



SAUDI ARABIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHIFT: VISION 2030 AND BEYOND

Arva Saeed

Independent Researcher, Email: arvasaeed1417@gmail.com

<p>ARTICLE INFO</p> <p>Keywords: Saudi Vision 2030, modernization, transformation, de-escalation, neutral</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Arva Saeed, Independent Researcher, Email:arvasaeed1417@gmail.com</p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>This study analyzes the changing patterns of Kingdom's foreign policy, economy, and society through neo-liberalist lens. Vision 2030, introduced by Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, seeks to reduce Kingdom's dependency on oil by diversifying its sectors of technology, tourism, and entertainment. This paper explores Kingdom's strategic shift in domestic reforms, economic liberalization, and diplomatic orientation using qualitative methods and secondary data sources. It examines Kingdom's evolving relations with key global players – China, the US, and Russia- as well as its regional de-escalation efforts, including rapprochement with Iran and disengagement in Yemen and Syria. Moreover, the research examines the Kingdom's potential normalization with Israel as a pragmatic move aligned with its modernization goals. Findings suggest that Saudi Arabia is adopting a neutral, economically driven posture, attracting foreign investments and fostering regional stability. This research serves as a source of valuable insights for policymakers by contextualizing Vision 2030 as a blueprint for the Kingdom's transition towards a modern, globally integrated, and liberal state.</p>
--	--

Introduction

Saudi Vision 2030 is a pivotal initiative taken by the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman in 2016 to reduce the Kingdom's oil dependency and transform the Saudi economy based on technology, AI, tourism, entertainment and education. Moreover, this vision aims to modernize Saudi society by integrating various cultures. Besides, this vision also aims to liberalize economy by encouraging privatization and free market economy. This initiative is very important not only for the kingdom but for the gulf. Saudi Economy generated 90% of revenue from oil and remained the largest exporter of oil in the world. However, due to growing instability in oil market and oil prices, Riyadh though otherwise and get rid of oil dependent economy to sustain its development. Saudi Arabia, in order to diversify its economy, is pursuing a neo- liberalist approach in every aspect. Politically, Saudi Arabia is following de-escalation policy in the gulf region. Economically, Saudi Arabia is putting efforts to foster trade and investment relations with China, Russia, and the US to bring Foreign Direct Investments and make the Kingdom hub of investments. Saudi Arabia is also seen very much inclined towards Israel particularly after Abraham Accords. Though the Kingdom remains supporter of two state solution and Palestinians rights, yet acceptance of Israel is a few steps away. The aim of this research is to analyze the political posture of the Kingdom in the future and its implications on regional and global engagements. This study addresses how Saudi foreign policy is shifting under vision 2030 and how this policy shift would shape the future trajectory. This Research aims to analyze the Saudi Vision 2030 with a Neo- Liberalist lens by employing the qualitative methods of research. Data collection technique involves secondary sources such as books, news articles, research papers, and official documents. Existing literature has discussed the Vision 2030 in detail but the gap persists in analyzing this initiative in terms of broader implication and predicting future of the Kingdom. Findings show that Saudi Arabia might move towards political isolationism and focus in domestic development to achieve the ambitious goals of 2030. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is all set to pursue a neutral policy and diffuse tensions with the major players of the region such as Iran, Yemen, and Syria. This research would assist the policymakers to analyze the situation and forge the policies that are in the best interest of the Kingdom. This research is a valuable contribution to the literature focused on the Gulf region.

Research Questions

This research aims to address the following questions:

How does Saudi Vision 2030 influence its foreign policy and global engagements?

Is Saudi Arabia's foreign policy a strategic realignment or a move towards political isolation?

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

To investigate the changing posture of Saudi Foreign policy and engagements with regional and global players driven by Vision 2030.

To analyze the future trajectory of Saudi Arabia's political ideology and economic diplomacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Neo-liberalist lens to examine Saudi Vision 2030, emphasizing market driven reforms, economic liberalization, global integration, and governance restructuring. Neo-Liberalism focuses on privatization, free market, and reduced government intervention that is completely being adopted by Saudi Arabia in order to reduce economic dependency on oil. Saudi Arabia's economic transformation aims to reduce reliance on oil revenues and expand the sectors of tourism, technology, and entertainment. This aligns perfectly with market liberalization policies that encouraged Foreign Direct Investments, private sector growth, and competitive market system. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is pursuing de-escalation and rapprochement diplomatic policies in the region to create a favorable environment for economic growth. Another important component of Vision 2030 is social modernization and liberalization which aims to promote cultural tolerance by integrating diverse cultural norms into Saudi Society, thus transforming the kingdom from conservative society to a modern society. This is manifested through growing gender equality, western entertainment, and cultural openness which align with neo-liberal modernization strategies. Existing literature has also analyzed the current Saudi Political and economic posture and supported Neo-Liberalist approach in explaining the Saudi Policy shifts. The economic restructuring, governance reforms, and global integration have been analyzed by the existing research using Neo-Liberalist lens. This study also, like the previous studies, uses the Neo-liberalism theory to explain the market-oriented economy, diplomatic de-escalation policy, growing economic interdependence, and social modernization of Saudi Arabia. This research work analyzes the Saudi Vision 2030 through political, economic, and social aspects of Neo-Liberalism. Politically, Saudi Arabia is pursuing de-escalation and reconciliation strategies in the region which manifest the key concept of Neo-Liberalism; increased economic interdependence reduces conflict and increases cooperation. Economically, the Saudi push for privatization, economic diversification, and increased foreign investments align with the core Neo-Liberalist concept of

free market economy and deregulation. Socially, Vision 2030 aligns with Neo- Liberalism by promoting gender equality, cultural industries, entertainment, tolerance, and workforce participation. This research provides a structured understanding of Vision 2030 and Saudi policy shifts under this vision within neo-liberal paradigm

Literature Review

Saudi Arabia has witnessed a remarkable transition from discovering the oil to becoming the largest exporter of oil and now transforming the economy from oil based to knowledge based; depending on tourism, technology, human capital, information, and education (Nurunnabi, 2017). Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman introduced Vision 2030 in response to increasing oil prices in global market that have threatened the oil- dependent economy of the Kingdom. In order to overcome the budget constraints and trade deficit, MBS decided to transform the economy of the Kingdom (Moshashi, et al., 2018). Achieving sustainable economic growth is prime goal of the gulf region. Labor and marine trade is the backbone of the gulf economy. Green economy and blue economy play a key role in economic sustainability of the gulf region which aligns with Saudi vision 2030 (Sarwar, 2022). Saudi vision 2030 is a neo-liberalist approach adopted by Muhammad Bin Salman as he seeks to diversify Saudi economy by privatization, market liberalization, and deregulations. This study evaluated the vision 2030 with positive outcomes for Saudi economy (Khoirunnisa and Nurhaliza, 2024). Saudi- Iran de-tension is influenced by various factors. As analysed by this study, both the regional powers have changed perception amid growing Chinese influence and declining American policies in the region. Both regional actors have shifted focus towards domestic development, bypassing militaristic policies (Mousavi and Jafari, 2024). The study views Iran- Saudi rapprochement with a realist lens arguing that this reconciliation was strongly supported by the western nations because instability in the gulf threatened crucial logistics, energy infrastructure, freedom of navigation, and economic security of the west (Bianco, 2024). Yemen has been major proxy for Saudi Arabia due to its geo-strategic location. Being located at Bab al- Mandab strait, Yemen always acquired a special position in the Saudi Policy. This study explores why Saudi Arabia frequently intervened to maintain the Kingdom friendly regime in Yemen and counter Iran- backed Houthi (Darwich, 2018).

The study conducted by (Akbar, 2022) analyzes the shifting trends in the Middle Eastern policies from intense rivalries to de-escalation and rapprochement in the year 2021- 2022. UAE, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Egypt, and Israel approached each other realizing the better future in

cooperation rather than confrontation. This indicated the constructive approach rather than realist feet. Saudi disengagement in Syria is viewed as by-product Saudi- Iran reconciliation. Muhammad bin Salman portrays his-self as a neutral leader who wants to lead the peacekeeping efforts in the region. Saudi normalization with Syria and its inclusion in League of Arab States indicate Saudi dedication to its Vision 2030 (Hatahet, 2023). Saudi Arabia is slowly and gradually advancing towards normalization with Israel following the Abraham accords. The study highlights the major obstacles in the way of accepting Israel and potential compromise expected of the Kingdom to normalize relations with Israel for the sake of Saudi strategic and economic interest (Guzansky, 2022). The research argues that Saudi Arabia is pursuing a triangular policy through strategic hedging by maintaining a balance between the US, Russia, and China. Saudi Arabia is increasing involving with Russia and China despite having a long term alliance with America. This study argues that the Kingdom is practicing a neo-classical realist behavior in order to achieve the aim of modernization and transformation (Rasanani, 2024).

What is Saudi Vision 2030?

Saudi Vision 2030 is massive transformative project being pursued by crown prince Muhammad Bin Salman on grounds to make kingdom less dependent on oil for economic strength. The global trend of oil hegemony has changed now. As predicted by International Energy Agency, world would reach to a point of OIL PEAK where states would no longer be dependent on oil and the need and demand of oil would start declining by 2030. As world is facing a sever climate disaster and seeks to shift towards green energy, the trends of hydrocarbon energy is declining. This problem and future danger was quickly realized by the Kingdom that was largely dependent on its oil exports. The oil industry constitutes of 43% of the Kingdom's economy and Saudi Arabia is one of the largest Oil exporters in the world which makes it a king of oil resources in OPEC. These oil resources produce 75% of the government revenue.

Keeping in view the looming danger of climate change, and global trend shifting from hydrocarbon to green energy, KSA has opted for a more diverse approach for its economy which is Vision 2030. Vision 2030 is based on three strong pillars which are vibrant society, thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.

A Vibrant Society

This pillar focuses to strengthen society on cultural, entertainment, and social grounds to enhance the sense of national identity and flourish a multicultural concept to integrate diverse social norms

and valued in Saudi society. Kingdom envisions establishing a happy society that embraces modern Islam, enhances its cultural heritage, people get to have a modern and a high quality living standard, everyone can have access to high quality health facilities, and all sorts of entertainment be available to people for cultural thriving. Under vision 2030, Kingdom aims to create a society that is all-rounder physically, psychologically, and socially. The key targets to be achieved for a vibrant society under vision 2030 are:

- Achieving life expectancy from 74 to 80 years
- Attaining tenth place in the Social Capital Index Ranking
- Top 100 global cities to include Saudi three cities in the list
- Assuring the physical fitness (40% of citizens exercise at least once a week)
- Increasing Umrah visitors annually to 30 million
- Raising the domestic spending on local culture and entertainment to 6%
- Increasing Kingdom's presence on the UNESCO World Heritage List
- Promoting Arabic language and culture

Thriving Economy

This is the most important pillar of Saudi Vision as this aims to diversify Saudi economy by attracting a great of foreign investments. Being strategically very important, Kingdom aims to reap full advantage of its location. Located at the crossroads of three continents, Saudi Arabia seeks to become hub of international trade and forge new partnerships with global Investors to strengthen its economy and support domestic companies to hike exports.

Under the theme of thriving economy, Kingdom aims to privatize the government sectors to attract direct foreign investment, and skilled individuals all around the world. Major targets to be achieved under this theme of Vision 2030 are

- Maximize the non-oil exports of the Kingdom
- Increase the contribution of private sectors in GDP Up to 65%
- Increase FDI up to 5.7%
- Achieve a position among the top ten in Global Creative Index.
- Raise PIF's assets from 159bn dollar to 1.86trn dollar.
- Become one of the largest world economies.
- Increase women participation in workforce up to 30%
- Localize oil and gas sectors to 75%

- Reduce unemployment to 7%
- Create tax free special economic zones
- Major investments will be made in the sectors with limited ties to petrochemicals.

Kingdom has also engaged in multiple Giga projects in desert like NEOM mega city to modernize the society, attract tourists, and foreign investments.

Ambitious Nation

This is the third pillar of Vision 2030 which plans to reform society into more transparent, efficient, and well governed society. The norms and practice of accountability, social contribution of citizens, increasing role of Non-profit Organization, and businesses is the central Idea of this pillar. Emphasize is on the individual responsibility and contribution to the society in individual capacity.

The targets to be achieved under this pillar are

- Approx. one million citizens must volunteer annually.
- Raise nonprofit sector's contribution to 5% in kingdom's economy.
- Maximize household savings from 6-10% of total income.
- Secure a position among top 5 countries in E- government survey Index ranking.
- Jump a big pace from 80th to 20th in terms of effective governance.

Saudi China Engagement

Saudi China collaboration and partnership has soared significantly after the commencement of Vision 2030 agenda. As Saudi Arabia pursues the liberalist policies in economic and social structures its growing partnership with the US and China simultaneously underscore its neutral stance in Global affairs. In response to Saudi bid to become an investment hub, China has picked up Saudi Arabia for its first sale of US dollar sovereign bonds in three years. China has always issued US dollar bonds in Hong Kong, but choosing Saudi Arabia for the first time indicates China's deep interest in strengthening financial ties with the Kingdom. Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman very keenly looks forward to Chinese investments to fund its Modernizing Vision 2030 projects. In order to achieve the goal of reduced oil dependency, Chinese investment plays a huge role in technological and financial fields. This partnership benefits the either parties. China on one hand has secured major Saudi construction contracts while Saudi Arabia on the other hand has secured investment from the Chinese companies that make panels and batteries. Saudi Arabia is also one of the largest exporters of crude oil to China that helps the Kingdom raise its financial assets. Saudi Public Investment Fund signed worth \$50bn deals with Chinese banks to ensure two

way capital flows through both debt and equity. Moreover, Saudi- Chinese private firm backed by giants like Alibaba, and the PIF expressed interest in setting up a special economic zone in Riyadh to attract Chinese manufacturing investments (Cotterill, et al., 2024). Besides financial investments, Chinese funding is rising in Green Technology in Saudi Arabia that has deepened ties between the two once determined by oil supplies. China has secured the title of the largest Greenfield foreign direct investor in the Kingdom with investments reaching \$21.6bn. China has surpassed the USA and France as the largest foreign direct investor in Greenfield in the Kingdom with investments soring to \$21.6bn (White, et al., 2024). The third portion of this investment is focused on green technology such as batteries, wind, and solar. The kingdom has become the fastest growing renewables market after China (Global Defense Corp, 2025). Since Saudi Arabia has appeared to be a bit mistrustful towards the US, its inclination towards China is justified to reduce dependency on the unreliable US. Additionally, the Kingdom is flourishing its mining industry to diversify its economy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. For this purpose Saudi Arabia has signed nine investment deals in metals and mining worth \$9.32bn with China's Zijin Group. Under these agreements, Zinjin group would focus on building zinc smelters in first phase with capacity of 100,000 tpa of zinc ingots, and 200,000 of Sulphuric acid. The second phase would focus on construction of Lithium Carbonate extraction facility that would produce 60,000 tpa of battery grade Lithium carbonate. The final phase of this cooperation would focus on copper refinery with the capacity of producing 200,000 tpa of copper cathodes, and 50,000 tpa of electrolytic copper foil (Saba, 2025). Chinese investment in Saudi renewable energy resources and Saudi investment in Chinese oil and gas industry is expanding the trade zone. Chinese investment in Saudi Arabia is pivotal in achieving Vision 2030 that aims to transit to green technology, and reduce oil dependency. Likewise, China's growing ties with the Kingdom favors the Belt Road Initiative of China to counter the western powers in the gulf.

Saudi- US Engagement

Since the announcement of vision 2030, the US has been a major investing partner of the Kingdom in diverse fields such as research, concert, media, culture, education, and sports. Saudi- US annual trade has reached \$54bn in wake of economic transformation under vision 2030 as multiple US companies are investing in Saudi Arabia. American investment in Saudi Arabia is approximately \$10bn with around 550 American companies operating in the Kingdom in various departments

(ICBC, 2017). In addition to this, the US being a strategic and G20 Partner of the Kingdom is also actively engaged in helping the kingdom achieve environmental sustainability and tackle climate effects (U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Saudi Arabia, 2022). Saudi crown prince Muhammad Bin Salman has affirmed broadening the US trade and investment sphere in the Kingdom up to \$600bn and beyond in both public and private sectors. This step is vital in bringing investments to the country for smooth implementation of vision 2030. Trump while praising the Crown Prince for investing in America expressed intentions to scale up Saudi investment in America to \$1trn (Reuters, 2025). In efforts to become a leader in AI and technology, Saudi Arabia plans heavy investment in technical field. In the pursuit of this aim under ambitious vision 2030, Saudi- US companies are collaborating such as Chip Company Groq and Saudi Aramco. This partnership aims to set up large scale AI inference data centers to advance the Kingdom's aim of technological leadership (Chowdhury, 2024). Saudi Arabia seeks heavy defense investment from the US to ensure the security of the Kingdom. In this regard, Saudi Arabia signed letter of intent to buy arms worth \$110bn immediately in 2017. This purchase is projected to increase up to \$350bn till 2027. This agreement includes purchasing tanks, combat ships, missile defense system, and cyber security technology that align with Kingdom's Vision 2030 agenda of localizing military industry. Saudi Arabia on political grounds has taken step forwards to broker peace in Ukraine after intense white house meeting between president Zelensky and president Trump. The high officials met in Jeddah and by efforts of Muhammad Bin Salman, Ukraine agreed to accept Trump's 30- day peace proposal of ceasefire. In return the US promised resuming intelligence sharing and defense assistance to Ukraine (U.S, Department of State, 2025).

Saudi- Russia Engagement

Russia is another important trading and investing partner in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia hosted delegation of top Russian companies including helicopters, trans-mash holding, Rostsel-mash agricultural machines, power machines, and Kaspersky along with made in Russia +Inno-prom business mission. Investments in various sectors such as agriculture, light and heavy industries, maritime and air transport, infrastructure, and finance have been encouraged by either side to make Saudi Arabia foreign direct investment hub that aligns perfectly with its vision 2030 (Arab News, 2023). Another milestone achieved in Saudi- Russian economic relations is establishment of Russian Direct Investment Fund's (RDIF) first office in Saudi Arabia. The opening of Russia's sovereign wealth fund in Saudi Arabia underscores the vitality of Saudi- Russian investment

partnership. RDIF and Saudi Aramco have started various collaborations worth \$1bn in oil services sector, and over \$2bn in oil and gas conversion projects (Argaam, 2019). Russian- Saudi Trade soared from \$2.8bn in 2016 to \$3.7bn in 2023 (Saudi Press Agency, 2017). This significant rise in trade and investment indicates that the Kingdom and the Russian Federation have mutual interest in regional and international stability and view economic interdependence and collaboration a necessary element of bilateral relations. Not just trade but collaboration in achieving sustainable use of resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is also a major aspect of Saudi- Russian partnership for vision 2030. Saudi Aramco works in collaboration with Russian scientists and researchers to explore sustainable solutions and help Saudi Economy to grow carbon free. Hence, Saudi- Russia engagement is vital in achieving the bold targets of Vision 2030 that aim to modernize the Kingdom and make its economy independent of revenue generated of oil.

Shifting Cultural Policies of the Kingdom

Economics, trade, and investments are just one side of the picture. Saudi Arabia is undergoing significant societal transformation to promote cultural integration and tolerance. Saudi Arabia has been very well known for its conservative society which follows strict principles of Islam. The concept of western style concerts, entertainment, cinema, music, mixed- gender gatherings and Halloween celebration never existed in Saudi Society. The kingdom traditionally adhered to strict interpretation of Islam, especially in cultural and societal matters. However, following the leadership style of Muhammad Bin Salman, the Kingdom is evolving in societal norms. MBS is more inclined towards west and wants to see Saudi Arabia as next Europe. Under the vision 2030 adopted by MBS in 2016, the kingdom aims to increase the cultural and entertainment activities by 6%. In 2018, Cinemas reopened in Saudi Arabia after 35 years of ban (Proctor, 2022). Theatrical performances have become increasingly common. The Kingdom now celebrates Halloween as a public event to integrate western societal norms in the Saudi society and change the narrow perception about Saudi Arabia among the global public. Saudi Seasons are organized throughout the kingdom that reflect diverse Saudi culture and history and attract the tourist and viewers from all over the world. Moreover, MDL beast festival has revolutionized the Saudi entrainment industry. According to a US based study, the Saudi entertainment industry is anticipated to grow from \$23.77million in 2021 to \$1.17billion by 2030 (Proctor, 2022). Saudi Arabia is also attracting foreign investment towards its film industry. This has created thousands of job opportunities for young Saudis who have to practice their filming skills abroad priory. Film AlUla , and Misk

Foundation are backing Saudi Film and production industry to diversify this department. France's Easy Riders Films has collaborated with Saudi Telfaz 11 Studio to bring up more diverse content in entertainment industry (Proctor, 2022). Saudi Films are contesting and winning awards like Golden Palm, and Golden Sail. This robust transformation in Saudi Culture and entertainment is set to bring more investments in the Kingdom and galvanize the economy thus, making the Kingdom hub of investments.

Saudi Arabia's De-escalation Policy

- **Saudi Iran Rapprochement**

Saudi Arabia and Iran have been vicious enemies of each other since 1979 Iranian revolution. Their enmity and hostility is rooted in religious and ideological difference. Emergence of a theocratic Iran led to polarization of the Middle East with two extreme poles, Shia and Sunni. Both the states engaged in various proxies among which worth mentioning are in Yemen and Syria. Bringing these two enemies on a table of negotiation seemed a miracle in international politics. However, this miracle happened in March 2023, when China brokered peace between the two rivals. The China-brokered peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia has various implications. Saudi Arabia is leading a vision to transform Saudi Economy for which the kingdom requires heavy investments. Investments are encouraged in a peaceful and a liberal environment. Saudi Arabia in pursuit of this vision to become an investment hub has extended peaceful efforts towards Iran. Moreover, Saudi Arabia for long relied on the US for its protection against Iran but, the US unexpected response to attack on Saudi Oil fields disillusioned the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia consequently decided to enhance strategic relations with Iran rather than escalating tensions with reliance on the US. This rapprochement although runs counter to US interest yet benefits the Kingdom's economic vision (Omran and Cornish, 2024). Another aspect is that Iran is heavily sanctioned by the US and facing severe challenges to its economic development. So, Iran in order to counter the US needed support from the major regional player of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia. Improved relations with the kingdom will open up trade routes and economic doors for Iran which would help Iran accomplish its prime goal of nuclear development. China, a third party, is on the backdoors reaping fruit of this reconciliation. China's main aim is to counter the US. Hence, China brokered peace between Saudi and Iran after seven years of rift to weaken American involvement in the Gulf (Mousavi and Jafari, 2024). Peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran means peace in the gulf. And peace in the gulf means increasing threat to US involvement and hegemony in the gulf.

Moreover, China aims to spread its Belt and Road Initiative to every region and connect Europe, Asia, and Africa. For the sake of its economic gains, China came forward to broker peace between the major players in the gulf region. Saudi Iran rapprochement will prove to be a milestone in the accomplishment of Vision 2030 as the region will grow stronger, prosperous, and self-sustained than ever before. Moreover, the peace achieved in the region will bring peace to the global dynamics as Middle East has been home to various wars and conflicts for decades.

- **Saudi Approach in Yemen and Syria**

Yemen and Syria for decades have been the proxies of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia led gulf coalition forces in Yemen to counter Iran-backed Houthi. Saudi Arabia's prime preference has always been to drive Iran out of the region as Iran's influence expanded from Iran to Syria and Lebanon. Initially Saudis remained actively involved in Yemen militarily to ascertain their sphere of influence in the region. However, the Saudi policy shifted from interventionist to non-interventionist lately in line of its Vision 2030. Unnecessary engagements in the proxies were obstacle in the way of achieving Vision 2030. Hence, Saudi Arabia reduced its military support in Yemen and following the Iran rapprochement, the Kingdom is moving towards more of De-escalation policy. Under this Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing de-escalation approach in the gulf to stabilize the region, and open up investment doors in the Kingdom. Similar attitude has been reflected by the Kingdom in Syria. Initially, Saudi Arabia remained actively involved in toppling the Assad regime in Syria and provided weapons and arms support in Syria backed by US artillery (Ayton, 2012). It was all in efforts to counter Iran in Syria. However, trends shifted lately when Saudi Arabia in May 2023, proposed to add Syria back to League of Arab States (LAS) after it had been removed in response to wide massacre in 2011. Qatar opposed but remained silent for wider interest of the region. Now Saudi Arabia appears to view its corridor of power in Syria as major factor in achieving its broader Strategic interest (Aljazeera, 2012). Following the ousting of Bashar al Assad, Saudi Arabia despite having its long term anti-Islamist Policies in the Gulf readily accepted the regime change and extended hand of cooperation with HTS led government. Although Saudi Arabia has normalized relations with Iran, yet driving Iran out of the region was in favor of Saudi Arabia. In the 20205 meeting of the World Economic Forums held in Davos, Switzerland "New Syria" was viewed to be inspired by "Vision 2030" (Trichy and Hamzawy, 2025). Saudi Arabia's readily acceptance of the Islamist government in Syria is an indication that

the Kingdom has dropped its anti- Islamist policy in the gulf and adopted a more tolerant and more liberal approach in the region.

Saudi Approach towards Israel

Establishing diplomatic ties with Israel is in very interest of the Kingdom in a number of ways. However, being a central and most respected country in the muslim world, Saudi Arabia is bound by its commitments to OIC and Religious aspects. Islam doesn't recognize any state for the Jews. Hence, the ultimate muslim stance is against the creation of Israel. Consequently, a wider public opinion is against the two state solution because if one state is the state of Palestine, the other would be the state of Israel which is totally unacceptable under Islamic views. But Saudi Arabia is a supporter of two state solution and is expected to recognize Israel as a state if the two-state solution is implemented and Palestinians are given a separate state. So this point towards the fact that Saudi Arabia intends to accept Israel not directly but indirectly. It has not yet extended its recognition but as soon as two state solution is implemented, it will immediately accept the later. Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing the vision 2030 agenda and for the accomplishment of this goal, Economic ties with Israel will hasten the progress. There are numerous benefits to Saudi Arabia in normalizing ties with Israel. First, being a desert, Saudi Arabia needs advance desalination, and water conservation techniques. Israel is expert in desalination, desert agriculture, and water conservation which would enhance the food and water security concerns of the kingdom. This aligns perfectly with Saudi Vision 2030 (Global Defense Corp, 2025). Moreover, one of the Saudi agenda is to become a leading power in the field of artificial intelligence and cyber-security. Again Israeli expertise in cyber-technology, AI, and defense align with Saudi Vision to become a technology hub by 2030. Another important aspect of vision 2030 is tourism. Saudi Arabia seeks to increase the GDP contribution of the tourism. Normalization of ties with Israel would lead to tourist flood in the Kingdom as seen in the Emirates after the Abraham Accord. This will certainly increase the GDP contribution of Tourism to 10% by 2030. Israeli Investment in Saudi Arabia will not just open doors to Israel but to entire west as western nations have strong trade and investment ties with Israel. So, this would increase the confidence of western investors to invest in Saudi Vision 2030.

Findings

Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing the neo- liberalist approach as evident from its policies in the Gulf. De-escalation in Yemen, readily acceptance of Islamist government in Syria, rapprochement

with Iran, and advocacy of two- state solution for Israel and Palestine indicate the peaceful approach of the Kingdom in the Region. Along with this balanced relations with global powers like China, Russia, and the US based on increased investment point towards economic cooperation and interdependence in Saudi policies. Saudi Arabia seems to be moving towards political isolationism while focusing on the domestic development as done by the US in the 18th century. Moreover, Saudi initiatives to encourage privatization and promote free market mechanism align with neo- liberalist approach. Saudi future seems to be very different from what it had since 1932.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia, the desert once, now has turned green and the conservative society is growing liberal and tolerant day by day. Saudi Arabia is all set to become next Europe by actively following the path of modernization. Saudi policy has prominently shifted from power politics to economic cooperation, tolerance, peace, soft power, and stability. This diplomatic attitude would certainly transform the Saudi economy and future of the Saudi society. Also, being a major regional player in the gulf, Saudi Vision 2030 is all set to bring significant geo-political and strategic dynamism in the region with implications worldwide. Hence, Saudi Arabia is expected to be the next Europe in near future.

References

- Financial Times. (2024, November 5). *China to issue first dollar bond in three years in Saudi Arabia*, Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/0d2a3dcc-9d1e-4741-84dc-8e5a81303a1b>
- Financial Times. (2024, December 4). *China's ties with Saudi Arabia buoyed by green tech*, Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/f0babafc-57e6-434f-9d94-013c312dc0f9>
- Global Defense Corp. (2025, February 10). *Israel agrees to help Mohammed Bin Salman in fulfilling Saudi Vision 2030*. <https://www.globaldefensecorp.com/2025/02/10/israel-agrees-to-help-mohammed-bin-salman-in-fulfilling-saudi-vision-2030/>
- Reuters. (2024, November 26). *Saudi Arabia agrees metals deals worth over \$9 billion*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-agrees-metals-deals-worth-over-9-billion-2024-11-26/>
- Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. (2017, February 9). *U.S. investment in Saudi Arabia worth \$10 billion USD*. <https://www.icbcasia.com/icbc/en/newsupdates/financialnews/worldconomy/USInvestmentinSaudiArabiaWorth10blnUSD.htm>

U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Saudi Arabia. (2022, May 25). *The United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Eight decades of shared history, strong partnership, and united vision*. <https://sa.usembassy.gov/the-united-states-and-the-kingdom-of-saudi-arabia-eight-decades-of-shared-history-strong-partnership-and-united-vision/>

Reuters. (2025, January 24). *Saudi economy minister says \$600 bln package with US includes investments*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-economy-minister-says-600-bln-package-with-us-includes-investments-2025-01-24/>

Chowdhury, H. (2024, September 16). “Saudi Arabia just stepped up plans to court the world's AI leaders to its desert kingdom”. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/saudi-arabia-ai-groq-a16z-vision-2030-mbs-2024-9>

U.S. Department of State. (2025, March 11). *Joint statement on the United States–Ukraine meeting in Jeddah*. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-united-states-ukraine-meeting-in-jeddah/>

Arab News. (2023, October 11). *Saudi Arabia backs Russian firms to open HQs in Kingdom*. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2389296/business-economy>

Argaam. (2019, October 8). *Russia’s RDIF opens overseas office in Saudi Arabia*. <https://www.argaam.com/en/article/articledetail/id/1319591>

Saudi Press Agency. (2017, October 2). *Vision 2030 opens new investment aspects between Saudi Arabia and Russia*. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/1673201>

Proctor, R. A. (2022, August 26). *How an entertainment explosion is driving change, transforming Saudi Arabia*. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2150971/saudi-arabia>

Mousavi, S. M., & Jafari Far, E. (2024). Investigating effective factors in de-escalation in relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. *Islamic Revolution Research*, 13(3), 99-122.

Financial Times. (2024, November 12). Gulf states wary of return to Donald Trump’s ‘maximum pressure’ against Iran. Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/d22b5a59-957f-4a8b-b898-d409bd7a5776>

Al Jazeera. (2021, June 8). *Times have changed: Saudi, Syria in rapprochement talks*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/8/times-have-changed-saudi-syria-in-rapprochement-talks>

Triche, N., & Hamzawy, A. (2025, January 31). *The Gulf shifts policies in response to the 'new' Syria*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Global Defense Corp. (2025, February 10). *Israel agrees to help Mohammed bin Salman in fulfilling Saudi Vision 2030*. Global Defense Corp. <https://www.globaldefensecorp.com/2025/02/10/israel-agrees-to-help-mohammed-bin-salman-in-fulfilling-saudi-vision-2030/>

Nurunnabi, M. Transformation from an Oil-based Economy to a Knowledge-based Economy in Saudi Arabia: the Direction of *Saudi Vision 2030*. *J Knowl Econ* **8**, 536–564 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-017-0479-8>

Moshashai, D., Leber, A. M., & Savage, J. D. (2018). Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(3), 381–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2018.1500269>

Sarwar, S. (2022). Impact of energy intensity, green economy and blue economy to achieve sustainable economic growth in GCC countries: Does Saudi Vision 2030 matters to GCC countries. *Renewable energy*, 191, 30-46.

Khoirunnisa, K., & Nurhaliza, S. A. (2024). Saudi Vision 2030: Economic Reforms and Sustainable Development in the Kingdom. *Jurnal Public Policy*, 10(1), 10-16.

Bianco, C. (2024). Iran–Saudi Rapprochement: Dynamics and Perspectives:» Western «Dimensions and Implications for Europe. *RECONCILING RIVALS*, 36.

DARWICH, M. (2018). The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status. *Insight Turkey*, 20(2), 125–142. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26390311>

BAKIR, A. (2022). The 2021-2022 “De-Escalation Moment” in the Middle East: A Net Assessment. *Insight Turkey*, 24(2), 55–67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48678906>

Hatahet, S. (2023). SYRIA’S REGIONAL REHABILITATION: BETWEEN CONSENSUS AND COMPETITION. *THE MIDDLE EAST’S FRAGILE RESET*, 93.

Guzansky, Y. (2022). *Saudi Arabia and Israel: Normalization at a Snail’s Pace*. Institute for National Security Studies. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep42591>

Hadian Rasanani, A. M. (2024). Saudi Arabia's Relations with China and Russia, Hedging and Increasing Relative Power amidst American Disengagement from West Asia: Implications, Change and Continuity. *Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies*, 8(4), 877-916.