After the Arab Spring: The Security, Stability and Geopolitics of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East

Moustafa Ezz
Huron University College, mezz@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/lajur

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/lajur/vol2/iss1/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Huron University College at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Liberated Arts: a journal for undergraduate research by an authorized editor of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact tadam@uwo.ca, wlswadmin@uwo.ca.
After the Arab Spring: The Security, Stability and Geopolitics of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East

Moustafa Ezz, Huron University College

Abstract: Focusing on the domestic and regional approaches of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia post-Arab spring, this paper explores the effects of the uprisings on Middle Eastern geopolitics and security. Ultimately, it highlights the challenges the Kingdom faces at home and examines the factors behind its exceptionally interventionist approach to recent regional conflicts. These factors can be explained by a regional Saudi-Iranian rivalry, driven by a domestic regime legitimacy theory rather than solely the conventional sectarian narrative. Using empirical and qualitative observations, this analysis concludes by prioritizing regional state order, the de-escalation of regional rivalries, as well as incremental, evolutionary changes by Arab states that accommodate public grievances in a way mindful of the domestic context, without resorting to the revolutionary changes that have resulted in the significant state failures observable today.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia; Arab Spring; Geopolitics; Middle East; Stability

As one of the Middle East’s primary actors due to its economic, political and military clout, status as the birthplace of Islam and stewardship over the Muslim world’s most important sites in Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia has an inherent leadership role in the region. Given this regional standing, understanding Saudi Arabia’s perspective on the Arab spring is crucial to determining the implications on regional security as well as its own national stability. This paper will begin by analyzing Saudi Arabia’s domestic and external responses to the post-Arab spring conflict in Yemen and Syria, and the resulting consequences to contextualize the scale of the issues. Then, the reasoning behind the Kingdom’s political and military policy approaches will be explained, along with an assessment of its key areas of domestic political risk. Ultimately, this paper argues that the Kingdom’s regional policy is not driven by strictly sectarian reasons, but by the ultimate priority of regime survival and a politically ideological rivalry with Iran. This paper concludes by advocating for the avoidance of state failure that facilitates the proxy conflicts exhibited in Syria and Yemen and an evolutionary approach to reform in the Arab world rather than a revolutionary or interventionist one.

The Saudi response to the Arab spring on a domestic level has been commonly characterized by a rentier state theory, in which “dissent is bought off” or a securitized...

approach, in which force is used to discourage and crush public dissent. In reality, the response entailed a multi-pronged economic, security and political approach designed to absorb any repercussions from regional unrest. The economic approach included a March 2011 pledge by the late King Abdullah of over $100 billion in spending on social welfare, education, housing and infrastructure, as well as bonuses for public servants. There also was a notable security deployment in response to the planned “Day of Rage” on March 11 2011, despite the protests never really materializing as intended, with arrests and a ban on demonstrations in response to the scattered protests that did occur. These explanations are accurate to a certain extent, but they do not effectively articulate other notable factors. For example, King Abdullah used calculated limited political reform to dispel criticism. Despite hesitation from the conservative clerical establishment, he issued decrees allowing women to run and vote in municipal elections as well as the appointment of 30 women, including a Shia, to the Majlis Al Shoura (consultative council). While this action may seem unremarkable to observers outside the Kingdom, such changes are relatively significant in the Saudi context. Overall, the House of Saud’s varied approaches, in contrast to the highly violent and stubborn approaches by other regimes in the region, mitigated any risks of unrest within the Kingdom stemming from the Arab spring.

Conversely, the Kingdom’s external response was more assertive and militant in nature. Saudi Arabia monitored the pro-democracy uprising in Bahrain with anxiety at the potential overthrow of its ally, the Sunni Bahraini Al-Khalifa regime, at the hands of its Shia majority population. Bahrain, being directly located on Saudi Arabia’s eastern front, where the majority of the Kingdom’s restive minority Shia population resides, presented a risk. When this threat became too high to ignore, Saudi Arabia led the deployment Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force to support the Bahraini regime’s forceful quelling of the uprising. In March of 2015, Saudi Arabia launched Operation Decisive Storm, along with a coalition of 10 other (mainly gulf) states, against Houthi rebels in Yemen who had captured the capital Sana’a and large swaths of the country in what was described by the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. as “a response to a direct request from the legitimate government of Yemen.”

Arabia has been a dominant financier and arms supplier to the Free Syrian Army and other groups, including Islamist groups, fighting the Al-Assad regime\(^7\). Additionally, where Saudi Arabia has not been involved militarily, it still exerted strong political and economic force to shape desirable outcomes in the region, such as the multi-billion dollar financial aid packages to the El-Sisi regime in Egypt after it overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood government.

**The consequences**

The most blatant consequence of post-Arab spring conflict is certainly the humanitarian impact. Although there have been varying degrees of casualties and violence in every state that experienced an uprising during the Arab spring, the most significant impact on human security has occurred in Syria and Yemen where the collapse of order has led to protracted conflict between warring factions. In Syria, according to the most recent report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the total number of documented killings between March 2011 and April 2014 amounts to 191,369.\(^8\) Moreover, it is calculated that 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria with over 6.5 million internally displaced persons, in addition to 4,181,329 registered Syrian refugees.\(^9\) The humanitarian crisis and flight of refugees has and will continue to have considerable impact on neighboring states and Europe. In Yemen, the armed conflict has resulted in catastrophic humanitarian consequences, which have been aggravated since Operation Decisive Storm. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the Yemen conflict 4,500 people have been killed and 23,000 wounded, the majority of which are civilians.\(^10\) Given that Yemen imports the majority of its food, the military blockade and destruction of infrastructure has resulted in 80% of the population requiring some form of humanitarian assistance, 2.3 million displaced people and 1.8 million children at risk of malnutrition.\(^11\)

Beyond the widely reported humanitarian crises and without delving into the multitude of domestic consequences for each regional conflict theatre, there are several

---


significant transnational consequences that require analysis. The collapse of order, particularly in Syria and Yemen, has strengthened the status of non-state actors, namely terrorist groups. In Syria, numerous jihadist groups established a presence amidst the chaos, the most significant of which are the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jabhat Al Nusra. Since 2011, 25,000 fighters (including 4,500 Westerners) from over 100 countries have travelled to fight in the conflict zone. In the short-term, the prominent concern is that these battle-hardened fighters will plan and carry out ISIL attacks in the region and in the West. Even if some of these foreign fighters perish in operations or are intercepted by intelligence agencies while returning to home countries, their ability to seize territory, as well as to proselytize and support homegrown attacks abroad, is deeply troubling. Saudi Arabia has seen over 1,000 of its nationals travel to fight in Syria and despite introducing legislation making it illegal to fight abroad and arresting over 1,600 ISIL supporters, it has already been the target of ISIL attacks, including suicide bombings of two different Shia mosques in Saudi Arabia’s eastern province and various attacks on Saudi security forces. Given the complexity of the Syrian conflict and the seemingly endless list of domestic and external actors involved, the prolonged conflict will continue to aggravate these risks. In the long term, even if the conflict ends, there will still be several notable consequences. Due to the significant scale of weapons proliferation in Syria, coupled with the absence of border security, a flow of weapons, jihadists and criminal groups outside of Syria is high. As a recent conflict assessment report states: “reconstructing the country would require $165 billion (equivalent to a combined 18 Syrian annual budgets) and would take between 15 to 25 years […] with over 1,000 insurgent units active across the country, a smooth post-conflict political transition is close to impossible.”

In Yemen, the collapse of the Hadi regime at the hands of the Houthi coup and the ensuing civil conflict will undoubtedly benefit Al Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula (AQAP), widely regarded as one of the most dangerous of the Al Qaeda franchises. Although AQAP has always had a notable presence in Yemen due to the lack of effective government control in some regions, Western and Saudi intelligence did at least have a cooperative counter-terrorism relationship with both the Saleh and Hadi regimes. Citing multiple U.S. strikes against AQAP targets in recent months, especially the strike killing

---

AQAP leader Nasser Al-Wuhayshi in June 2015, a recent Congressional Research Report affirmed the ongoing Saudi-U.S. intelligence capability in Yemen.\textsuperscript{15}

Although the U.S. will likely be able to act unilaterally in counter-terrorism operations, the absence of an embassy, human intelligence capability and a viable governmental security partner in Yemen as a result of the Houthi coup is certainly far from desirable for effective long-term counter-terrorism efforts in Yemen. AQAP has already managed to seize new territory, using the opportunity provided by conflict to give it a sectarian overtone by portraying itself as the Sunni defense against the Zaydi Shia Houthis, a claim that will be further bolstered should the Houthis expand into Sunni dominated regions of Yemen.\textsuperscript{16} Given the staunchly anti-Western and anti-Saudi ideology of the Houthis, who have themselves been added to a list of terrorist organizations by Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E\textsuperscript{17}, counter-terrorism cooperation is inconceivable in the future. The negative consequence of a stronger AQAP in Yemen is fairly obvious, however its implications are more severe for Saudi Arabia than anyone else. This situation creates a paradox for the Kingdom as its intervention in Yemen is de-facto strengthening AQAP, which it quelled in a violent domestic insurgency in the mid-2000s aimed at Saudi and Western targets in the Kingdom. This insurgency was one of the most severe national security threats in the history of the Kingdom and a direct threat to the ruling House of Saud.

Despite recent gains by Saudi and coalition forces in repelling the Houthis from Aden and Southern Yemen\textsuperscript{18}, there is no objective reason to believe that the Saudis will be able to achieve their stated goal of defeating the Houthis and re-installing the Hadi regime, let alone any other actor who can claim the legitimacy and project the force necessary to stabilize Yemen. The deepening destruction of civilian infrastructure and humanitarian impact, along with the complex web of actors and their irreconcilable ideological differences, risks Saudi entrenchment in this conflict. The cost of blood and treasure to Saudi Arabia for little military or strategic gain, combined with international scrutiny of the effects on Yemeni civilians, will also negatively affect the legitimacy and prestige of the House of Saud in the eyes of its domestic constituents.

**Probable causes**

It is generally accepted that the emergent geopolitical tensions and conflicts are at least partially fueled by a regional Saudi-Iranian rivalry, in which each state provides support to allied state actors as well as non-state proxy groups. Explaining the motivations behind


\textsuperscript{17} Brehony, “Yemen and the Huthis: Genesis of the 2015 Crisis,” 248.

\textsuperscript{18} Jeremy M. Sharp, “Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention,” 1.
this rivalry and the resultant patron-client relationships is where there has been difference of opinion. Perhaps the most common narrative in the media and political discourse used to describe this rivalry and conflict in the Middle East is a sectarian conflict rooted in a centuries-old divide between Sunnis and Shias.\(^{19}\) This explanation is highly simplistic and an inaccurate assessment of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry. Apart from the fact that history provides numerous examples of harmonious coexistence between Sunnis and Shias\(^{20}\), one only has to look at current regional alliances to see how reductionist a solely sectarian rationale is. Following this rationale would imply a unified alliance of Sunni allied states and actors against Shia allies, an arrangement that would see Saudi Arabia, the GCC states, Egypt, Turkey, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood pitted against Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. However, in reality there are deeper divisions between several of these entities, such as the animosity of Saudi Arabia and Egypt towards Turkey and Qatar due to their support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which the Kingdom regards as an archenemy and has placed on a list of terror organizations.\(^{21}\)

A more persuasive assessment of the cause of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry is a domestic regime legitimacy theory in which the foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran are driven by the overarching priority of ideological domestic regime survival. This view is advocated by F. Gregory Gause, who explains this rivalry and under-balancing in a would-be sectarian alliance as resulting from the perception that Iran’s transnational Islamist political system and Turkey’s populist democratic Islamist model pose an ideological threat to the Saudi dynastic monarchy.\(^{22}\) While sectarianism may be used as a tool in both Saudi Arabia and Iran’s pursuits of regional influence and for framing each other as threats for radical domestic audiences, it would be more accurate to assess the regional conflict theatres in Syria, Yemen and Iraq as being caused through bottom-up factors:

An arc of state weakness and state failure running from Lebanon through Syria to Iraq, explains the salience of sectarianism in the new Middle East cold war. The retreat of the state, accompanied particularly in Syria by the violence exercised by those who controlled the state, drove people in these countries to look to sectarian identities and groups for the protection and material sustenance that the state


either could or would no longer provide. These groups looked to external allies for support in their domestic political and military conflicts.\textsuperscript{23}

It is evident that the Saudi-Iranian proxy war is exacerbating these conflicts, rather than causing them, though they transcend sectarian lines. Even the Saudi military offensive against the Houthis is due to tacit Iranian support rather than pure sectarian logic, despite Saudi Arabia’s framing of the conflict in sectarian terms to demonize its domestic Shia minority. In fact, the Houthis practice a minority form of Shia Islam in northern Yemen, called Zaydism, which is closer to Shafi’i Sunni Islam than the Twelver Shia Islam practiced in Iran.\textsuperscript{24} Additionally, despite a sincere U.S. commitment to Saudi Arabia as an ally, the Saudis have a perceived belief that it can no longer rely on the U.S. as an absolute guarantor of its national security due to several events. These include ignoring Saudi advice against invading Iraq and overthrowing a regime that served as a balance to Iran, the ease with which the Obama administration was willing to support the ousting of president Mubarak of Egypt and the reign of the Muslim Brotherhood, the absence of U.S. intervention in Syria and the P5+1 nuclear deal with Iran.\textsuperscript{25} It can be argued that this has contributed to Saudi Arabia’s exceptionally interventionist military approach.

Domestically, Saudi Arabia generally mitigated any spillover of the regional 2011 uprisings into the Kingdom, however the events of the past year call for an analysis of causes of national instability, not at the bottom, but rather at the top. The passing of the late King Abdullah in January 2015 and the subsequent succession occurred smoothly as planned. However, a pre-dawn royal decree on April 29\textsuperscript{th}, 2015 is what caught the attention of many Saudi analysts in what has been seen as a stunning reshuffle in the House of Saud. The announcement relieved Crown Prince Muqrin of his post ‘at his request’, replacing him with Mohamed bin Nayef (MbN) as the new Crown Prince and president of the Council of Political and Security Affairs, while allowing him to retain his position as Minister of Interior. The announcement also appointed King Salman’s son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) as Deputy Crown Prince, while allowing him to retain his position as Minister of Defense and President of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs.\textsuperscript{26} Most notable about this move is the removal of Prince Muqrin, the last remaining son of the Kingdom’s founder Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in the line of succession from the position of Crown Prince – the first time a Crown Prince has been removed, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in the history of the Saudi state – making

MbN next in line for the throne, the first member of the next generation of the Saudi ruling family to ever be in such a position.

Analyses of the implications of the shuffle have differed. Some analysts stress the new concentration of power in the hands of the Sudairis as being a divisive move that could irk their half-brothers and cousins, causing serious discord in the royal family. The Sudairis are a historically powerful grouping within the royal family, consisting of the sons and grandsons of one of the more prominent wives of the Kingdom’s founder (known as Hassa bint Ahmad Al-Sudairi). Other analysts downplay the Sudairi reasoning, stressing factors such as access to power or the consideration of meritocracy, and praise the rise of next generation of leadership as being more representative of the 70% of Saudis that are under the age of 30. This is something that might have been an intentional strategic decision by King Salman when appointing MbS.

While both perspectives have their merits, they are not individually exhaustive. Indeed, King Salman’s appointment of MbN and his son MbS in their power-concentrated positions is not entirely orthodox in a royal family that has emphasized slow change and power sharing. It also goes against the explicit efforts of the late King Abdullah to secure the majority appointment of Muqrin’s position on behalf of the Allegiance Council. However, the majority of the Allegiance Council, a body founded by King Abdullah in 2006 to handle succession matters, also immediately approved the appointment of MbS. The appointment has been cited to dispel concerns of a ‘Sudairi Coup’ and surely King Salman has acted with a certain degree of royal family support, even if any underlying hesitation existed. The closeness of King Salman to the Ulema (a body of religious clerics) has also been observed to be a factor behind his strength. Although the House of Saud dominates government and high-level political participation outside the royal family is limited, the Ulema have a pervasive role in executive decisions, royal decrees and national affairs. The Ulema have been historically led by the

---


Al Ash-Sheikh family, the Kingdom’s leading religious family and the descendants of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the eighteenth-century founder of the puritanical and ultraconservative form of Sunni Islam that is dominant in the Kingdom today, known as Wahhabism. The relationship between the Al Saud and Al As-Sheikh families stems from a 300-year-old pact that continues to this day: The Al As-Sheikh keep authority in religious matters and ensure the Wahhabi doctrine is upheld, in return, Al As-Sheikh give religious legitimacy to the Al Saud family’s political authority.

Even if it raised quiet concerns amongst certain members of the royal family, King Salman’s appointment of MbN and MbS was seamless overall and even met by initial optimism by some. It is the events that have since transpired that exacerbated the level of royal and public unease at King Salman and his new ruling circle\(^3^{2}\). King Salman’s brazen decision to launch military operations in Yemen is a remarkably uncharacteristic, assertive foreign policy approach for the Kingdom. The absence of any effective strategy or substantial operational success so far, despite Saudi casualties and costs, will lead many in the public and royal family to question the competence of MbS who is spearheading the operation. The halving of oil prices since 2014 is also adding more fiscal pressure to an economy that already faces structural challenges. Although predictions of a Saudi economic collapse are exaggerated and the Kingdom’s $650 billion foreign reserves can sustain the country for at least a decade, budgetary deficits and subsequent implications on state spending ability and economic growth are concerning.\(^3^{3}\) This reality means that the expensive social welfare packages and public sector spending that Saudis have become accustomed to, the mounting costs of the Yemen war, as well as checkbook diplomacy tactics utilized elsewhere in the region could become increasingly unsustainable. Even the collapsed construction tower and stampede tragedies in the holy sites of Mecca and Medina during the 2015 Hajj season have raised extensive criticism of the ruling family.\(^3^{4}\) At face value, these incidents might seem as a simple case of public safety mismanagement, but the implications for the royal family are far deeper since the Al-Saud’s politico-religious legitimacy stems from its status as guardians of the holy sites and the King’s official title is *Khadiim Al Haramain Al Sharifain* (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques). It should be noted that Iran, whose citizens were amongst the highest casualties of the accident, released several strongly worded statements directly questioning the legitimacy of the Saudi royal family’s management of the holy sites.\(^3^{5}\)


This incident exemplifies domestic regime legitimacy sensitivities vis-à-vis policy approaches and rivalry with Iran. While the Kingdom has successfully overcome numerous threats to its rule in the past, what makes the future situation unprecedented is that the passing of power onto the next generation, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud’s grandsons, means the number of princes with potential of succession has been multiplied and the process could become more complicated and competitive.

Policy Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

There is certainly no silver bullet solution to the multifaceted conflicts in the region and there is little reason to believe they will be resolved in the near-term. What can be done however, are measures to mitigate these conflicts and their consequences. The first step in approaching the issue of regional instability should be to avoid aggravating it even further by making order the ultimate priority. As G. Cause notes: “The Islamic State, Hizballah, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Houthis, the Sadrists, and more Libyan militias than anyone can keep track of now get headlines that were once reserved for national governments.”

State failure must be avoided at all costs, regardless of cause, be it a disproportionately violent regime response, as in Syria, or regime change at the hands of a foreign military intervention, as in Iraq. Instead, states with relatively effective governance and monopoly on the use of force must be supported even if they do not align with democratic norms; a collapse of Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Jordan could be catastrophic. There is substantial empirical research to back this belief. An analysis on the incidence of terrorism in 19 Middle Eastern states from 1972 to 2003 indicates that those with significant state failures are more likely to be the targets and hosts of terrorists and that a policy of democracy promotion in the region aggravates terrorism internally and externally. Another typology of authoritarian regime types covering 191 countries in the world from 1972 to 2003 indicates that the collapse of authoritarian regimes does not equate to a democratic transition, with monarchies most often returning to a traditional or party-less monarchy. Another comparative study that assesses the relationship between repression (both political terror and civil rights restrictions) and the risk of regime overthrow (both violent and non-violent) indicates that certain forms of repression can reduce threats from organized groups or prevent collective action. However, the study does state that violent oppression against non-violent actions can spur

---

escaped violence and radicalized positions, as was the case in Syria.\textsuperscript{40}

Based on empirical evidence, the logical approach would be to support stable rule regardless of any repression. At the same time, an exclusive focus on such data can ignore qualitative reasoning; the approach for which this paper advocates should not be seen as condoning violent regime oppression tactics. In the long-term, factors that have incited public unrest cannot be permanently ignored and underlying socio-economic and basic human rights grievances cannot be met by strictly excessively violent responses. However, the notion of exporting Western-style democracy and socially-engineering civil society must be completely dismissed, as it ignores the reality that Middle Eastern states are non-uniform and unique in their historical, political, cultural, demographic and governance attributes. Changes that consider evolving societal input and needs, before they reach a tipping point, are encouraged. However such changes should occur in an evolutionary way that is congruent with the domestic context, regardless of whether or not the end result resembles Western-style democratic institutions and certainly not through revolutionary means that destabilize regimes. In the case of the Kingdom, the late-King Abdullah’s pragmatic, incremental, political and economic reformist legacy demonstrated a clear understanding of the merits of this approach. King Salman’s closer association with the Ulema and MbN, continuing his infamous track record of zero-tolerance for dissent and reform\textsuperscript{41}, should he ascend to the throne next, would represent an unfavorable reversal of this cautiously strategic approach. For King Salman, MbN and MbS, it would be wise to carefully consider reevaluating any domestic or regional policy approaches, such as the Yemen operation, that have caused discord within the House of Saud, as the latter study also affirms the better capability of regime insiders to act collectively in facilitating a leadership exit.\textsuperscript{42}

Specific tactical solutions and kinetic counter-terrorism responses to regional conflict theatres are beyond the scope of this paper; however, macro policy options to deescalate these conflicts must be considered. Efforts to cool the Saudi-Iranian rivalry that has fueled opposing transnational proxy-fighting factions must be pursued. Analysts have noted that the more the relationship between these two rivals improves, the more positive political settlements could become in Syria, Yemen, Iraq or Bahrain.\textsuperscript{43} Although the recent multilateral Syrian peace talks have brought Saudi Arabia and Iran into the same room,\textsuperscript{44} only time will tell what effect this will have on their relationship. Despite the multipolar ideological rivalry in the Middle East, inter-ideological cooperation is theoretically possible if another ideological group is commonly perceived as the most

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Bruce Riedel, “The Prince of Counter-Terrorism,” \textit{The Brookings Institution} (September 2015). \url{http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2015/the-prince-of-counterterrorism}
\textsuperscript{42} Abel Escribà-Folch, “Repression, Political Threats, and Survival Under Autocracy,” 548.
\textsuperscript{43} F. Gregory Gause III, “Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War,” 27.
subversive threat. Should the recent ISIL attacks in Paris, Ankara and the downing of a Russian airliner in Egypt drive the U.S., EU, Russia and Turkey to compromise certain positions in the interest of cooperating against ISIL, Saudi Arabia and Iran could also find themselves adapting to less rigid geopolitical divisions.

By thoroughly examining the case of Saudi Arabia in this paper, the correlation between domestic priorities and regional policies becomes clear; the Kingdom sees transnational ideological rivalry as an existential threat to its rule. This has manifested itself in a regional rivalry not exclusively on sectarian lines, but one that has nonetheless protracted conflicts in the region with serious consequences as witnessed in Syria and Yemen. Ironically, these regional efforts have exacerbated domestic political risk in Saudi Arabia at a time where risk factors such as succession and economic conditions are already pressuring stability. In addition to cooling the fierce regional rivalries, the circumstances that have lead to regional conflict in the first place, namely state failure as a result of violent regime change, must be avoided.

Bibliography

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Liberate: A Journal for Undergraduate Research  


[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576100701329576](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576100701329576)


“Saudi deputy crown prince gets 82% of allegiance council votes,” *Al Arabiya News*, April 30th 2015.  

**Author Bio**

MOUSTAFA EZZ is currently pursuing a BA with an Honors Specialization in Political Science at Huron University College. His primary research interests include international security, intelligence, counter-terrorism, political risk and diplomatic strategies. His geographic specialization is the Middle East and North Africa, having lived in the region for fifteen years.