression, different from the music of urban areas due to the different nature of their lifestyles. In addition, females in Saudi Arabia have had their music for centuries; they sang songs in weddings, celebrations and female parties—only women exclusively attend the female music performance. Moreover, women sing lullabies and work songs at their homes. As a rule, people of the Hejaz, especially in Macca and Medina, are always different from other Saudis, because of the foreign inhabitants. In Hejaz, unlike other Bedouin areas, a female singer who plays the oud and sings with an ensemble leads the female music party (166-169).

In order to understand the Saudi development as a country and as a culture, it is necessary to tackle its history, institutions, and peoples’ ways of life. After two failed attempts to emerge with a united Muslim country, Al Saud finally and officially succeeded to establish the state of Saudi Arabia in 1932. In addition to education and labor, the country shaped its institutions on

Islamic traditions. Islam was also present in the Saudi education system and their education.

Women have faced many challenges in both sectors, yet they are witnessing a remarkable progress in both sectors. In another context, the Bedouin's way of governing is still present and in action in Saudi Arabia. Despite the urbanization and the settlement of people in cities and houses, Bedouin's customs and traditions such as clothing remain a core aspect in the Saudi identity.

Chapter Two

An Overview on the U.S.-Saudi Relation

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the United States and Saudi Arabia had created a solid bilateral relation, which proved its importance through the decades. The United States had the upper hand in negotiations and discovery of oil in the Middle East, thus becoming the most important importer of oil from Saudi Arabia. Surprisingly, and because of the rapid technological innovations and the two world wars, the U.S. became addicted to the Saudi oil. Consequently, this addiction to oil obliged the U.S. to provide military assistance, including arms sales and support during wars. For instance, the last war Saudi Arabia launched in Yemen against Houthi rebels, witnessed trump's utmost-boundless support. Despite the congress' firm rejection, Trump kept the American blood running through the Saudi army' veins.

1. Oil: Basis of the Bilateral U.S.-Saudi Relations

At the beginning of the 20th century the Arabian Peninsula was a crew of scattered tribes wandering around the desert seeking different sources of life. Even though a great portion of the region was empty—while Saudi Arabia was an Ottoman protectorate—European powers did not give the land all their attention (Pariona). Alrebh claims it was a good reason for the leader Abdulaziz Ibn Abdul Rahman Al Saud to defeat both AL Ikhwan, and the Rashidi of Hail and the Sharif of Mecca (19-20).

Even though he enhanced his position and power amongst the different tribes, the journey the leader was taking, was not as smooth as it was expected. Economy was troublesome and too difficult for the new government to handle, as it had no prior experience in ruling a land that size. At that time, they had two minor sources of income. On the one hand, the Hijaz province was the center of an agricultural activity; while on the other, pilgrims were provided with services during

their visit to Mecca and Medina (Library of Congress). Unfortunately, misfortunes never come singly; the new leader had to face a blow from the global recession in the 1920s and 1930s. Besides, those services' revenues were not nearly enough to cover up on his people's expenses—he had roughly enough to feed 2000 men on his own table—let alone creating a healthy atmosphere for a prosperous economy in the future (28)

It all started when Britain promised Saudi Arabia, a sea protection from the Ottomans, a treaty conclusion with the king, and the recognition of independence in all Najd and Hasa (Goldberg 699). Later, on 1st May 1931, the United States officially—from London—recognized the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd and its dependencies. This was followed by the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1932 under the command of Abdulaziz Al Ibn Abd as Rahman Al Saud (Blanchard 3). Unfortunately, a plethora of economic obstacles were awaiting the King and the Kingdom, in a time the Western World was going through a worldwide economic depression, and needed a new outlet to safely stabilize its economic productivity. Luckily for them, geologists discovered oil in the Middle East.

1.1. Oil Discovery in the Middle East

At the very beginning of the 20th century and in a harsh working conditions above a dry land, William Knox D'Arcy, a millionaire from London, sensed signs of an opportunity to discover oil in the Persian Gulf and did not hesitate to capture it (Vassiliou, *The A to Z* 153). D'Arcy and after negotiating a concession with Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar of Persia, recruited George Bernard Reynolds to drill for oil in the Persian desert (Weber 21). After several attempts Reynolds did not seem to have the best luck in the world. As might be expected, D'Arcy and the other sponsor Burmah Oil Company started losing patience, and finally telegraphed him to stop drilling (Franks and Nunnally 80). Yet, Reynolds was too optimistic for his own good about finding oil in the

Persian desert and decided to continue drilling. Later, on 16 May 1908, a strange yet strong smell was sniffed in the rocks, that might have smelled like oil to all geologists; however, it smelled like hope to Reynolds. This latter kept on drilling for so long, and on 26 May of the same year, the well finally hit oil (Daniel 126). Rooted to the spot, astonished as if he saw one of the seven marvels of the world, Reynolds in his last attempt—even after being asked to stop drilling—was surprised as much as his superiors were, when he informed them in a coded telegraph message that he had succeeded in finding oil (Sorkhabi).

This great foundation had led many geologists to sniff for oil all around the Middle East region. A British-New Zealander geologist named Major Frank Holmes, also known as ‘Abu Naft’, which literally translates to ‘Father of Petroleum’, was one of the most interesting and interested geologists seeking oil in the region (Garavini 34). For a rental payment of £2,500 a year, Major Holmes convinced Sultan Ibn Saud to grant him a concession for oil exploration in the eastern side of the kingdom (Vassiliev, *King Faisal*). Holmes and his geologist Arnold Albert Heim did all they could, but their hopes went up in smoke; thus reported back negative results to their syndicate, concluding that there is no reason for them to waste more money in exploring oil in Saudi Arabia (Sorkhabi).

All eyes shifted to Saudi Arabia’s eastern neighbor, Bahrain. At that time, Sheikh Hamad al-Khalifa was more concerned about artesian wells in his land, yet Holmes was still following his previous leads on oil signs in the region. As expected, Holmes and Sheikh Hamad came to an agreement when Holmes secured artesian water in Bahrain. In return, Sheikh Hamad granted him a concession to explore oil in Bahrain in 1925 (Chisholm 12). After several financial and strategic setbacks, Holmes and his team succeeded in convincing Gulf Oil Corporation to buy his concession and proceed the drilling. Unexpectedly, new obstacles faced the new investors, which forced them to sell their Bahrain concession for \$50,000 to Standard Oil of California (SoCal), as this latter

created a subsidiary called the Bahrain Petroleum Company (Sorkhabi; Al-Khalifa 570). While SoCal was buckling down around the clock to discover new oil wells, it only added insult to injury to the Brits, as ‘technically’ Bahrain Island sheikhdom was a British Protectorate with a treaty that clearly states a prohibition on any mortgage or sale of any kind regarding the land (RamHormozi 163). However, SoCal acquired a concession through its subsidiary. This incident drove Sir John Cadman, the Chairman of the Iraq Petroleum, around the wrist, after knowing about the positive results of oil drills in Bahrain (United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations 101).

1.2. Oil Discovery in Saudi Arabia

A while after these events, a geologist named Fred A. Davies who joined the Standard Oil Company of California (SoCal) in 1922, and after the British blew up their chance in Bahrain, he hastily advised his company to execute drilling activities near and within the Saudi land, before it is too late (Brady 157). In a road trip in the autumn of 1930, Philby Harry St. John Bridger, the King’s advisor also known as ‘Sheikh Abdullah’ after embracing Islam, persuaded Ibn Saud to exploit his land’s natural resources (Auzanneau 182). It has not been long, and exactly in May 1932, SoCal sought for Philby’s help in order to be granted a concession in the Kingdom (Yergin 290). The fact that Philby was a loyal friend in the King’s good book, obliged him to search for a better bargain. For this reason, he invited the Anglo-Persian and the Iraqi Petroleum negotiators for an oil bid (Vassiliou, *Historical Dictionary* 371). After tough negotiations, SoCal agreed to the Saudis final terms; which were as follows:

1. Rental fee of £5,000/year,
2. \$50,000 if oil was discovered, and an extra \$50,000 the following year (Simons 188).
3. £30,000 in gold upfront (within 15 days after the official agreement),

4. A second loan of £20,000 after eighteen months,
5. The company agreed to construct an oil refinery and to supply the Saudi government with 200,000 gallons (US) of gasoline and 100,000 gallons (US) of kerosene to the government devoid of any charges,
6. The government agreed to not tax the company, including imports, charges, fees and duties,
7. Finally, the most critical part of the agreement was that SoCal is going to have the exclusive right for oil exploration in the kingdom for the next 60 years (Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi*).

Eventually the agreement was signed on 29 May 1933 by the Saudi finance minister Abdullah Al-Sulaiman al-Hamdan and L.N. Hamilton (Shwadran 293). Later on, SoCal established a subsidiary called the California-Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC) to manage the concession and operate in Saudi Arabia. The company sent a list of competent and efficient geologists, R.P. “Bert” Miller, S.B. “Krug” Henry, J.W. “Soak” Hoover, Thomas Koch, Art Brown, and Hugh Burchfield (Sorkhabi). Later on, following years of insupportable efforts which showed modest results, this team eventually needed help from a geologist called Max Steineke. This latter was appointed as chief executive of CASOC. He took his time to study the peninsula’s geological structure, and visualized positive prospects about it (Vassiliou, *Historical Dictionary* 50).

Dammam Dome was the name given to the geographical structure in which the geologists recommended to start drilling. Wheels were set in motion and drilling started in seven wells. After years of drilling with no promising results in the first six wells, in 1937 the San Francisco office started questioning the progress in Dammam No.7: “When will married quarters be ready?”. Despite the humble results in the previous wells, Dammam No.7 held big news for the wildcatters. Thereafter, 04 Mars 1938, was the date that answered all questions, as Dammam No.7 flowed at the rate of 1,585 barrels a day, and increased to 3,690 barrels a day just three days after (Seven

Wells of Dammam; Turner 8). Finally, the kingdom officially announced the discovery of oil on 16 October 1938, and linked a 69 km pipeline from the oil field in Dammam No.7 to the port of Ras Tanura in 1939 (Al-Sughair).

In 1944, the company that dominates all Saudi fields became known as Aramco (Arabian American Oil Company). Afterwards, in 1948, Standard Oil of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum—currently known as ExxonMobil—bought shares in Aramco (Madison 93). Finally, in 1980 Saudi Arabia bought all the shares and assets of the company, and became “Saudi Aramco” (Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters* 472). Eight years later, in 1988, Aramco officially became the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, or Saudi Aramco (472).

1.3. The United States’ Dependence on Saudi Oil

The United States gave great importance to all sorts of energy. In the 1880s the United States started utilizing coal energy in order to generate electricity in different establishments (Gambrel). However, when the world develops, modern trends and innovations follow up, and this time, it was the discovery of oil. Shortly before and after the ‘1928 Red Line Agreement’—which allowed five American companies to exercise their drillings in the Middle East countries in the 1930s—and the two world wars experience, the United States made sure that energy is vital to its economic and military power (Saunders 6).

Throughout history, the U.S. succeeded in winning the heart of many allies. One of the most critical ones was Saudi Arabia. As noted before, in 1938 Saudi Arabia declared its first success in discovering oil in its land, at a time the U.S. was struggling an oil production shortage. Therefore, President Franklin Roosevelt discussed the bilateral relation with the kingdom in hopes for closer ties (Kennedy). Everything went smoothly over the years; yet, the U.S. bumped into few steps along the way, such as that of the Arab Oil Embargo in 1973; which was targeted at those

countries that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur, causing global crisis (Clark 25). As a result, the U.S. decided to make drastic changes in its foreign policy, because the instability of the region jeopardized its economy.

Back then, the U.S. needed a plan to stabilize its economy through the adaptation of a new economic philosophy known as the 'petrodollar system'. The creation of this system came to existence after Saudi Arabia agreed to the U.S. proposal that provides for the obligation on any country that is willing to purchase oil from the Kingdom to pay in U.S. dollars (Robinson 69). This smart move led the remaining OPEC countries to join this system, and link their commodity to the U.S. dollar. That is to say, whenever oil prices go up the U.S. dollar's market value does too, and vice versa. In short, the U.S. indirectly made the OPEC countries fight its war instead without breaking a sweat (Chen).

1.3.1. The United States' Oil Production Status

According to the U.S. department of energy, the U.S. production did not exceed 8,971.00 bpd between 1980-2013, as this peak quantity was registered in 1985 (U.S Department of Energy). However, in 2018, and for the first time since 1973, the U.S. enjoys the throne of the largest crude oil producer in the world. Bob McNally, president of Rapidan Energy Group, a consulting firm and a former energy official under President George W. Bush, commented proudly: "It's an historic milestone and a reminder: Never bet against the US oil industry". This was not mere luck, but rather the result of huge amounts of efforts, management, and technological innovations, "It's all about technological improvements, supported by ample capital to invest, and the ingenuity of American oil drillers," confirms McNally (Egan). On 12 September 2018, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) released a projection showing that the U.S. surpassed both Saudi Arabia and Russia in crude oil production for the first time since 1975 (Lieber 130). President Donald Trump

in a rally in Wheeling, W.Va., on 29 September 2018 declared that: “The United States is now the No. 1 energy producer in the world. That happened just recently” (Sterling). See **(Fig. 9)**

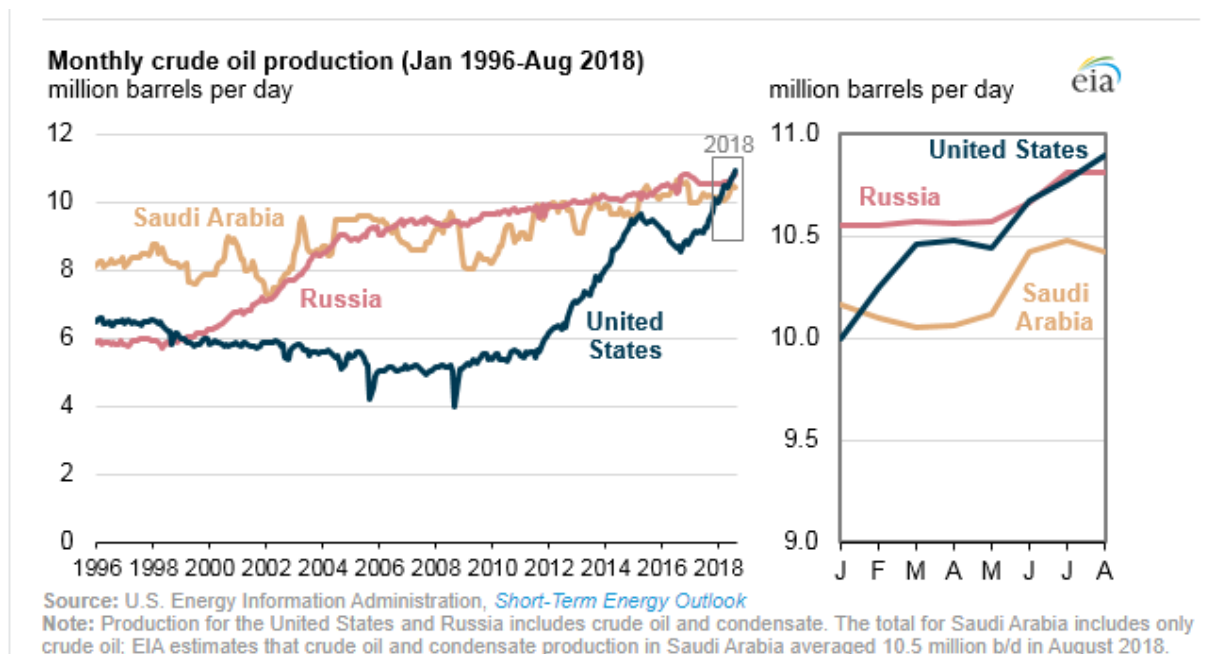


Fig. 9. The United States is Now the Largest Global Crude Oil Producer

Source: Dunn, Candace., and Hess, Tim. “The United States is now the largest global crude oil producer.” U.S. Energy Information Administration, 12 Sept. 2018. Web. 12 Apr. 2020.

One of the special things about this shale boom is that Texas was its epicenter, and the main reason behind the U.S. climbing to the top. In the same year, the ‘Lone Star State’ produced more oil than each of Iraq and Iran, to be No. 3 in the world, if it was a country (Egan). See **(Fig. 10)**

Texas to pump more oil than Iraq, Iran in 2019

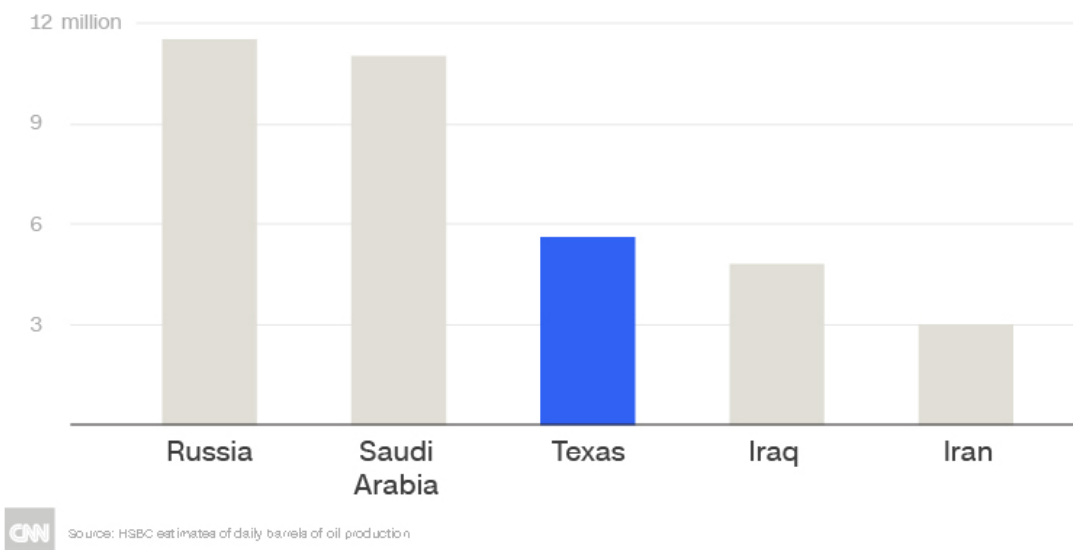


Fig. 10. Texas Surpasses each of Iraq and Iran in Oil Production in 2019

Source: Egan, Matt. “Texas to pass Iraq and Iran as world’s No. 3 oil powerhouse.” *CNN Business*, 17 July 2018. Web. 16 Apr. 2020.

This proves even more that the U.S. is a giant global power. By and large, experts around the world seem to predict that the United States is unlikely to step down its throne any sooner. Presently, the U.S. is at the top of the largest oil producers in the world and shares 18% of world total production (Khandelwal). See (**Table. 4**)

Table. 4. World’s Top 10 Oil Producers

Country	Million barrels per day	Share of world total
United States	17.94	18%
Saudi Arabia	12.42	12%
Russia	11.40	11%
Canada	5.38	5%
China	4.81	5%

Iraq	4.62	5%
Iran	4.46	4%
United Arab Emirates	3.79	5%
Brazil	3.43	3%
Kuwait	2.91	3%
Total top 10	71.15	71%
World total	100.89	100%

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration. “What countries are the top producers and consumers of oil?” 1 Apr. 2020. Web. 3 Apr. 2020.

Even though the United States is now the largest oil producer in the world (including crude oil, all other petroleum liquids, and biofuels), it is still the largest consumer as well. Historically, the United States has always depended on oil since its discovery, and showed no hesitation nor mercy in making either allies or enemies for that matter. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) indicated that the United States consumes 20% of the world total oil production. See (**Table. 5**)

Table. 5. World’s Top 10 Oil Consumers

Country	Millions per day	Share of world total
United States	19.96	20%
China	13.57	14%
India	4.34	4%
Japan	3.92	5%
Russia	3.69	5%
Saudi Arabia	3.33	3%

Brazil	3.03	3%
South Korea	2.63	3%
Germany	2.45	2%
Canada	2.42	2%
Total top 10	59.33	60%
World total	98.76	100%

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration. “What countries are the top producers and consumers of oil?” 1 Apr. 2020, Web. 3 Apr. 2020.

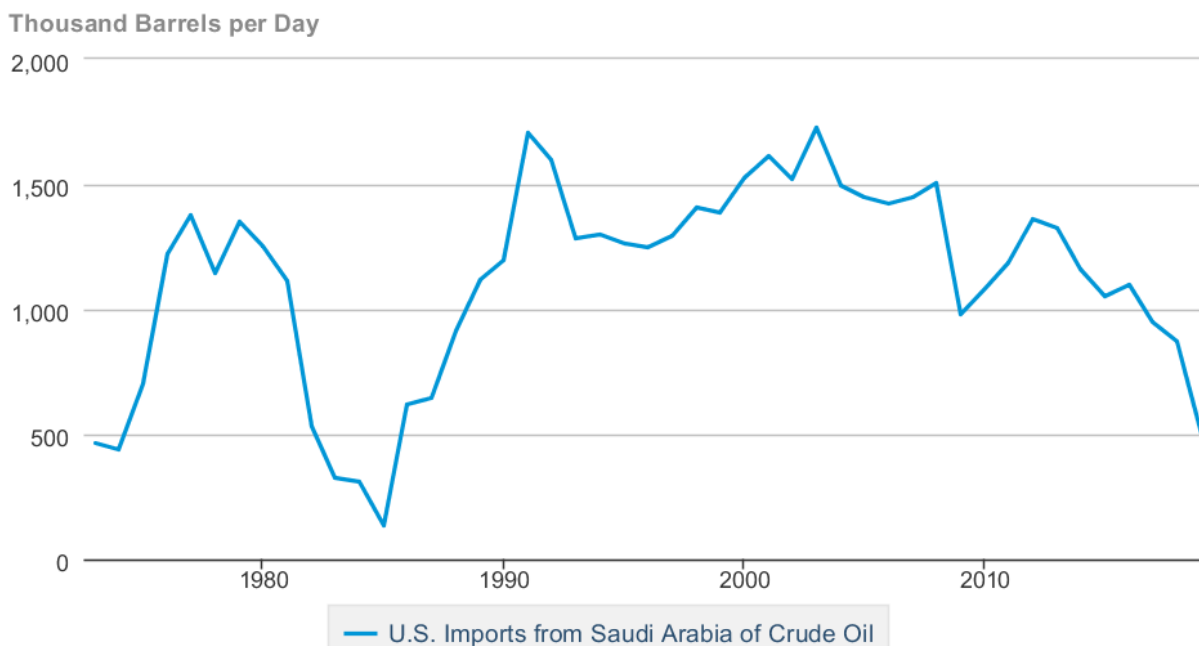
Experts and analysts assume that the United States will remain at the top for a while. Moreover, the U.S. aim is to be an oil net exporter. Jason Bordoff, professor and director at Columbia University’s Center on Global Energy Policy and a former adviser to President Obama, commented to CNBC’s Steve Sedgwick and Hadley Gamble at the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference (ADIPEC) on Monday: “I don’t think the export story will be short-lived, I think the growth in production is going to slow but it’s still growing, so we’re still going to see the U.S. become a net oil exporter and put a lot of barrels on the market and that’s really important” (Ellyatt). Despite all efforts, some experts called this Shale revolution a ‘myth’, and that the U.S. will continue to dominate the Middle Eastern oil, especially the Saudi Arabian one. (Tverberg).

1.3.2. Is the United States still Dependent on Saudi Oil?

For decades, the United States had been severely dependent on Saudi Oil. As mentioned before, the U.S. companies were the first to discover oil in the Kingdom. Since 1938, Saudi Arabia launched its first commercial production (W. H. Bowen 104). However, the large production started after the end of WW II, slightly after SoCAI became known as the ‘Arabian-

American Oil Company' (ARAMCO). This latter was the United States' largest foreign investment until the Saudi takeover in the 1970s (Bahgat 3). Furthermore, the Kingdom was the largest oil exporter of oil to the United States for years, as Saudi oil was the only steady blood in the American veins. See (Fig. 11).

U.S. Imports from Saudi Arabia of Crude Oil



 Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Fig. 11. U.S. Imports from Saudi Arabia of Crude Oil per Decade

Source: The U.S Energy Information Administration. “U.S Imports from Saudi Arabia of Crude Oil.” 3 Apr. 2020. Web. 3 Apr. 2020.

This bilateral relationship went throughout a shaky ground from the year of oil discovery in 1938, the OPEC Oil Embargo in 1973, up until the Oil Market Crash in 2014 (Thompson 68). Like any economic super power would do, the U.S. did not stand idly by while its economy was at stake, and sought another outlet to protect its interest. Therefore, the U.S. started exporting

more oil from its neighbor Canada, as this latter overtook Saudi Arabia as the largest single exporter to the U.S. in 2002 (Winegard 263). Moreover, according the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), Canada provided 1.6 million barrels per day, while Saudi Arabia did not exceed the verge of 1.5 million barrels. Canada widened the gap since 2004 to be at ease and by far the largest oil exporter to the United States (Oil Dependence and U.S. Foreign Policy). In the same context, the U.S. Energy Information Administration showed that the U.S. imported about 9.10 million barrels per day (MMb/d) of petroleum in 2019, from nearly 90 countries. Additionally, it revealed the top five crude oil exporters to the United States in the same year. See (Fig. 12)

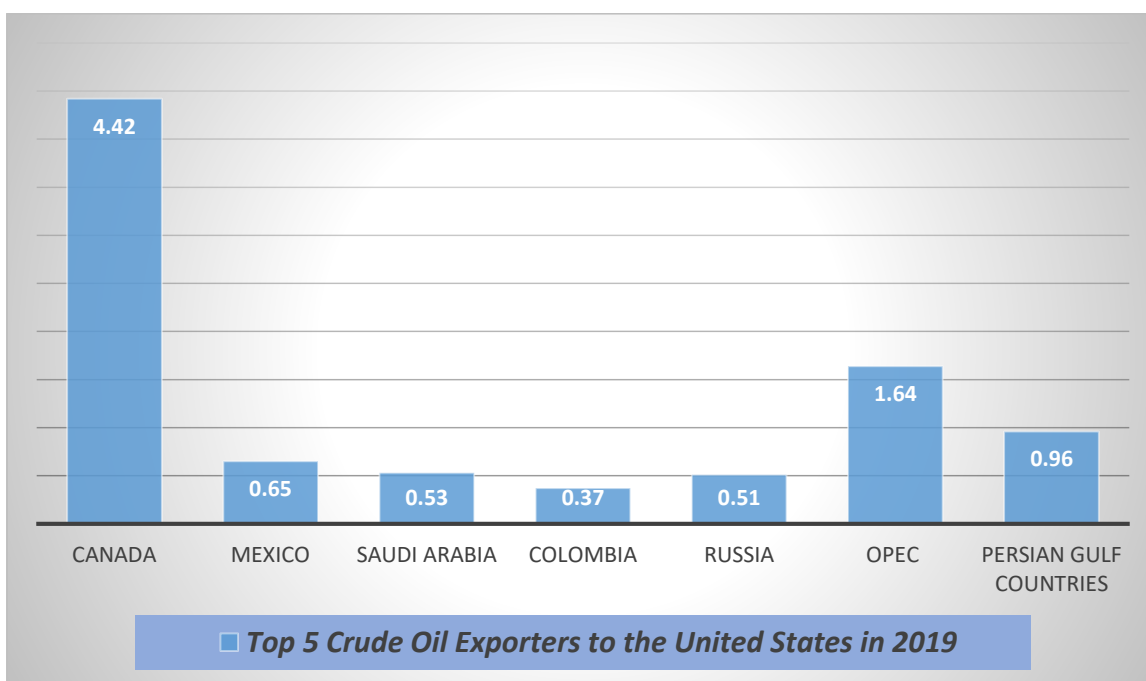


Fig. 12. Top Crude Oil Exporter to the United States in 2019

Source: U.S Energy Information Administration. “How much petroleum does the United States import and export?” 3 Mar. 2020. Web. 04 Apr. 2020

One would think that the U.S.-Saudi relationship would decline, especially that the United States decided to diversify oil supplies and to increase imports from neighboring countries, such as Canada, Mexico, and Colombia. However, history says otherwise. In the past, U.S. presidents

emphasized the significant role Saudi Arabia played in balancing the world powers. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington, February 18, 1943, commented on the importance of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, “The defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States” (Robinson 69). Similarly, President Eisenhower stated, “Should a crisis arise threatening to cut the Western world from Middle East oil, we would have to use force” (Bahgat 11). Two decades later President Bush sent troops to the Middle East to defend Saudi borders in any case of external threats (11).

During the 1970s’ Oil Embargo, the U.S. expected a big black cloud on the horizon, which would bring sad and painful news to the American economy. The U.S. National Security Advisor, back then, Henry Kissinger described the Saudis as unequal to the civility the Americans possessed, when he ridiculed them in a White House secret meeting, “It is ridiculous that the civilized world is held up by 8 million savages”. Ironically, few months later, Kissinger, flesh and blood, was promising the Saudi King American military and economic assistance, before the embargo was even- lifted. Moreover, Kissinger addressed the king saying: “Our objective is to work with Your Majesty and to strengthen our friendship on a long-term basis” (Johnson and Gramer).

On 2nd October 2018, the international community witnessed with a heavy heart the cold assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul—an author, and a columnist for The Washington Post, whose opinion opposed the Saudi violations to human rights in Yemen. An assassination that was committed under mysterious circumstances, most of which lead directly to the involvement of Saudi officials in its merits (Fahim).

Even though many European states such as, Germany, Finland, and Denmark cancelled arms deals with Saudi Arabia to put out fire in Yemen, and deprive a sly and an untrustworthy regime from high-tech weaponry; alongside with imposed sanctions from Canada, the U.S., the

U.K and France on the 18 alleged Saudi killers; and congress accusation to Prince Mohammed, Donald Trump denied all evidence and showed him his ultimate support (“Jamal Khashoggi...”). Last but not least, the very recent incident on 21 April, when Saudi Arabia intentionally flooded the oil market, causing the U.S. oil prices to drop as low as -\$40.32 during the Coronavirus pandemic (Sabga). Undoubtedly, desperate times call for desperate measures. On 2nd April, President Donald Trump—before the storm wages it heavy winds—had already in a tweet called MBS (Crown Prince) “my friend”. A word that demonstrates to the world how desperate the U.S. was for oil cuts. The KSA gladly granted fair cuts, after discussions with President Vladimir Putin of Russia (Lefebvre).

Even though, the U.S.-Saudi relation can be sometimes bumpy and tricky, it somehow survives each time, which proves the extent to which President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud’ bond is solid and resilient, since the first meeting in the American cruiser, the USS Quincy, for more than 75 years (Riedel).

2. Protection, Assistance and Arms Sales in the New Millennium

Krause assumes that in the world, there are two types of arms transfer. The first is a service in exchange for cash, gold, oil or barter. While the second is an assistance and/or subsidization. However, one cannot separate the two types, as they are linked to each other in one way or another. He supposes—in the global market of arms production and transfer—that there are factors, which lead to the demand of production. He specifies further, that arms production and transfer are spawning as a result of three vital motives: “the pursuit of wealth, power and victory in war” (12).

The first motive is economy. It might be a major reason; yet trading arms is not similar to trading other commodities. In other words, arms would need an existent as well as an adequate

infrastructure, skilled labor, and brilliant politics, for the reason, that this latter—as far as economy is concerned—is the only way to close deals. The second motive is power. It is and to a large extent the primary motive behind military industry (13). Thomas Esper's research on military self-sufficiency in early-modern Russia describes it as:

a state's power, indeed its very survival, is closely related to the adequacy of its military organization to meet foreign policy needs. Not only is this adequacy dependent upon manpower and other economic resources, plus efficiency, training and morale factors; it is also greatly affected by weapons technology shape the emergence and evolution of the global arms transfer and production system (qtd. in Krause 15).

Esper summarizes the “state’s ... survival” in its “power”, but not only the military presence and equipment, but also intel, technology and innovation. The third motive—as history proves—is victory. In order to gain strength and respect from other countries (power) through creative and efficient military industry (economy), which are the three basic motives for arms production and transfer: economy, power and victory. Likewise, the U.S. strengthened its military power and pushed forward to defend and sustain the security of its allies, and gain leverage over them. This will enable the largest military superpower to be creative in its future geopolitical plans. (15)

There are several incentives for a global power like the United States to export arms and expand its military industry. As long as conflicts are ongoing and raging everywhere, certain countries will be in permanent need for arms as much as other life essentials. On the one hand, since economy is not the primary focus behind building a strong arsenal, power on the other hand is the ultimate aim behind it. Besides defending and maintaining the security of its allies, the U.S. tends to use its arms exports as leverage on other governments’ internal as well as external

policies and behaviors. As a result, the U.S. arms sales made 6.2% out of the total exports in the years between 2005 and 2014 (Thomas 1).

Due to the endless wars in the Middle East, countries in that region had the lion's share of exported arms from all around the world, one of which was notably extravagant, between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to protect, assist and transfer arms.

2.1. Middle Eastern Demand for Arms and the American Dominance

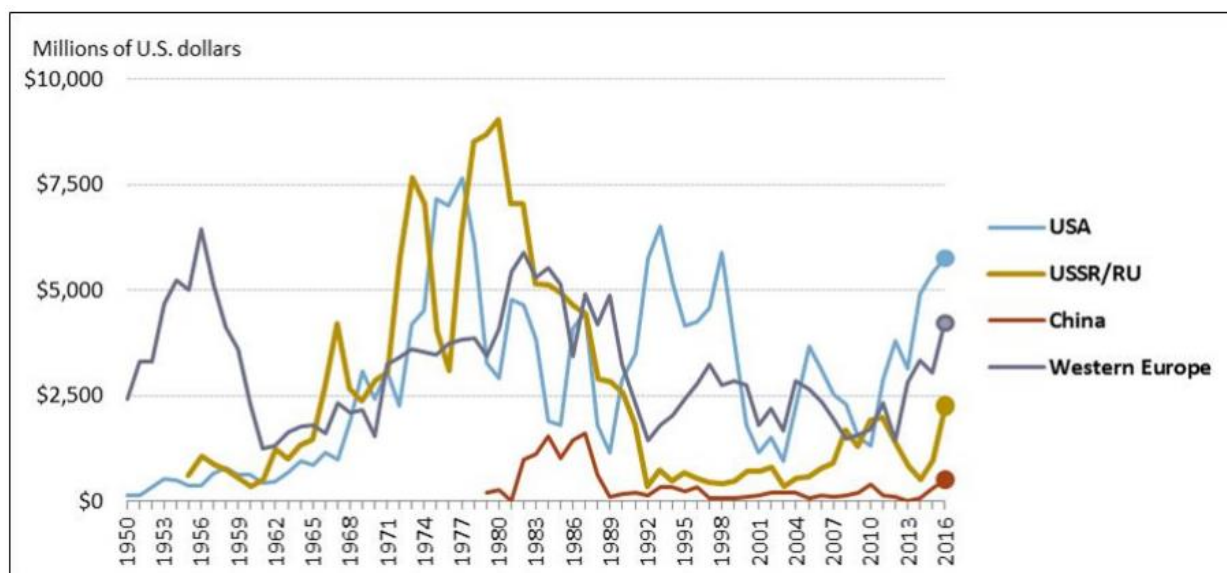
Several countries around the globe are in a state of war and/or most accurately in a 'civil war' surveyed under a bipolar superpower; in prospects for a new world system, led by different global powers using different schemes and techniques. Unquestionably, whether it is an economic or a biological war, it will eventually lead to raising armies and gathering military supplies to front the enemy. Most of today's hotbeds and focal points of war are located in the Middle East region, where many people are living under intense circumstances of permanent war and terror. Hence, countries, such as, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan, and Afghanistan, etc. are constantly threatening or being threatened, started an arms race not for themselves, but rather for their neighboring countries (Le Miere).

Equally important, Iran is considered to be the most dangerous regime that threatens the stability of the Middle East because of its nuclear program (Davis and Pfaltzgraff 1). This threat is evident in two key countries, Saudi Arabia and Israel. As their leaders were raging a diplomatic war on Tehran. For instance, the Israeli prime minister and defence minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a statement to the media, addressed the Iranian leaders: "This is what I have to say to the tyrants of Tehran," he also stated: "Israel knows what you're doing, Israel knows when you're doing it, and Israel knows where you're doing it" (qtd. Holmes). Similarly, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman accused Iran of the attacks on Saudi oil fields, seeking peaceful and

diplomatic solutions, while also urging the world leaders to take “strong and firm action to deter Iran” (“Saudi Arabia's MBS”).

In addition to the Iranian threat, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen are in ongoing conflicts, causing transnational terrorist threat. Therefore, the Middle East region covered 61.1% of the total arms agreements with the developing world between the years 2012 and 2015. Hence, a country like Saudi Arabia had every reason to be a number one participant in the global arms trade (Thomas 3). According to Army and Technology website, 2019 statistics demonstrate that the KSA is crowding out major powers like France and Great Britain for the top 10 biggest defence budgets. Saudi Arabia came 4th with \$51bn, after the United States, China and India; leaving behind all of the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Russia, and South Korea (“The world’s biggest defence budgets”).

Since the Middle East has been the focal point of terror and war, one major supplier has been drowning the region with arms, special forces, and military training programs, overriding the very existence of any moral military code. It started three decades ago, after the end of the cold war, when the United States became by far the largest supplier of arms to the Middle East. The following figure shows the U.S. dominance. See (**Fig. 13**).



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), importer/exporter total trend-indicator value (TIV) tables. Figure created by CRS.

Notes: Total exports by supplier to all Middle Eastern states.

Fig. 13. Top Four Arms Suppliers to the Middle East

Source: Thomas, Clayton. “Arms Sales in the Middle East: Trends and Analytical Perspectives for U.S. Policy.” *Congressional Research Service*, 11 Oct. 2017, PP. 3. Web. Accessed 15 Mar. 2020.

2.2. The U.S. Protection and Assistance to Saudi Arabia

During the Second World War, Britain needed all the help it could get in order to beat Hitler’s invasion. The cash-strapped brits needed urgent military funds. Moreover, Britain’s prime minister urged the American president for help, yet Frankin D. Roosevelt abided the American law, by remaining out of external affairs, especially war, following the isolationist nature of the Monroe Doctrine. Later on, Roosevelt proposed a policy by which the U.S. will aid all its allies, especially those in need for it. After two months of hot congressional debates, the congress agreed on the Lend-Lease policy, formally titled ‘An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States’, then it was enacted March 11, 1941 (Callihan et al. 597).

Although the Lend-Lease program was oriented solely for democratic countries whose defense was vital to the safety of the United States, Saudi Arabia—as an oil rich country—was included by February 1943, until its termination in 1945 (Chai 27). Grathwol and Moorhus believe that, after the United States’ extension of military assistance to Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom succeeded in creating the first professional and modern army. Furthermore, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was critical to the creation, assistance and modernization of the Saudi Forces (514). Moreover, three major organizations are funded through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program for national security reasons, to train and equip the Saudi Armed Forces (U.S. Department of State).

Long assumes that after the end of WWII, the threat was not completely gone. The Kingdom was one of the largest oil producing countries, with a very small population that needed assistance in order to maintain its own security. Therefore, the U.S. was the one to provide that for Saudi Arabia. During the first prospects of the cold war, the U.S. came to an agreement with Saudi Arabia to use Dahrhan as a military base to train Saudi defense forces. Throughout the years, the United States was Saudi Arabia’s knight in shining armor; keeping it safe from President Nasser and its then virtual client state, Yemen, in the 1960s; Iran in 1980s; and Saddam’s Iraq in the 1990s. The most important period in this mutual-cordial-alliance was in 1991, when the U.S. led a Western-Arab states coalition known as ‘Operation Desert Storm’, to drive Saddam’s Iraqi force out of Kuwait. The Kingdom footed the lion’s share of the bill, paying over \$50 billion (27-28).

2.2.1. U.S.-Saudi Arms Trade Relation in the New Millennium

After the 09/11 attacks, which involved fifteen Saudis out of the nineteen attackers, the American public started perceiving Saudi Arabia as “a corrupt, absolute monarchy that supports

terrorism and provides financial aid to Terrorist organizations, denies its people basic democratic freedoms and human rights” (Long 24). In a similar manner, the Saudi public started perceiving the United States as “arrogant, hypocritical country preaching racial and ethnic toleration but intolerant itself” (24). Even though the new millennium started off the wrong foot with the 09/11 attacks accusation to the Saudi Kingdom, the situation was soon remedied; which proved to the world how solid, ‘special’ and resilient the relationship was between the two states. Thereafter, the relationship kept flourishing through the last two decades. Later, on 2018 the President of the United States Donald Trump, said to Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman during his visit to the White House that the relationship between the two states: “is now probably as good as it's really ever been,” in addition to that he promised him more military sales (Dockery).

It is no wonder the core of most meetings and discussions between the Saudi and American leaders are either about oil or arms. In order to illustrate the extent to which arms are an important card between the two states, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute shows that the Saudi Kingdom is the largest arms importer in the world in 2020 (International arms transfers). Further, DW published an article, which informs that the KSA leads the top arms importers during the last 4 years. Moreover, the same source indicates that the United States is by far the largest arms exporter in the world, as it exported more than one third of the total exported arms in the world during the last five years (Stockholm Institute). The U.S. distributed its exported arms on 96 countries. Thus, the U.S. dominated the major arms exports between the years 2015-2019. See **(Fig. 14)**.

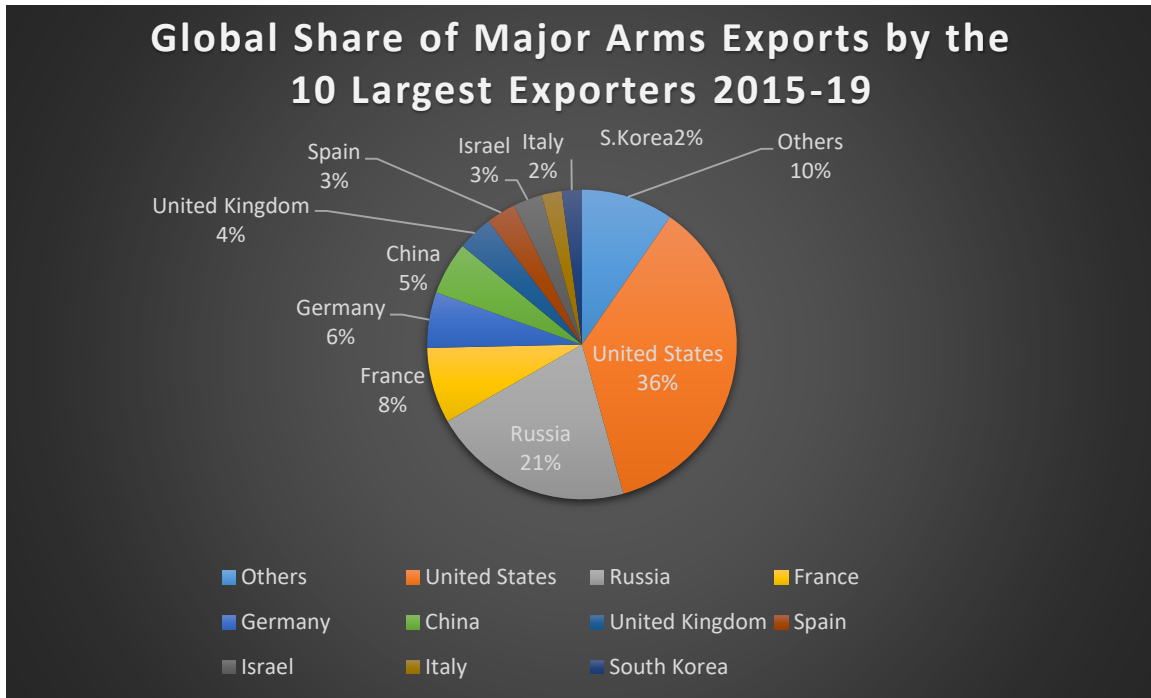


Fig. 14. Global Share of Major Arms Exports by the 10 Largest Exporters 2015-2019

Source: “International arms transfers.” Web. 21 Mar. 2020.

More than the half of the American arms exports, were oriented to the Middle East, where most of them were bought by Saudi Arabia. This latter, alone, covered 22% of the American exports and 12% of the world arms trade exports (Stockholm Institute). See (**Fig. 15**).

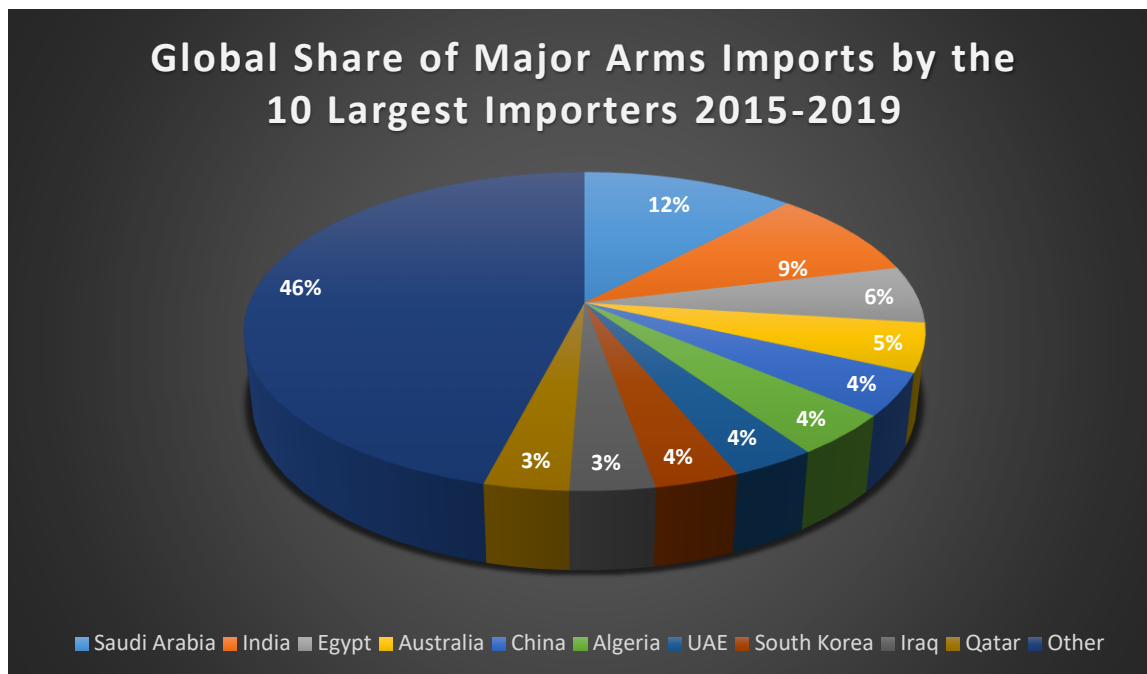


Fig. 15. Global Share of Major Arms Imports by the 10 Largest Importers 2015-2019

Source: “International arms transfers.” Web. 21 Mar. 2020.

2.2.2. The 2017 U.S.-Saudi Arms Deal, War in Yemen and Congress Reaction

The U.S.-Saudi military cooperation is very important to both states. According to Blanchard, there are four major reasons for this continuous military assistance. First, maintaining Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME) against any external threat from Arab neighboring countries, or in any case of an Arab coalition. Second, reducing the need for U.S. troops deployment in the region. Third, deterring the Iranian threat and its nuclear program. Finally, developing the U.S. military industry (23).

On 20 May 2017, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, welcomed the President of the United States Donald Trump in a tweet: “We welcome @POTUS Trump to KSA. Mr. President, your visit will strengthen our strategic cooperation, lead to global security and stability”. In the same year, Donald Trump announced plans for a series of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, worth \$110b

(Thomas 11). The deal consists of a previous agreement with the Obama Administration since 2013, which includes, combat ships, Abrams tanks, and Chinook helicopters, of \$24b worth (11). Moreover, the CNBS's report elucidates two deals as parts of the agreement. The first one was a \$110b immediate deal. Whereas, the second one was a \$350b extended deal for over the 10 years (David).

Saudi Arabia needed this deal to enhance the interoperability with its historical ally the U.S. against Iran. This latter, opposed Saudi Arabia and the United States by backing up Bashar Hafez al-Assad in Syria, and Ansar Allah, who are publically known as Al Houthis (Ehteshami et al. 33). As a result, Saudi Arabia led a coalition in 2015, alongside with its ally the UAE. Both states intervened in Yemen claiming restoration over the legitimacy of the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour, which was taken down by Houthi rebels (Juneau 653-654).

According to the New York Times, Saudi Arabia caused 'war crimes' including, killing thousands of civilians in airstrikes, "tortured detainees, raped civilians and used child soldiers as young as 8" (Cumming-Bruce). Similarly, Tom Malinowski, the state department's top human rights official during the Obama administration said: "It makes the US complicit again in Saudi actions that are causing great suffering over which we have insufficient control" (What's the goal). In the same context, Charles Garraway, a retired military officer assumes that both sides are causing war crimes, and that "None have clean hands" (Cumming-Bruce). On the same side of the equation, Trump was chiefly betting on the "emergency" provision of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), that would allow him to proceed with the arms sales, without any congressional review (Hastedt 147). Further, this provision (emergency declaration) would enable Trump to carry on with 22 arms sales to a dozen countries, whereby Congress would stand idly by. Whereas on the other side of the world, nearly 233,000 deaths estimated, caused

by the Saudi led-coalition on Yemen, more than half of these deaths were children under five, which sounded the alarm for congress to react against further participation and/or arms sales to the coalition. Hence, Congress—both House and Senate—took action by passing a bipartisan resolution to end this massacre. As a consequence, Trump not only he vetoed the resolution, but also declared national emergency invoking the tension Iran created in the region (Ohlbaum and Stohl). Despite the firm congressional opposition which was evident in the democratic senator's tweet, Bernie Sanders: "I wonder why Donald Trump vetoed our historic legislation to end U.S. involvement in the brutal bombing of Yemen. Who benefits from that?", Donald trump—because of the national emergency declaration—was able to close arms sales deals without a period for congressional review (Ohlbaum and Stohl). Trump and his Government proved once again that the United States and Saudi Arabia have a very resilient relationship, and that they would peruse all likely avenues possible to sustain and protect it.

Since oil discovery, the two nations had gone through a journey full of intense events. From discovering black gold, arms assistance and military support, to launching cooperative ops, and fighting wars on different grounds for mutual interests. However, the age of media blackout is replaced by more severe control systems, which investigate every detail between the two states. Today, both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, recognize that it is a war of information, and that soft power can erase and install new ideologies serve their cause and long-term goals.

Chapter Three

Saudi Road Map Towards Openness

In an attempt to open its doors for foreign investments, Saudi Arabia had to divorce its conservative nature, and welcome with open arms the West's liberal ideology. This openness tendency was not only at the economic level, but also at the level of society, where all citizens obtain new rights. MbS launched a well-organized vision to levitate the Kingdom's economy, while attracting more investors. Moreover, he ordered a plethora of reforms at the political, economic and social levels, which attracted the eyes of the regional and international media. The U.S., as the Kingdom's most powerful ally, was at the center of the political discourse during these historical reforms.

However, MbS' recklessness in dealing with political and religious dissidents had put the U.S. leadership in a tough spot. Despite that the U.S., under Trump's administration, showed boundless support for the young prince, MbS crossed several redlines which eventually might threaten in the future to a demise of a strong historical relationship. Furthermore, amid the rapid pace of cultural change and social reforms, some policies had split the Saudi public in half, while only one of them had survived the wrath of jail and torture. This compulsory change, which might be in favor for further application of more soft power in the Middle East, extends the U.S.' regional as well as temporal control in the Middle East.

1. Openness in the Globalization Era

In the 19th century, the rapid population growth led to an enormous demand for food and labor (Neale 129). Fortunately, the same century had witnessed an ample of inventions, such as: steamships, railroads, telegraph, etc., which caused global trade to take a captivating turn in the history of world economy (Lubrano 157). Koppelman assumes that this technological

breakthrough paved the way to a modern era of industrialized world, which is also known as the 'Globalization Era' (151).

After the end of the two World Wars, and the Cold War, globalization as a term gained huge popularity (Kolb). According to Merriam Webster, globalization is "the act or process of globalizing: the state of being globalized especially: the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets." (Globalization). In technical terms, Kopp defines it as "...the spread of products, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures. In economic terms, it describes an interdependence of nations around the globe fostered through free trade". Globalization promoted for the 'interdependence of nations'; that are culturally diversified, which might be challenging to the worldwide network of trade. Therefore, the international community had to lift all barriers, in order to smoothen the international trade process and cooperation between world economies.

Tendency towards openness had become the center of attention, as it became the main factor boosting economic performances. Moreover, scholars such as Inglehart, Williamson and Hofstede, assume that culture, and to a large extent, is embedded within economic and political systems, while also values and norms influence market productions, public choices and industrial lanes (De Jong, et al. 112). In the same context, Merriam Webster defines openness as "the free expression of one's true feelings and opinions" (Openness). This definition evokes a strong sense of liberation and freedom in one's opinion. Similarly, yet in an economic context, De Jong, Smeets and Smits define openness as "the unrestricted integration of national markets in the global economy" (113).

Moreover, Quinn considers openness "to be government policies regulating inward and outward financial transactions on current and capital accounts, as well as policy-directives

imposed by international agreements.” (qtd. in De Jong 114). Hence, Quinn limited openness in economy to imposed regulations and restricted policies by different national governments.

Moreover, a report published by the Legatum Institute, indicates that “openness is about more than just trade and regulation; it is about the wider conditions that exist in a country that will either help or hinder that country’s economy” (Global Index, 20). The same source indicates that in the last 10 years, economic openness has been increasing by 8%. See (**Fig. 16**)

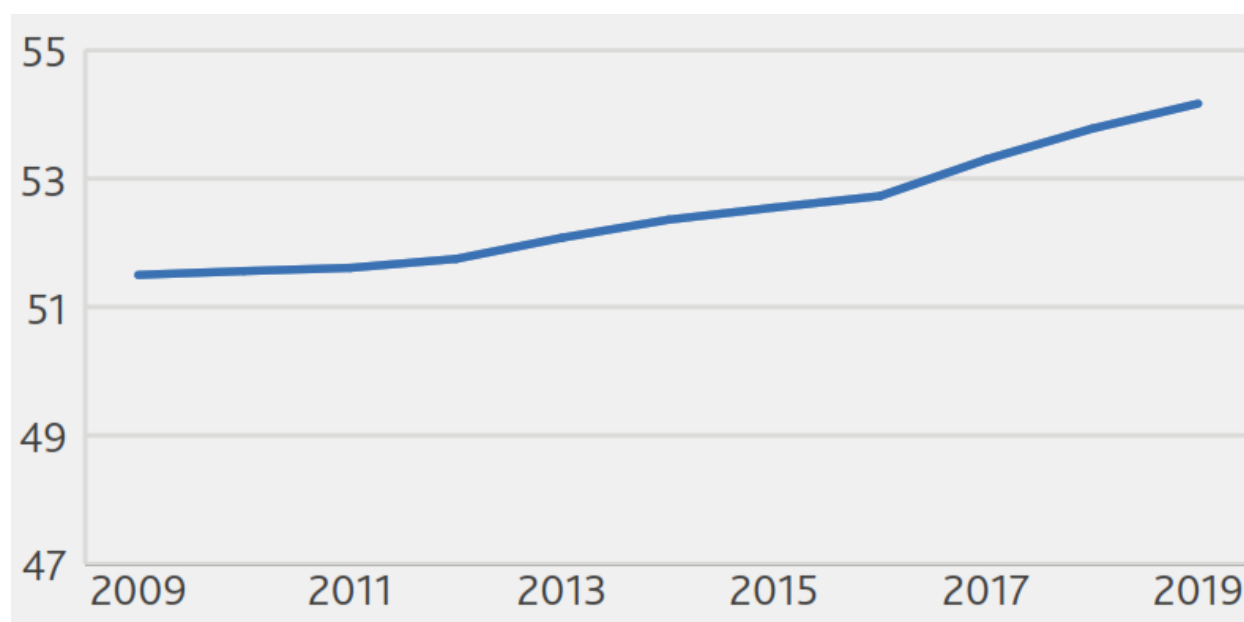


Fig. 16. Global Economic Openness (130 countries)

Source: “Global Index of Economic Openness.” *Legatum Institute*, May 2019. Pdf. Accessed 07 May 2020.

In simpler words, openness in economy signifies erasing national borders, smoothing investment and trade processes, in order to create a unified, dynamic and vivid trade network. It is no secret that openness is a number one factor for the relocations of the different assets to the most suitable allocations, which in return would make them more productive and efficient to their highest capabilities. It is also a process that creates a culture of competition between firms and

companies (De Jong 114). Another important notion developed by Inglehart, determines that the international affairs usually attract people with material values, and vice versa when it comes to people with post-material values (qtd. in Kwon 8). In other words, Kwon hypothesized it as follows: “Individuals who are more culturally open-minded are more likely to support regional economic integration.” (8). Hence, in today’s global economic system, openness plays a major role in balancing and allocating perfectly each industry to its fit national market, which in return enhances its performance.

2. Openness as part of America’s New Middle East Project?

The Middle East and North African countries (MENA), have witnessed an increasing political and economic tensions because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the war in Iraq and their significance in the region (Cordesman, *Energy Developments* 58). Politically, many of the Arab countries in the region have faced internal instability because of the “lack of political openness, and the increasing popularity of the Islamist opposition groups” (Al Khouri 1). Economically, the Arab world today and in the past knew high rates of unemployment and slow growth per capita income due to the fast demographic growth and the poor management of natural resources (1). Hence, the U.S., as well as the European Union, sought after including the MENA countries in their free trade markets in order to cool down the flammable tensions, smoothen the relations with the countries of the region and increase their security through building economic stability and enhancing the welfare of the Arab population.

The deal between the U.S. and the MENA countries started as a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Israel in 1985. Further, after the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Jordanian peace treaties took place in 1993 and 1994 respectively, the U.S. established the first Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) in Jordan. After 9/11 attacks, the U.S. did not cease to look for FTAs with

MENA countries, but rather became more eager to liberalize global trade. Moreover, according to the 9/11 Commission Report, the United States' strategy to fight terrorism revolved around economic policies to reassure "development, [and] more open societies" (qtd. in Al Khouri 1).

In Fact, Al Khouri claims that the United States uses several strategies in its trade diplomacy with the MENA countries. It includes, Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs), FTAs and QIZs (5). First, a TIFA is an agreement between the U.S. and another country to discuss matters of mutual interest in order to facilitate trade and investment. The U.S. has established numerous TIFAs with the MENA countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Turkey, Yemen, Tunisia, and Algeria. Furthermore, TIFAs are the first step towards a free trade with MENA countries—they can develop into FTAs—as they discuss trade, investment and political concerns (5).

Second, FTAs are bilateral agreements "in which member countries agree to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers on trade in goods, services, and agriculture between or among countries covered by the agreement, and to establish rules in trade-related areas, such as investment, intellectual property rights (IPR), labor, and the environment" (Akhtar et al. 17). In addition, the United States establishes FTAs with countries that are able and willing to join the free trade, such as Bahrain, Morocco and Oman (Al Khouri 5).

Third, QIZs were ratified by the U.S. congress in 1996. They are industrial zones in a host country specialized in manufacturing certain products. They enable goods produced by Israel in partnership with either one of Jordan or Egypt—the two countries that signed peace treaties with Israel— "to enter the United States duty free". Furthermore, products produced by QIZs are exclusively exported to the U.S. (4). The U.S. agreements with North Africa are notably insignificant compared to those with the Middle East ones. The following charts demonstrate the

U.S. imports and exports with Middle East and North Africa from the period between 1991 and 2018. See (Fig. 17) and (Fig. 18)

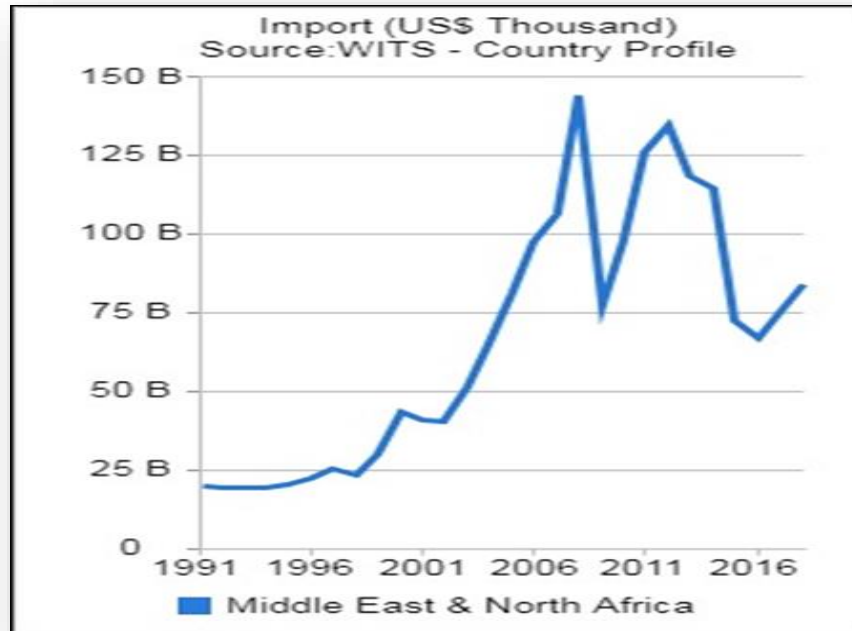


Fig. 17. U.S. Trade Imports from MENA Countries

Source: The World Integrated Trade Solution. "United States Imports to Middle East & North Africa, in US\$ Thousand 1991-2018". Web. 29 July 2020.



Fig. 18. U.S. Exports to MENA Countries

Source: The World Integrated Trade Solution. “United States Exports from Middle East & North Africa, in US\$ Thousand 1991-2018”. Web. 29 July 2020.

3. MBS’ Vision 2030: An Open Saudi Arabia on the Horizon

In order for Saudi Arabia to reduce its oil dependency, the government had to draw a strategic framework—detailed in the Vision 2030—that promotes investment in private sectors, education, healthcare, while modernizing culture and entertainment to meet the modern age’s requirements and the public’s expectations.

Saudi Arabia’s King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, initiated the first announcement towards a project that all Saudis are looking forward to. He said: “My objective is for our country to be a pioneering and successful global model of excellence, on all fronts, and I will work with you to achieve that” (Saudi Vision 2030). He appointed his son Muhammad as Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs. According to Vision 2030, this huge project is based on three major pillars. First, Saudi

Arabia as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Second, a diverse and strong economy. Third, a strategic geographical position (6). The Vision 2030 includes many framework details (economic, political and social), which are to contribute in the building of a modern Kingdom. Few months after the announcement of this vision, Saudi Arabia witnessed tangible and ground changes, shadowed by a boundless U.S. support to the government of Mohammad Bin Salman. As a result, these changes launched a storm of conflicting views.

3.1. Vision 2030's Economic Plans

In the recent years, oil-dependent countries had to watch their oil expected revenues disappear into thin air. The average oil price in the period between 2010 and 2014 was about 100\$ per barrel; however, it dropped sharply to approximately 50\$ in the period between 2015 and 2018. Plausibly, this oil slump overarched the middle eastern giant Saudi Arabia. This latter, had hit the ground running, since the dramatic drop of oil prices, initiating an economic blueprint in order to diversify and balance its revenues (Moshashai, et al. 1). As illustrated in the previous chapter, Saudi Arabia is one of the most dependent nations on oil as its primary income. Not only it is important for the economic wellbeing of the country, but also to gain “political quiescence” while choosing the “macroeconomic catastrophe” over a “potential rebellion” (3). Hence, Arabia's expenditure has been growing over the years, until it surpassed its own revenues. See **(Fig. 19)**

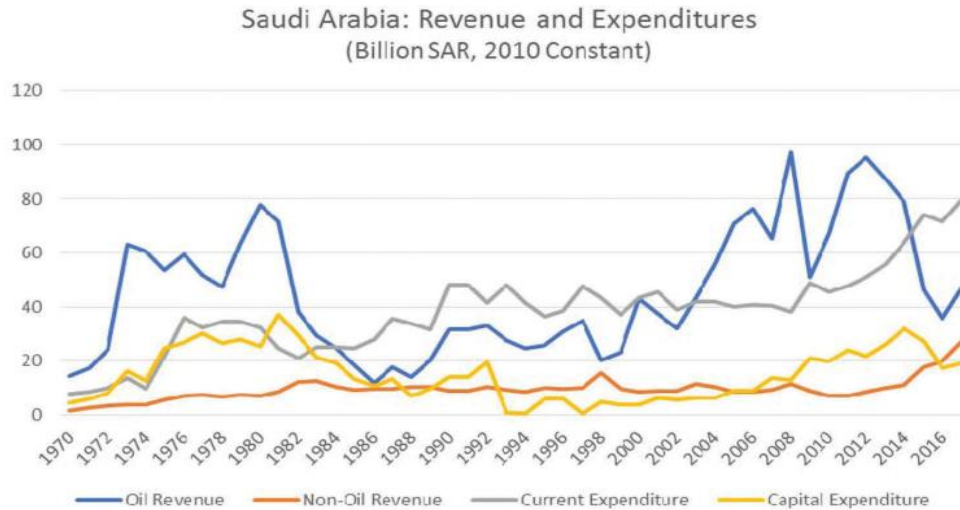


Fig. 19. Saudi Arabia’s Revenues and Expenditures since the 1970s

Source : Moshashai, Daniel., et al. “Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform”. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2018. Pdf. Accessed 2 July 2020.

In the last four years the Kingdom’s expenditure exceeded its revenues. See (**Fig. 20**)

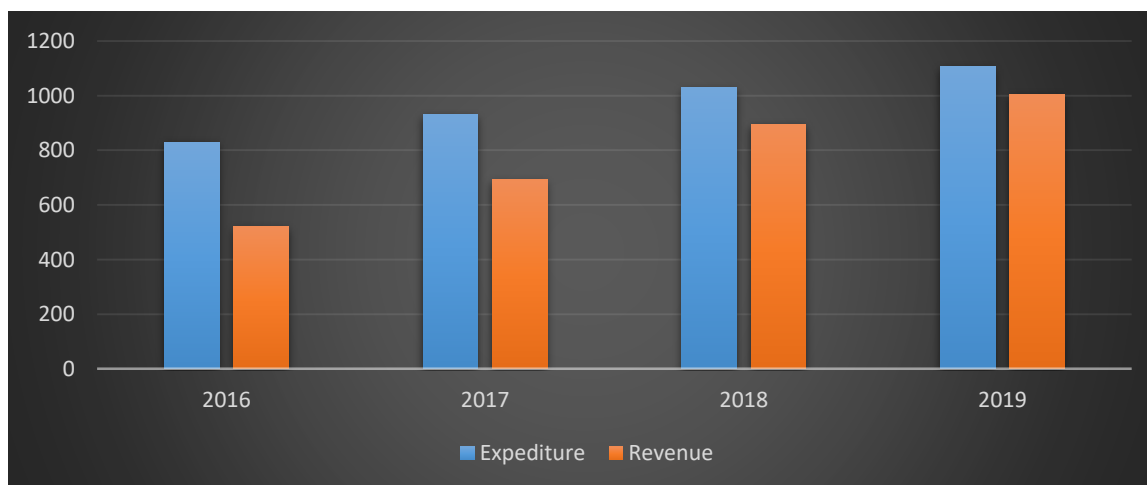


Fig. 20. Expenditures and Revenues of the Kingdom’s Previous Four Years

Source: “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s Budget”. *Gov.sa*, 16 Feb. 2020. Web. Accessed 5 July 2020.

Hence, the evident discrepancy between the expenditures and revenues, gives the impression of a huge negligence towards the country's economy. It also reflects an unwise autarchic governance, spending, and overdependence on oil revenues (4). A scant number of solutions and reforms were on the table, up until the proposition of a factual economic plan incorporated in Vision 2030. According to Moshashai, as first step towards a national reform plan, Saudi Arabia, during the economic volatility, launched a systematic austerity, followed by reductions in government subsidies (2). Moreover, these reforms depended on the willingness of investors and the environment of the investment.

According to Vision 2030, the economic plans are primarily based on the investment in Saudi youth, the private sector, women integration in workforce and the localization of military industry (7-48). In Saudi Arabia youth whom their age range from 0-30 years, make up 67.02% of the total population (Amlôt). Hence, besides other riches and assets, the Saudi government pays enormous attention to its youth, as this Vision 2030 describes them as "the real wealth", which Saudi Arabia is going to build its future upon (6). A wealth that can only be invested on youth before graduation, through associating higher education formations with the market requirements.

Moreover, the plan aims at developing and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, while enhancing investment competencies (40-41). The private sector has a major role in this plan, as the government is willing to create a public-private partnership based on reciprocal benefit and constructive cooperation rather than destructive competition, detailed in the National Transformation Program (NTP) (83). Further, the Kingdom aims to increase the private sectors' contribution of Gross Domestic Product (GPD) from 40% to 65%; foreign direct investment from 3.8% to 5.7%, and the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) from 25 to top 10 countries (53). In the same context, the giant petroleum company Aramco will contribute as a

conglomerate in different businesses besides oil, in a special program called as “The Saudi Aramco Strategic Transformation Program” (50- 82).

In a different context, women’s participation in labor force is very crucial to the economic growth of Arabia. Even though statistics show that more than 50% of Saudi graduates are women, they have not fully captured tangible opportunities in labor force, which caused and still causing a direct negative impact on the economy (Forster 2). Hence, despite the cultural hindrances, Vision 2030 clarifies that the Saudi government is looking forward to integrate 30% of women in labor force by 2030 (37-39).

Of higher importance, industrial localization is central to the Vision 2030, due to the colossal military spending. Saudi Arabia spends solely 2% on military industry within the Kingdom. As a result, the government, through scholarships, technological transformation and specialized training, is looking forward to localize 50% of its military industry, including armored vehicles ammunition, and even aircrafts (48). Furthermore, in order for Saudi Arabia to decouple government spending from redundant subsidies, it launched a Fiscal Balance Program (FBP), not only to freeze unnecessary funds, but also to develop an investment plan devoid of oil revenues as its primary income (Moshashai, et al. 2). Moreover, according to Vision 2030, the government launched a Public Investment Fund Reconstructing Program (PIFRP), accompanied with a Human Capital Program (HCP). The former aims at “transforming (the Fund) into the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world”; whereas, the latter aims at assisting, assessing and analyzing the different aspects related to the human capital, in a long-term plan to support the government (82).

3.2. Vision 2030's Political Plans

Since the political scene in Saudi Arabia is still under a monarchical system of government, the least that could be done is an endeavor to achieve political and governmental transparency. According to Vision 2030, the government aims at implementing international standards regarding control systems. Moreover, the Vision stresses the importance of administrative service enhancement and severity in punishment in cases of transgression. The Vision asserts that the government will be straightforward when it comes to either its success or its failures, taking into consideration any opinion vital to its improvement (7). Furthermore, the government will be working towards digitalizing governmental platforms to help reduce delays and attract as many investors as possible. Finally, in a partnership with the private sector, the government “will strengthen the governance of digital transformation through a national council” (57).

3.3. Vision 2030' Social Plans

The ultraconservative Kingdom faced a storm of social reforms. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman introduced an original social plan incorporated in the Vision. This latter aims at supporting culture, education and entertainment. It also focuses on healthcare, children's character, and moderation as its core concept. MbS, launched a social war on extremism in Saudi Arabia, promoted for moderate Islam, and granted women with some of the west's basic human rights (Saudi Vision 2030 13-39).

The Vision works towards the development of a more suitable atmosphere for entertainment and cultural events, alongside with a wide-range partnership with the private sector to launch new projects that include sports facilities (Saudi Vision 2030, 22). Moreover, volunteering, cultural activities, different sports and engagement in international exchange programs are part of a bigger vision to develop children's character, while ingraining

fundamental and national principles within their personalities (28). Furthermore, this Vision views health as indispensable to the nation's quality of life; thus, it aims at increasing the average life expectancy from 74 to 80 years (31). Changes, so fundamental, cause the reader to beg the question, why is this sudden modernization?

Between the 1960s and the 1980s Saudi Arabia witnessed a strong political and social uprising known as the 'Sahwa Movement' or al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya or Islamic Awakening (Armborst 60). After fleeing from political oppression in Egypt and Syria in the 1950s, King Faysal Al Saud sheltered the Muslim Brotherhood refugees (Hegghammer et al. 322). Years later, the Brotherhood started plotting a reformist agenda at both the social and political levels (Aly and Wenner 346). Al Faqih explains that the birth of this movement was "of a marriage between the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and the Saudi state's Salafi-Wahhabi tradition" (Ibrahim).

Prominent names at the period such as, Salman al-Awdah, Awad al-Qarni, and Safar al-Hawali were the leaders of the Sahwa Movement (Bin Ali 198). The Saudi government took advantage of the social prominence of the movement to promote for jihadi ideology amongst the Muslim youth, since the Saudi view towards the Soviet's occupation of Afghanistan was in line with that of its ally the United States (Musharraf 208). Despite the immense popularity of the movement back then, several factors led to a foreseen divorce between it and the Saudi authority.

First, as Ahmed Bin Rashid, a Saudi professor, exiled in the United Kingdom in an interview with Aljazeera said: "The Sahwa challenged the idea that there should be obedience to the ruler, introducing ideas that were not welcome in the Wahhabi quarters," the movement objected any kind of blind obedience to the royal family (Ibrahim). Second, the 1979 Iranian revolution and its ideological principles also influenced the region, as Al Khomeini promised to get rid of all tyrants in Muslim countries (Esposito 18). Third, the 1979 famous and terrifying capture of the holy Grand Mosque in Mecca by a mini militia led by a former army corporal

Juhayman al-Otaybi, which was eventually cracked down by French special forces soldiers alongside with the Saudi army (Danforth 6). However, this military assistance does not exist in any official documents, as Saudi Arabia insisted on the secrecy of this mission; hence, all documents are either sealed or classified. Unluckily for the Saudi authorities, two out of the three soldiers narrated the full story to Aljazeera journalist Tamer Al-Mashal. The French commandos Paul Barril, when he was asked for the reason behind this top level secrecy, said that it would have been an embarrassment for the royal family (Al Saud) (“The Tip of the Iceberg,” 00:11:45-00:12:05).

Mohammed Bin Salman believes the reason behind Saudi Arabia’s reactionary ideas and extremism is primarily because of the Sahwa movement and the 1979 Iran revolution. The young Crown Prince commented to the “60 minutes” news program that the Saudi people “were living a very normal life like the rest of the Gulf countries. Women were driving cars, there were movie theaters in Saudi Arabia, and women worked everywhere. We were normal people developing like any other country in the world until the events of 1979” (Khashoggi).

Ulrichsen, a Baker Institute fellow for the Middle East and Sheline, a Postdoctoral Fellow, Baker Institute and Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance, confirm that the very reason behind every reform Bin Salman is looking forward to, is because of the 1970s “He portrayed that year as a pivotal one in which Islam became politicized through the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and the fundamentalist takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca” (4). However, Bin Salman’s word cannot be taken, because Saudi Arabia was upholding reactionary ideas even before 1979. For example, as it is explained in chapter one; women were supposed “to know ‘enough’ to be good wives and mothers and nothing more. However, in the 1960s, King Faisal’s wife Queen Iffat, inspired him to fund and promote girls’ education in the Kingdom”. This very reform was followed by a direct royal order from the King Faisal himself “to open fire on

religious demonstrators protesting the introduction of television to Saudi Arabia” (5). This coercivity in decision-making repeats itself today.

In the spring of 2016, MbS curbed the power of the Committee of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention, also known as the religious police. This latter, was responsible for public behavioral control, which usually promotes a bad image of the Kingdom to the rest of the world in the 21st century (Abdellatif). Furthermore, despite the religious restrictions and justifications, the Saudi government lifted a 35-year ban on cinemas in 11 December 2017 (Chulov, “Saudi Arabia to Lift”). AlMuhraini commented on this cinematic victory, and replied to all religious justifications that the “Rise of civilized societies is linked to the rise of art and it is rare to see ignorant societies producing the most brilliant works of art or literature” (Saudi Arabia profile - Timeline).

It might be shocking to know that women obtained ID cards as late as 2001 for the first time since the establishment of the Kingdom in 1932! (Al-Sudairy 126). While in 2011 a woman was sentenced 10 lashes because she drove a car; however, King Abdullah overturned that sentence (Beazley and Lassoie 37). Luckily today and since the ban on women’s driving was lifted in 26 September 2017, they were granted the legal right to drive, after a royal decree came into effect in June 2018 (Jarbou 321). Rasha Khayat became the first woman ever to drive a car in the streets of Riyadh (Naar). Moreover, after one month from lifting the ban on women’s right to drive, the Kingdom declared that women will be permitted to attend different sport events (Schmidt). Therefore, these reforms “has allowed them to take a whole different number of measures that ease up on the rather severe sort of social norms and restrictions that were in place previously,” said Kristin Smith Diwan, a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute (Boghani).

In the same context, women all over the Kingdom suffered and still suffer from a patriarchal society, which controls almost all aspects of their social, economic, and educational lives (Alwedini 33). The male guardianship program, which would be considered to a huge obstruction against women's freedoms in the West, is actually praised by religious clerics in the Kingdom (Terrill 597). A woman that falls under the guardianship program is who "remains a legal dependent, no matter her age, education level or marital status. She needs a male guardian—a father, uncle, husband, brother or son—to consent to a variety of basic needs" (Coker).

Since the day Saudi Arabia signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2000, the government loosened some restriction on women in the Kingdom (Saudi Arabia's enduring male guardianship system). For instance, now women over 21 years young are legally permitted to acquire their own passports and to travel abroad without any guardian consent (Abdellatif).

These reforms aroused paradoxical views at the social level and attracted the attention of the media. However, the reason everyone is discussing these reforms were not those drastic changes per se. Previously, King Abdullah enacted fundamental and foundational reforms, such as, women's right to vote, participate in municipal elections, and even hold positions in Shura council (Schuster and Stern 464). Boghani assumes that the only explanation to this media inquisitiveness on the topic is that "the pace of the current changes, however, is unusual for Saudi Arabia". The accelerated pace in technological change in Japan is similar to that of culture in today's Saudi Arabia.

While in the past you could hear the sound of musical drums in public in Saudi Arabia solely during military marches or trainings, today it is rather different (Urkevich 208). In 30 January 2017, it was the first time ever for Saudi Arabia to host a public concert. Mohammed

Abdo, also known as the “Artist of the Arabs,” Rabeh Sager, and Majid Al-Muhandis, sang together alongside with a 60 Egyptians orchestra singers. Women’s attendance was banned, while the grand mufti of the Kingdom said that “there is nothing good in song parties” (Paul). Moreover, the Kingdom, in the MDL Beast Festival in the capital Riyadh, hosted and internationally known musicians, such as David Guetta, Steve Aoki, Black Coffee and Martin Garrix (Narozniak).

Mohammed Bin Salman appeared certain regarding many fundamental reforms. Even though he was not the legal de facto ruler of the Kingdom, nor the one who should be crowned Prince in the first place, the ambitious young Prince’s history and ambiguity begs loads of heavy questions, concerning the fronts that are backing him up tirelessly despite his rather imprudent decisions.

4. Mohammed Bin Salman’s Rise to Power and Donald Trump’ Boundless Support

According to Hubbard, Mohammed Bin Salman is the sixth son of the 25th son of the first king. He was the eldest amongst his mother’s children—King Salman’ second wife. He had a very “imposing personality”, leaving no room for actual Shura, let alone opposition. He had a strong tendency to treat everyone else around his circle as a ‘less important’, while acting as a solo leader in an autarchic Kingdom. Unlike many of his relatives, MbS chose to study in the Kingdom instead of moving abroad (Cochran 4). He was a law student at King Saud University, known for his eagerness to lead conversations (Illahi 132). Hubbard reports that one of the princes who studied with him said: “He always wanted to be the one speaking. He always wanted to be in the lead”. The passion towards political debates and leadership in dialogues, must be the result of several factors and environmental effects in the Prince’s young life.

Moreover, according to the same author, during his childhood, MbS, was a “mischievous” little kid. A British-Algerian teacher Rachid Sekkai, had the opportunity to teach the 11 years young Mohammed. The Algerian teacher noticed that he “seemed to be allowed to do as he pleased”. He used to play with the guards during the lessons, and cracking jokes while the teacher was explaining. Moreover, Sekkai, described a very important trait in Mohammed’s personality “In that palace, he was the one that everybody looked after. He got the attention of everybody,” he showed everyone who was the one in charge (Hubbard).

In his book “MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed Bin Salman,” Ben Hubbard explained that Salman was drawn in his own sorrows after the death of his two elder sons from his first wife. He assumes that something does not add up to a two consecutive sudden deaths, “In 2001, Salman’s oldest son, Fahd, who had helped out reporters during the Gulf War, died suddenly at age 46. One year later, his brother Ahmed, the Kentucky Derby winner, died, too, at age 44. The declared cause in both cases was a heart attack, but the underlying reasons were never made clear”. MbS, thus became the eldest son and the one closest to his father Salman. The two created a solid father-son bond. In addition to that, he learned from and acquainted many important clerics, politicians, and other high profile figures in Saudi Arabia.

After the death of both Salman’s brothers, Prince Sultan and Prince Nayef, King Abdullah named his Crown Prince (Bolanos 54). Thus, MbS became closer to the throne than he had ever been before. Hubbard assumes that because of his father’s fondness of him, he was in an ultimate position of power. Salman admired the fact that his son enjoys Saudi Arabia as much as he does. His eldest living son had spent almost all of his life in the Kingdom, whether studying, camping, or spending his vacations, “the older brothers, with their foreign educations, British accents, and horse ranches, had lost touch with their father, who, in the end, was a Saudi traditionalist who

liked the desert and eating meat with his hands. So did MBS and his father appreciated it,” Hubbard asserts.

Later on in 2014, Joseph Westphal, the American ambassador of the Obama administration, and after few meetings with Crown Prince Salman (King Fahd was extremely ill) could not but notice the presence of his young ambitious son Muhammed. Westphal—after fixing a meeting with the young man—said “I did believe from the very beginning that this was a young, ambitious guy who was destined to be a leader” (Hubbard). Three years later, Mohammed Bin Salman became Deputy Crown Prince and de facto ruler of the Kingdom.

Chulov claims that according to three solid sources, Ahmed Bin Abdul Aziz—the only living full brother of King Salman, and Mohammed Bin Nayef—the previous crown prince, were arrested by orders of Mohammed Bin Salman. Moreover, Cantey asserts that the body of legislation responsible for the transition of power known as ‘the allegiance council’ was critical to MbS’ triumph against Mohammed Bin Nayef, as the former outvoted the latter 34 to 31 votes (169). Now, since Mohammed Bin Salman became Crown Prince and de facto ruler of the Kingdom, there was little he could not do.

Accused of corruption and other heavy charges, members of the Saudi royal family became what the Guardian reporter Chulov describes as a “five-star prisoners at the Riyadh Ritz-Carlton”. According to the same reporter, MbS, detained 350 princes and businessmen, and tortured them in their luxurious stay. An ex-adviser of King Abdullah—who wishes to stay anonymous—declared to Aljazeera that MbS is using all of his forces to be King before Trump’s term comes to an end. He is also pursuing all legal/illegal ways to make Prince Ahmed pledge allegiance to him before his father Salman dies, “Ahmed refused to give bay'a [pledge allegiance] to MBS, claiming that throne is his rightful place, based on their father's will” Said the former

advisor. He added, “Prince Mohammed feels that if he does not take the throne during Trump's reign, he will never get the chance” (Ibrahim).

Despite the charges MbS is dropping on his blood relatives, he is ironically very lavish and extravagant himself. He owns the most expensive chateau in the world; a \$450.3 million Leonardo da Vinci painting; and a \$500 million yacht (Hubbard). Not only that the young prince is living a Hollywood star lifestyle, Bin Salman created international charged political debates and brought about regional instability. He launched a terrifying war on Houthi rebels in Yemen; kidnapped unlawfully the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri; ordered a vicious crime to kill the Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi; and even hacked Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos’s phone (Black).

Despite the bad image the young prince promoted for himself, he still receives huge support from Trump’s administration. When Bin Salman created the anti-graft commission and arrested a load of princes, businessmen and high profile military officials, Trump showed him nothing but ultimate support to. Trump tweeted after the incident: “I have great confidence in King Salman and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, they know exactly what they are doing,” the United States President added, “Some of those they are harshly treating have been ‘milking’ their country for years!” (qtd in. Smith). Moreover, according to Black, MbS seems to have a good relationship with Trump’ advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner. Black assumes that: “Americans who embraced his vision for change turned a blind eye to his recklessness”.

Opening another chapter in MbS’ scandalous book, his forces sprawled all over the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul and took Khashoggi’s life (Holland and Rampton). According to Holland and Rampton, Trump denied the complicity of Mohammed in the murder, while describing him as a “very good ally”. Further, when Trump was asked if dealing with Saudi Arabia meant dealing with MbS, he answered: “Well, at this moment, it certainly does”. According to the same

source, princes in the Kingdom believe that Trump has a decisive role in the Kingdom's royal structure in the near future. Trump stalling to the media, refusing to fall into the trap of improvised comments, kept on polishing the crown prince's image while refusing to accuse him of any crime whatsoever. Furthermore, regarding MbS becoming a King, Trump commented: "Honestly, I can't comment on it because I had not heard that at all. In fact, if anything, I've heard that he's very strongly in power".

The U.S. President, not only he received a tremendous international pile of critical comments for his arbitrary support to the mischievous Prince, he faced a harsh opposition from his own legion. Holland and Rampton claim that Trump was at the point of his fellow republicans' gun, right after CIA Director Gina Haspel informed them that MbS was the one behind the order of the killing of Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi. Trump called Haspel's assessment "very premature", while the Republican Senator Lindsey Graham replied in a tense tone: "You have to be willfully blind not to come to the conclusion that this was orchestrated and organized by people under the command of MbS". The same source indicates that after being pressured multiple times, Trump had to come clean in front of his supporters "I really hope that people aren't going to suggest that we should not take hundreds of billions of dollars that they're going to off to Russia and to China," as expected, Trump never cared for MbS per se, but rather for the fortunes he could afford both in the short and long-terms (Holland and Rampton).

5. Internal Reactions to MBS' plans

The young crown prince was the talk of the media during these recent years. His improvised and sometimes imprudent decisions attracted the media's attention. MbS' fame grew faster than expected, to reach the whole world today. Internally, the situation was not as promising as his plans were. The pace of changes manifested in the Kingdom had certainly gone

beyond the public's expectations. In addition to the West that celebrated and praised the concrete progress the Kingdom has made regarding women's rights, cultural openness, and collaboration against terrorist organizations, clerics in the Kingdom wore new cloaks and modernized masks that fit exactly the plans MbS advocates for. However, in the other side of the equation, some prominent figures in Saudi Arabia opposed the atrocious internal policies, and the confounding external strategies. MbS, ruling as it pleases him, was an act of a social war on religious and political dissidents. Since he is the one and only to call the shots in the Kingdom, some of the clerics chose to alter their religious and political views to avoid detention (Clerics and Entertainer). Unluckily for the young prince, few other prominent politicians and big religious names chose to be in the crossfire, and not to bury the hatchet when something wrong rang justice bells.

Many believe that coercivity and terror are two common policies in Saudi Arabia. However, it is challenging to maintain control while grip tightly on a nation with the same method over eight decades. Even though all of Arabia's kings ruled the Kingdom with iron fists, there must be a magical strategy that assisted in maintaining power in Al Saud's grip for this long. It does not take a genius to figure out that the very foundational base the Kingdom was built upon is the same one that is keeping Al Saud in power today. Shahi considers that that "this sense of religious mission was vital, since it provided a rational context for the monopoly of power by the house of Saud" (177). Hence, religion became a vital element Saudi kings always use to lock any doors of probable rebellion, and it is exactly what is keeping Bin Salman today, besides the United States, in power.

Religion became an opium to the large Saudi masses, while its symptoms are manifested in their political unconsciousness. As it is mentioned before, the Sahwa (or awakening) movement and Al Saud were on the horizon of a political and a religious divorce. The Sahwa

leaders categorically refused all kinds of any existence of foreign—basically American or nonbelievers—troops inside the Kingdom, in a time Al Saud were desperate to defend the Kingdom against Saddam’s threat. Obaid believes that “they saw it as an embarrassment for Saudis to require a foreign military for protections” (195). Because there were modicum solutions, the Royal family needed to flex some religious concepts into political weapons.

An alternative appeared as the proper solution to the perplexed political scene and the public agitation, when Muhammad Aman al-Jami and his student Rabi’ al-Madkhali were introduced as the new religious current, because of “their critical stance toward the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sahwa” (Alterman and McCants 149). The government, thus, urged to their support and even “facilitated the rise of prominent individuals from the Jami and Madkhali movements in Islamic universities, from which they could launch a counteroffensive against the Sahwa” (149). Muhammad Aman al-Jami and his student Rabi’ al-Madkhali dedicated their lives to investigate and issue edicts (or Fatawas) to permit/prohibit certain behaviors. Most of which their current is famous for, loyalty and complete obedience to the ruling family. According to them, religion forbids all kinds of rebellion against the ruler, because it causes *Fitna*, or anarchy among the public, which in return leads to shedding blood of the innocent (148).

The rapid pace of reforms in Saudi Arabia was rather surprising to the religious and conservative nature of Saudis. The royal family shielded itself with religious clerics, who bolster and flex any religious rule in favor of political decisions. For instance, the famous 90s the Sahwa public figure Aidh Al Qarni (not to be confused with his namesake, Awad Al Qarni), publically apologized to the Saudi people for his past ‘mistakes’, while endorsing MbS’ visions towards a moderate Islam. Al Qarni in an interview said:

I would like to apologize to Saudi society for...the extremism, the violation of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, the violation of the tolerance of Islam, the violation of the moderate and

merciful nature of Islam. I support today the moderate and open-to-the-world Islam that has been called for by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

Not only that Al Qarni untied his relation with the Sahwa movement and bolstered the crown prince's new vision, but also chose to be silent concerning the massacres practiced on Muslims in China, just because it might contradict Bin Salman's views (Clerics and Entertainer). The stance Al Qarni took was much admired by the famous Saudi comedian Nasser Al Qasabi. (Ismail).

In the same context, according to Salem and Alaoudh, the young prince's religious legitimacy comes from the 21-member council that is 'supposed to' advise the king and crown prince regarding religious matters through issuing Fatwas that fit his visions. Moreover, the same authors assume that some well-known and religiously strict clerics in the Kingdom are endorsed by the crown prince himself, such as Saleh al-Fawzan and Saleh al-Luhaidan. This latter, issued Fatwas that ban any kind of protesting against the ruler. Moreover, according to the same reporters, Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, issued a Fatwa that stipulates a blind obedience to the ruler and submission to his decision whatsoever its impact will be on the public.

This carrot and stick policy arose controversial views on using Islam as a weapon against any dissident. Ironically, it did not stop here, some clerics' support took greater lengths. For example, Abdulaziz al-Reis believes that if the ruler drinks alcohol and fornicates in TV for 30 minutes every day—which are two major sins in the Islamic religion—no one has the right to oppose him or rebuke his rule publically (Salem and Alaoudh).

Furthermore, the former and first black Imam of the Holy Mosque in Makkah, Sheikh Adil Al-Kalbani—known as Obama of Saudi Arabia—betrayed his own word regarding his views towards music and its validity in Islam, when he stressed that “There is no clear text or

ruling in Islam that singing and music are haram”. Al Kalbani changed 180 degrees and admitted that he was wrong in the past “I strongly supported them and had a famous sermon on this but I changed my mind when I found out that prohibition of singing and music in Islam was based on weak evidences” (Shaheen). The same cleric pampered the crown prince’s vision even more. Al Kalbani, in a TV broadcast, disowned the rootlessness of women ‘paranoia’ in the Kingdom, considering the segregationist nature of the Saudi public as unjustified and preposterous, claiming that even

In the Prophet’s era, and they are the most protective and God-fearing people. With all these traits, the men used to pray in the front and women prayed in the back of the mosque without a partition, not even a curtain. And today, it is a separated room, some even far from the original Prophet’s Mosque area, I believe this is some type of phobia toward women. (Senior Saudi cleric)

Moreover, according to TRT World, Al Kalbani appeared playing a Baloot tournament from which he received harsh criticism because playing cards is also forbidden according to the kingdom’s conservative clerics.

Furthermore, it is well known that Muslims are not allowed to celebrate any event that is not within the Islamic traditions. However, the same source indicates that Ahmed Bin Qassim al Ghamdi issued an edict that permits the celebration of the Valentine’s Day, deepening the shock for Saudi conservatives (Saudi clergy). Another Fatwa made by Sheikh Abdul Mohsen al-Obeikan created controversy and confusion amongst the public. Al-Obeikhan attempted to dodge around the Islamic law, in order to legalize the ban on mixing between men and women. The cleric came up with an original edict (or fatwa), whereby women breastfeed men, so they ‘technically’ become their sons, and thus mixing in such atmosphere would be legitimate under the flag of Islamic law according to him (Saudi clerics battle).

In the same context, a portion of the public showed its contentedness with the new reforms. For example, the founder of Jeddah's AlComedy Club, Yaser Bakr, expressed his ultimate happiness when he received the news. After being oppressed for so long, his club can now open without fearing the authorities. In his first standup comedy act, he described how much severe were his parents, that they tore his baby pictures because they were considered religiously forbidden (or Haram). Moreover, a 19-year-old woman (refused to mention her name to the source) commented on these reforms “I'm really happy that it happened now that I'm young, and, like, I can live all these changes” (Northam and Tanis). Similarly, the music band ‘Most of Us’ released multiple videos celebrating the new reforms, one of which was a song about women driving for the first time and another one celebrating the opening of cinemas (Saudi group puts out fun music).

The conservative side of the Saudi public faced a cultural shock in their own country. Political, religious and even social activists faced jail time and severe punishments including torture and murder, in and outside cell bars, for their opposing stance to MbS’ policies. Hence, the half-baked publicity might be convincing; however, the whole picture is not painted yet. Even though King Salman granted women with the right to drive cars, MbS’ authorities arrested four women demanding the same exact rights a week before the royal decree was set in motion. A sign that shouts loud and clear that only MbS can make reforms and none of the citizens are allowed to protest for any rights whatsoever, even if they are in line with his policies (El Sirgany and Clarke).

Similarly, a massive loophole was left open in the guardianship program reform. Despite the fact that Saudi women over 21 years old were granted the right to obtain personally their own passports and travel abroad without their male guardian’s consent, the guardianship program reform still contains a huge loophole. Any Saudi guardian can easily report a complaint about his

female relative “with “taghayyub” - a legal provision that means “absent” in Arabic and which has long been used to constrain women who leave home without permission” (Loopholes riddle Saudi reforms).

The essence of these reforms was to create an open atmosphere and a less severe public control and constraints on the Saudi people. For instance, in April 2016, Saudi authorities stripped off the religious police from its privileges to loosen on the public and advertise for openness and tourism. However, Ulrichsen and Sheline claim that MbS did not really curb the religious police but rather shifted its privileges to the ordinary one, thus making it seem as if he loosened public constraints, while in fact it was a delusion that so many had actually bought (7).

Furthermore, the openness approach was a big cover for economic advertisement and undercover intel operation in and outside borders. The cold assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, the consecutive arrests and prison tortures of religious dissidents topped global news, exposing the atrocious regime and its brutality (Perper). In 2018, the world woke up to a pitiless murder in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, as the victim was one of the most recognized Saudi dissidents, Jamal Khashoggi (Cochran 5). Saudi Arabia sought justice, by sentencing 5 out of 8 suspects to death, while jailing the remaining three defendants. Khashoggi, who was dissolved in acid inside the consulate, covered Middle East news, especially those regarding Saudi Arabia and its ruling royal family. The crown prince commenced his de facto rule by portraying himself as liberal-freedom-seeker. He sought to attract international investment opportunities from the west; however, he ended up deep down in a pit of a diplomatic despair.

Consequently, the Saudi verdict seemed like a diplomatic response assuring the international community that justice is always served in the judicial system. However, the CIA and other official intelligences did not fully agree, pointing out to the involvement of MbS in this crime’ merits (McKernan). Similar to this incident, Saad Aljabri, an ex-Saudi intelligence

official, filed charges against MbS, accusing him of an attempt of assassination similar to that one he practiced on Jamal Khashoggi. Aljabri threatens that he knows the kind of information that “could sour the close relationship being fostered with the Trump administration”, reports Agence France-Press.

In the same context, a wave of arrests and detention roamed around popular clerics in the Kingdom. One of them was Salman al-Awda, who, after creating a solid base on social media in 2011, welcomed the Arab spring with open arms and demanded for more rights (Worth). A stance that worried the authorities for years, which led them to detain him in 2017 without charges. One family member claims that his relative (al-Awda) “was being held over his refusal to comply with an order by Saudi authorities to tweet a specific text to support the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar”. While the controversial preacher tweeted: “May God harmonize between their hearts for the good of their people”—exactly opposite to what he was ordered to tweet (Cleric Salman al-Awda).

Moreover, another well-known cleric, Ali Al-Omari campaigned in 2017 against violence and extremism and advocated for women’s rights in his TV shows. The authorities detained him in September from the same year. The famous TV host was reportedly “brutally tortured”, while the tweet account that is concerned with the freedom of Saudi dissidents, tweeted: “We confirm that Dr. Ali al-Omari [sic] is currently suffering from severe burns and injuries all over his body, due to being severely tortured by beating him and subjecting him to electric shocks during his detention in solitary confinement for 15 continuous months!” (Rights group).

Furthermore, according to the Middle East Monitor, many academics scholars and preachers were arrested by Saud authorities. The list of the arrested scholars includes figures/academics such as: professor Abdul Aziz Al Abdullatif, novelist Mustafa Al-Hassan, and poet Zied Bin Naheet. In addition, the authorities arrested prominent preachers such as: Al-Ouda,

Awad Al-Qarni, Yusuf Al-Ahmad, Ibrahim Al-Fares, Ibrahim Al-Nasser, Muhammad Al-Habdan, Gorom Al-Beshe, Mohammed Bin Abdel Aziz Al-Khaderi, Al-Omari, Mohammed Musa Al-Shareef, Ibrahim Al-Harhi, Hassan Farhan Al-Maliki and Khaled Al-Ajimi.

Reasons differ about the cause behind these arrests, but the New Khalij assumes that it was because of their stance from the blockage on Qatar (The campaign against). While others assume that, the reason behind the arrests is the crown prince's support for 'moderate Islam', and his fight against extremism. However, Ismail contradicts this view, arguing that "Many of the Sahwa clerics arrested in 2017 are, for the most part, less fundamentalist than others outside the movement, including the loyalists who populate the official clerical establishment in the kingdom". Al-Awdah for instance, participated in King Abdullah's National Dialogue in 2003, which covered tolerance in religion (Ismail).

6. What does the U.S. Benefit from the Kingdom's Openness?

Openness liberalizes markets; that is to say, it lifts all hindrances and restrictions on the different resources and assets, which in return will be utilized to their fullest capacities. Moreover, openness aims at expanding market size, motivating domestic business and helping in the growth of the economy, resulting in a notable increase in employment rates. However, some countries are less tolerant to the openness approach. According to them, it might harm local industries, they are not developed enough to join the Global Trade Organization, or just because of their government's ideological reasons (De Jong 114-115).

As long the United States can leverage any government, it is no wonder that the world's strongest super power will monopolize, with ease, every national market in the Middle East, starting with its historical partner Saudi Arabia. Moreover, ancient notions of classic colonization and stick policy, hard, economic and nuclear powers were toward the end of the 80s supported by

what Nye coined as the soft power. A more humanized psychologically appealing to acceptance, more than using the hard power, because they simply target the most important part of human kind, culture (5).

These newly adopted techniques aim at winning the hearts and convincing the minds of Saudi youth with the western liberal ideology, in hopes for the creation of a pro-American society. After the end of the war on Iraq in 1991, Saudi Arabia had diplomatic as well as national security concerns. Conservative clerics and public figures condemned and publically rebuked the authority's decision for seeking help from the United States (Henderson 7). However, the Saudi public became rather sympathetic after the 9/11 incident, as the tension between the two countries had relatively increased (8). Moreover, activists continued raising flags of liberation, in hopes for a modernized kingdom, "we Saudis want to modernize, but not necessarily westernize", said veteran policymaker and former Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Bandar Bin Sultan Al Saud in the early 1990s (Sanders IV and Ouchtou).

Furthermore, the only way to communicate with the Royal Family about political or social matters is through petitions, because Saudis are not allowed to gather and publically discuss such matters (Raphaeli 522). In January 2003, few petitions were referred to Crown Prince Abdullah, so he considers some sociopolitical reforms. The first one was a "vision document" handed to the Crown Prince in a meeting with more than 100 Saudi intellectuals, in order to discuss constitutional reforms among other proposals (522). Although, the first petition received positive feedback, a second petition "In Defense of the Nation", signed by 300 intellectuals and entrepreneurs, including 51 women, was referred to the Crown Prince in September of the same year. The petition emphasized on public inclusion in decision-making and counseled rapid changes (524). Again, more than 150 reformists signed a third petition, in which they urged the government to go on board with structural changes and turn the country into a

“constitutional monarchy with a transitional period of three years”. This last petition was not different from the previous one; however, it was addressed to the public as well (526).

At the same time, 300 intellectual Saudi women signed and sent a petition to the Crown Prince, demanding female’s promotion and status adjustment. They demanded more independency and power, including “the promulgation of rules regarding divorce and alimony, opening up opportunities for studying in various specializations at universities, and appointing women to leadership and decision-making positions” (526).

In his study “The Effect of Online Community on Offline Community in Saudi Arabia”, Al-Saggaf concluded that one side of Saudis is gaining confidence, becoming more open-minded and less self-conscious about the opposite gender. On the other side of the equation, a portion of Saudis became rather perplexed regarding few aspects of their culture and religion (7-12). Furthermore, internet and social networking have played a major role in motivating Saudis to stand up and demand for change by voicing the voiceless of the community, youth and women. For instance, in 2011, a Saudi woman called Manal Al-Sharif filmed herself driving a car on Saudi land, and posted it on Twitter. She was arrested for nine days. Moreover, several Saudi women did the same to support her and pressured the government to give women more rights (Alsharkh 24-25).

In order to shore up his country’s economy, MbS has pursued the openness approach and implemented Vision 2030, which includes huge ground projects, women’s integration in the workforce, and foreign investment. Besides economy, the prince worked on improving the reputation of the monarchy overseas and declared a new chapter of a modern Saudi Arabia. However, his notable campaign on extremism crossed several redlines. The international community and multiple governments expressed their discontent about the methods the Saudi regime perused in dealing with political and religious dissidents. Despite the fact that MbS never

draw moral boundaries in his way to authority and application of his views, the United States showed him an immense support. This latter, works in line with MbS, in order to smear a long-term agenda, that would one day overarches all of the Middle East, as it colonizes their ideology and replaces it with a more or less an Americanized one.

Conclusion

After a long history of tribal and religious conquests and in an attempt to unite the people of Arabia under one flag, Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud finally achieved his ancestor's goal, on 23 September 1932, when he established the state of Saudi Arabia. Since then, he and his sons ruled over the country one after the other. Moreover, based on religious texts, Islamic ethics and values entangled the country and influenced the Saudi lifestyle, as much as it influenced governmental and private institutions, such as those of education and labor.

Since the day of its establishment, Islamic ethics and values make up the central pillar which Saudi Arabia stands on. In addition, religion in the Kingdom has influenced education, work and most of the social institutions, such as family and tribe. Moreover, traditions and religious interpretations have affected the participation of women in the working force.

The discovery of oil in the Middle East has opened up endless doors and opportunities for both, the Middle Eastern countries and the Western countries. Since its discovery, oil has been a matter of interest for the whole world. It became crucial for world economy, energy and influence. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia has benefited greatly from its agreements with the United States, as it changed from being a tribal country to one of the largest crude oil producers in the world. On the other hand, the agreements with Saudi Arabia have granted the U.S. a long-term political and strategic cooperation in the region.

Moreover, oil discovery in the Middle East—Saudi Arabia in particular—was the first chapter of a long story. For instance, the United States established a diplomatic relationship with Saudi Arabia right after it discovered oil in its lands. After establishing such a relationship,

statistics show Saudi Arabia's enormous oil production as well as the United States' oil production and consumption status, since oil discovery. However, at some point, the U.S. went from depending on the Saudi oil to diversifying its oil imports from different countries, while enhancing its national oil production. Yet, this did not stop the U.S. military assistance to Saudi Arabia, as well as its political support, which proves that their relationship goes beyond oil, to strategic, regional as well as international political and military cooperation.

The American imperialist-economic strategies with Saudi Arabia have developed through the years. In addition, history proves that the Saudi internal and foreign policies have mostly been under the United States' radar, as it is manifested in the ongoing social reforms.

Throughout history, whenever a Saudi King attempts to modernize the Kingdom, he faces a huge rejection from the country's clerics and conservative citizens. Thus, the Kingdom maintained a slow but steady pace towards western modernity. However, the day Saudi Arabia crowned Prince Salman King, the Kingdom took a captivating turn. His son Mohammed Bin Salman implemented a tremendous number of reforms compared in a short period of time. He initiated the Vision 2030, which includes economic, social and political plans. The new crown prince insisted on modernizing the Kingdom in a very rapid face, creating controversial views amongst the public. Moreover, the U.S. being the strongest ally of Saudi Arabia, showed him boundless support.

After discovering oil in the Middle East, the United States became Saudi Arabia's most important ally economically, military and politically. Through the decades, the United States overarched Saudi Arabia from all angles; however, the Islamic values imbued within Saudis were the hardest aspect to change. Even though it is well known that Saudi Arabia is rich with cultural Islamic norms and values, the United States, through Mohammed Bin Salman, implemented a soft power strategy to gradually Americanize the Saudi social lifestyle. The U.S., by then, would

be able to reduce the deployment of its forces in the Middle East, guarantee a long-term ally, assure the security of Israel and gain a pro-American society in Saudi Arabia. Despite the fact that during the 1990s the Sahwa movement categorically refused any assistance from the Americans, the U.S., through its support to Mohammed Bin Salman and his openness tendency, succeeded in 'normalizing' the political atmosphere for further economic, military, and social cooperation.

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