

p-ISSN : 2788-5054 | e-ISSN : 2788-5062

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/girr

DOI(Volume): 10.31703/girr/.2024(IX)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/girr.2024(IX.III)

www.girrjournal.com



GIRR

GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS REVIEW
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

VOL. VII, ISSUE III, SUMMER (SEPTEMBER-2024)



Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal

www.girrjournal.com

© Global International Relations Review

Article Title

The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS

Global International Relations Review

p-ISSN: 2788-5054 **e-ISSN:** 2788-5062

DOI(journal): 10.31703/girr

Volume: VII (2024)

DOI (volume):10.31703/girr.2024(VII)

Issue: III Summer (September-2024)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III)

Home Page

www.girjournal.com

Volume: VII (2024)

<https://www.girjournal.com/Current-issues>

Issue: III-Summer (September-2024)

<https://www.girjournal.com/Current-issues/7/3/2024>

Scope

<https://www.girjournal.com/about-us/scope>

Submission

<https://humaglobe.com/index.php/girr/submissions>

Google Scholar


Visit Us



Abstract

The state's role in regional and international affairs shifts with the leadership change, particularly when the new leader is younger and more ambitious than his predecessors. The role of Saudi Arabia has been evolving with the rise of de facto leader Muhammad Bin Salaman(MBS). As a foreign policy tool, Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of MBS, has chosen a particular diplomatic approach to lessen conflict, promote regional peace and stability, and develop its economy in order to gain more clout in the Middle East. So, what is the unique diplomatic regional approach of MBS, and why is KSA, under MBS's leadership, still facing serious challenges in the region? This study briefly explores Muhammad bin Salman's diplomatic initiatives toward regional countries with strained relations. This study highlights the challenges the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces under Muhammad bin Salman's leadership in achieving diplomatic success with regional countries.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Salman, Middle East, Regional Diplomacy, Individual Level of Analysis

Authors:

Syed Qandil Abbas: (Corresponding Author)

Associated Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. (Email: syed572@hotmail.com)

Saba Anwar Khan: MPhil Scholar, Department of International Relations with Special Focus on Middle East, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Pages: 36-43

DOI: 10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III).04

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024\(VII-III\).04](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III).04)

Article link: <http://www.girjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://girjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.girjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rvIolA2.pdf>



This work is licensed under the Attribution-Noncommercial- No Derivatives 4.0 International.

Citing this Article

04	The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS						
	Author	Syed Qandil Abbas Saba Anwar Khan	DOI	10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III).04			
Pages	36-43	Year	2024	Volume	VII	Issue	III
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA	Abbas, S. Q., & Khan, S. A. (2024). The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS. <i>Global International Relations Review</i> , VII(III), 36-43. https://doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024(IX-III).04					
	CHICAGO	Abbas, Syed Qandil, and Saba Anwar Khan. 2024. "The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS." <i>Global International Relations Review</i> VII (III):36-43. doi: 10.31703/girr.2024(IX-III).04.					
	HARVARD	ABBAS, S. Q. & KHAN, S. A. 2024. The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS. <i>Global International Relations Review</i> , VII, 36-43.					
	MHRA	Abbas, Syed Qandil, and Saba Anwar Khan. 2024. "The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS", <i>Global International Relations Review</i> , VII: 36-43.					
	MLA	Abbas, Syed Qandil, and Saba Anwar Khan. "The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of Mbs." <i>Global International Relations Review</i> VII.III (2024): 36-43. Print.					
	OXFORD	Abbas, Syed Qandil and Khan, Saba Anwar (2024), 'The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS', <i>Global International Relations Review</i> , VII (III), 36-43.					
	TURABIAN	Abbas, Syed Qandil and Saba Anwar Khan. "The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of Mbs." <i>Global International Relations Review</i> VII, no. III (2024): 36-43. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024(IX-III).04 .					





Global International Relations Review

www.girrjournal.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/girr>



Pages: 36-43

URL: [https://doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024\(VII-III\).04](https://doi.org/10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III).04)

Doi: 10.31703/girr.2024(VII-III).04



Cite Us



Title

The Evolving Role of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East: Challenges to Regional Diplomacy of MBS

Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Rise of Muhammad Bin Salman](#)
- [Regional Diplomacy of MBS](#)
- [Challenges to MBS's Regional Diplomacy](#)
- [Challenges to Saudi-Iran Rapprochement](#)
- [Challenges to Saudi-Yemen Rapprochement](#)
- [Traditional Islam as a Challenge to MBS Regional Diplomacy](#)
- [Israel-Hamas War: A Challenge to MBS Regional Diplomacy](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

Authors:

Syed Qandil Abbas: (Corresponding Author)

Associated Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: syed572@hotmail.com)

Saba Anwar Khan: MPhil Scholar, Department of International Relations with Special Focus on Middle East, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

The state's role in regional and international affairs shifts with the leadership change, particularly when the new leader is younger and more ambitious than his predecessors. The role of Saudi Arabia has been evolving with the rise of de facto leader Muhammad Bin Salaman (MBS). As a foreign policy tool, Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of MBS, has chosen a particular diplomatic approach to lessen conflict, promote regional peace and stability, and develop its economy in order to gain more clout in the Middle East. So, what is the unique diplomatic regional approach of MBS, and why is KSA, under MBS's leadership, still facing serious challenges in the region? This study briefly explores Muhammad bin Salman's diplomatic initiatives toward regional countries with strained relations. This study highlights the challenges the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces under Muhammad bin Salman's leadership in achieving diplomatic success with regional countries.

Keywords: [Saudi Arabia](#), [Muhammad bin Salman](#), [Middle East](#), [Regional Diplomacy](#), [Individual Level of Analysis](#)

Introduction

The landscape of international politics is constantly evolving, with power, diplomacy, and regional relations always in flux. The rise of new leadership often signifies a transformative period, impacting the internal landscape and a nation's engagement with the global community. With the rise of MBS,

this phenomenon is visible in Saudi Arabia. His tenure has been characterized by a distinct set of principles and practices known as the "MBS doctrine." This framework encompasses a diverse array of domestic reforms, economic diversification initiatives, and foreign policy endeavors that have redefined Saudi Arabia's stature within both the



This work is licensed under the Attribution-NonCommercial- No Derivatives 4.0 International.

regional and international spheres. The kingdom has been mending its relations with international and regional actors. Saudi Arabia has already switched to a policy of normalizing relations with all regional actors with whom the Kingdom had strained relations. The Kingdom had worsened relations with Iran, was at war with Yemen, had deteriorated relations with Qatar, had frigid relations with Turkey, and strained relations with Syria. Initially, Muhammad Bin Salman used coercive measures to deal with regional countries. However, he quickly recognized the limitations of coercive means to achieve his set goals. So, he adopted a more pragmatic and diplomatic approach to dealing with regional countries. The Kingdom, guided by the ambitious leadership of Muhammad bin Salman, has been endeavoring to repair its relations with neighboring nations to foster peace and stability in the region, thereby aiding the Kingdom in diversifying its economy and enhancing MBS's role as a leader. However, there are many challenges he has to face to accomplish his goal of successful diplomacy in the region.

Rise of Muhammad Bin Salman

Muhammad bin Salman was born in Riyadh(KSA) on 31st August 1985, into the influential House of Saud. (Ożarowski, [2023](#))

From his childhood, he observed the internal working process of the royal family, which helped him shape his political trajectory. He started his work as a special advisor in 2009. Kerr, [2014](#) This allowed him to establish experience as well as connections with royalties. On 23rd January 2015, Salman bin Abdul Aziz, the twenty-fifth son of the kingdom's founder Abdul Aziz, consolidated his position as the seventh king after the passing of King Abdullah. (Jain, [2015](#))

In the first month of power, he appointed his son Muhammad bin Salman as Minister of Defence. (Cochran, [2019](#))

However, his role as a policymaker advanced when he presented his "Vision 2030" in 2016. In June 2017, his appointment as crown prince was pivotal in his rise to power. Kerr, [2014](#) MBS rose to power though he was behind several half-brothers in the succession. King Salman replaced Crown Prince Muqrin (first in line) and Muhammad bin

Nayaf (second in line), who were the Crown Prince's choices of his predecessor (King Abdullah). According to the insider report, MBS forced his cousin Muhammad bin Nayaf to step aside as crown prince. Zaccour ([2021](#)) Even though there were better choices in the following generation, Salman chose Muhammad Bin Salman, his seventh son, to carry on the family line. Since 2017, he has been the de facto ruler. After consolidating power as Crown Prince, he launched a clampdown on its perceived challengers by detaining several influential persons. His power was further consolidated when King Salman appointed him the kingdom's prime minister in 2022 (Ożarowski, [2023](#)).

Theoretical Framework: Individual Level of Analysis

The individual level of analysis provides a foundational theoretical framework for examining the personality traits of MBS as he holds the power to make decisions that significantly influence foreign policy. In international relations, the Individual level of analysis involves an understanding of the role and influence of a leader in foreign policy decision-making. Individual level of analysis primarily focuses on the state's leader who has the power to make decisions. It believes that all actions and interactions of the state are determined by an individual (leader) or group of individuals. The individual level of analysis includes many approaches, but this research applies a cognitive approach to analyze foreign policy. The cognitive approach focuses on the personality and beliefs of leaders in foreign policy decision-making (Hussain & Shakoor, [2017](#)). It deals with how a leader's personality or belief impacts his decisions. It explores a leader's view of the world, changes in his views with time, and the impact of these views or changes in views on his decision-making regarding the foreign policy of his states.

By analyzing MBS's statements, it is determined that he has a positive attitude. He views himself as a compelling figurehead who can significantly contribute to the region's development. He is clear about his goals and is confident in his ability to bring peace and stability through economic engagement with other

countries. Instrumental beliefs refer to the methods leaders use to achieve their objectives. MBS is employing diplomacy as a strategy to pursue these goals, and he will likely continue to rely on diplomacy in his efforts.

Regional Diplomacy of MBS

MBS has high faith and confidence that he can achieve his goals through diplomatic initiatives. His diplomatic initiatives include rapprochement with his arch-rivals Iran, Qatar, Turkey, Yemen, and Syria. MBS has also been trying to normalize its relations with Israel. In January 2021, Saudi Arabia initiated a new era of diplomacy by lifting the blockade on Qatar, which had been in place since 2017. Following this, Saudi Arabia and other GCC members reopened air, sea, and land routes to Qatar, with flights resuming later that same month. Crown Prince MBS also normalized its relations with Turkey. Historically, these relations had been strained since the Arab uprisings. But the restoration began with the AIUla Agreement of 2021, which lifted the blockade on Qatar as Qatar's support during its blockade was one of many issues that have increased the friction between the two (Cafiero, 2021).

Another prominent Diplomatic success of Saudi Arabia under MBS is the rapprochement with Iran, which has been considered an arch-rival of the Kingdom since the Iranian revolution of 1979. On 10th March 2023, the National security advisor of Saudi Arabia and the Iranian Supreme National Security Council's secretary with the Chinese Foreign Minister announced the restoration of diplomatic ties in a joint press conference in Beijing. Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to restore relations (2023) Moreover, after the Saudi-Iran rapprochement in March 2023, the hope of resolving the Yemen conflict also became evident. Saudi Arabia started a direct negotiation with Houthi leadership in Sanaa, Yemen. Saud-Houthis negotiation started in April 2023, mediated by Oman, along with efforts of UN mediation that started in April 2022. Saudi Arabia also mended its relationship with Syria in April 2023. The rapprochement began in March with discussions on the resumption of consular services.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia under MBS has been trying to mend its relations with Israel. Both states

have been seen to normalize the relations with the help of the USA, as it mentioned that it is the top priority of the US to normalize the relations between its two allies in the region (Staff, 2023). The KSA sees this normalization as a prospect to secure a Defence pact with the United States and to acquire a civil nuclear program. However, he stated that the Palestinian issue has immense significance and before the normalization of relations, the rights of the Palestinian people will be ensured.

Since the inception of warfare on October 7, Saudi Arabia has been trying to de-escalate conflict. The Kingdom hosted an urgent meeting of the OIC and Arab- Islamic summit and condemned the aggression and barbarism of Israel in Gaza. OIC summit rejects justifying Gaza attacks as Israeli self-defense (2023). He condemned the Israeli atrocities in the region but did not take any hard steps to end the conflict that would undermine its peace process with Israel. On the activities of Yemen in the Red Sea against Israel, the Foreign Minister clearly said that the Kingdom does not want any war with Yemen as it is committed to ending war with Yemen. Saudi foreign minister discusses the Israel-Hamas war and wider challenges in the Middle East (2024).

Challenges to MBS's Regional Diplomacy

MBS has adopted a diplomatic approach, however, MBS must face many challenges while pursuing its objectives through Diplomacy. Some of these challenges are as follows.

Challenges to Saudi-Iran Rapprochement

The Rapprochement process with arch-rival Iran started in March 2023, with China as a mediator. Since March, no notable progress in terms of agreements has been made except for some high official visits and optimistic statements from both sides. On Yemen's issue, both sides have agreed to settle the crisis in Yemen, but no roadmap has been presented on how they will resolve this crisis. Another challenge to the Saudi-Iran rapprochement is the Saudi's efforts to normalize its relations with Israel. Iran openly calls Israel an enemy and has strong feelings of hatred towards Israel. (S. Q. Abbas, 2024)

Iran fiercely criticized the Saudi's effort to normalize its ties with Israel. In a sideline press conference, while attending the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, the Iranian President stated that establishing relations with Israel by any Arab state would be a betrayal to Palestinians. Middle East Monitor. (2023) This challenge has become more difficult to overcome after the start of the war.

Iran has been financially, militarily, and morally supporting Hamas. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh claimed Hamas received \$70million in 2022. Levitt, M., & Fellow, F.-W. (2023) Days after the outbreak of war, Ayatollah Khamenei, the Iranian supreme leader, warned Israel that if Israel continued their barbarity, it would not be possible to keep Muslims and resistance forces out of war. Iran's Khamenei demands Israel stop bombardment of Gaza. (2023) He also called for the severing of political ties to all Arab states having political relations with Israel. Many skirmishes have been seen between Israel and Iran or Iranian-backed groups in the region since Oct 7. Staff, A. J. (2024) So, it is the prerequisite for the success of rapprochement that Iran will stay out of war directly as well as indirectly. It is a great challenge for the Kingdom to convince Iran to be out of the Israel-Hamas war which on many occasions criticizes the Arab states including the Kingdom for not playing their role in defending the Palestinians.

Moreover, the USA could be a spoiler in the Saudi-Iran rapprochement. However, the USA welcomed the peace initiative between Saudi and Iran. But in a recent episode of the Israel-Hamas war, the USA repeatedly blamed Iran for supporting Hamas and Houthis. In a Security Council meeting in January, the USA's ambassador to the UN condemned the Houthi attack on vessels and blamed Iran as the root cause of all problems. Houthis defiant after warning over Red Sea attacks. (2024) If the anti-Iran government gets elected in upcoming elections in the United States, it would further complicate the challenge for Saudi Arabia to maintain and sustain rapprochement with Iran. The Middle East remained a focus of Republicans and less of a focus of Democrats. Prior to the Israel-Hamas war, social scientists were observing the shift in US policy from the Middle East to West Asia. Commuri, M. (2023) However, the war halted the shift in policy and once again increased the US

engagement in the region. Israel and other non-state actors can also be the spoiler of the Saudi-Iran Rapprochement. Israel and Iran are arch-rivals, and the Hamas-Israel war intensified the animosity and there is no hope of reconciliation between Iran and Israel in the future. The issue with non-state actors is that they are autonomous and have their interests in the region. They will respect and welcome the rapprochement as long as it serves their interests.

Challenges to Saudi-Yemen Rapprochement

The process of rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi started in April 2023. However, no roadmap to end the crisis has been presented. Meetings of officials ended with optimism but no formal peace agreement to end the crisis has been made yet. Many challenges need to be overcome to make this rapprochement successful. A number of trust-building measures are required to build trust between the two. Another important challenge to Saudi Arabia and Yemen's peace process is the other factions operating in Yemen. In Yemen, the parties to conflict include the internationally recognized Yemeni government, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Al-Qaeda, and Houthis. The objective of this Saudi rapprochement towards Yemen Houthi is to secure peace at its border and this is only possible with a political solution that would end civil war in Yemen. A political agreement among these parties is essential for attaining peace in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is engaging with Houthis to secure a peace deal that is marginalizing the other factions. As a result, different factions have opposed the Houthi-backed Houthi-Saudi talks. Nagi, A. (2023) So, the challenge for Saudi Arabia would be to bring all these parties to the table.

The October 7 war has further complicated the situation. Houthi have openly conveyed their support to Hamas. Since October 7, Houthi has been seen as active and West has warned the Houthis of dire consequences. This scenario is of great concern to Saudis who want a peace deal with Yemen Houthi. In the ongoing chaos, for now, the Kingdom has adopted a sideline policy to preserve the peace deal with Houthi, but it has to be seen to what extent the Kingdom would handle the pressure from the West and stay away from this chaos.

Challenges to Saudi Efforts Towards Normalization with Israel

KSA and Israel initiated the negotiation process of normalization, mediated by the USA this year. However, normalization has not taken place yet. There are many challenges for Saudi Arabia; The first challenge for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to maintain equilibrium between Israel and Iran as both perceived each other as rivals. Saudi Arabia restored its relations with Iran in the first half of 2023 which perceived Israel as its arch-rival in the region. In its efforts to normalize its relationship with Israel, the Kingdom has been facing severe criticism from Iran. So, it would be a great challenge for the Kingdom to maintain and sustain the relations with both Israel and Iran at a time when both have strong animosity towards each other.

Another challenge to Saudi's effort to normalize its relations with Israel emerged on October 7. With the war, the process of normalization has halted. Israel has not only been attacking the Palestinians directly but also blocking the humanitarian corridors, which is aggravating the situation in Gaza. The people of Palestine are facing death, Hunger, and disease. The whole population of the Muslim world and all Arab states have a soft corner for the Palestinians and are sympathetic to them. At this point in time, when the whole Muslim Ummah has its eyes on the Israel-Hamas war and is in rage due to Israel's atrocities, the continuation of normalization with Israel would not be in Saudi's Favor. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's population is against any kind of relations with Israel, particularly after the start of the war. In a poll conducted from 14 November to 6 December by the Washington Institute with a sample of 1000 Saudi citizens, 96% of Saudis were in the view that all Arab countries should end diplomatic, economic, and political relations with Israel due to Israel's atrocities in Gaza (Cleveland & Pollock, [2023](#))

Traditional Islam as a Challenge to MBS Regional Diplomacy

The traditional Islam known as "Wahabism" always plays an important role in the Kingdom's policies whether it is a domestic policy or foreign policy. This ultra-conservatism form of Islam

(Wahabism) in the Kingdom has its roots back to the 17th century when Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab, a religious scholar took refuge in al-Diriya, a ruling area of Muhammad ibn Saud (founder of the first Saudi State). Both allied and planned a Jihad to conquer the Whole of Arabia. Wynbrandt ([2010](#)) This alliance divided their power and responsibilities; political and military powers were granted to Muhammad ibn Saud and religious power was granted to Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab. This is still valid after 250 years in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Religious authorities still legitimize the political authorities of Al-Saud by approving and endorsing the King's succession and the King's decisions. In return, they enjoy privileges and hold key positions in the Kingdom's structure.

MBS regional diplomacy is based on the principle of Modernization and this modernization covers economic, societal, and religious aspects. On many occasions, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman emphasizes the importance of returning to moderate Islam. Moreover, in a conference held in Riyadh in 2017, he promised to return to moderate Islam to progress and live peacefully with the world. Middle East Monitor ([2017](#)). However, the concern is whether MBS will be successful in bringing religious modernization to the Kingdom. The Ulema or religious clerics have a significant influence in the country. It has been seen in the history of the Kingdom that any initiative to modernize the Kingdom was rolled back. History tells us that any effort to challenge or curtail the authority of religious establishments in the Kingdom provoked unrest. The rolling back of modernization efforts by King Faisal, and the violent insurrection against King Fahd due to his rejection of the advice of religious authorities on the matter to allow the US military on Saudi soil showed the influence of religious establishment in the Kingdom. Moreover, large masses follow these scholars, not only the masses within the Kingdom but in the whole Muslim world.

Most Muslims perceive any effort to moderate Islam as pressure from the West so that Islam can be altered to follow Western norms and culture. So, the modernization of Islam could also challenge the Kingdom's Muslim leadership role. Another issue with this reform in religion is that if the Kingdom under Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman

becomes successful, the next demand from the liberal Saudi population would be reforms in the political structure of the Kingdom. So, it would be a challenge for MBS to return to moderate Islam without bringing reforms in the political structure of the Kingdom.

Israel-Hamas War: A Challenge to MBS Regional Diplomacy

October 7 war is another major challenge to Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's regional diplomacy. This conflict has impacted not only Palestine and Israel but the whole Middle Eastern region because all Arab countries, particularly their populations, have a soft corner for Palestinians. All Arab countries in the Middle East have been condemning the Israelis's atrocities in Palestine. Many Arab countries openly support Hamas against Israel, including Qatar, Iran, Turkey, and many others. Moreover, with each passing day, the chances of escalation of the conflict have been increasing.

Another element that is contributing to the escalation of the conflict is the involvement of Yemeni Houthis and Lebanese Hezbollah in the conflict. With the momentum with which the warring parties are increasing, it seems impossible to keep Iran out of this war, which is an arch-rival of Israel. The MBS who was trying to develop positive relations with all regional countries, including Iran and Israel has been facing severe challenges due to the escalation of conflict. In this difficult situation, MBS has been taking a very cautious approach despite facing competing pressures from both sides and trying its best to de-escalate the regional tension. However, further escalation of this conflict would undermine MBS regional diplomatic initiatives of rapprochement and normalization of relations.

Conclusion

There is constant change in power dynamics, diplomacy, and regional relations in international politics. New leadership often ushers in a period of change, impacting the domestic landscape and the course of a nation's international relations. The decisions made by leaders are significantly influenced by their beliefs and personalities. Muhammad bin Salman, the son of King Salman, has been acting as the Kingdom's de facto head of state ever since he took over in 2015. He is a young, vivacious leader with a strong sense of confidence. He has no conceptual complexity in his goals and means to achieve them. He seeks a region that is stable and tranquil so that he can grow the economy of the Kingdom and thereby expand its influence. To achieve these goals, he has made diplomacy one of his tools. He is attempting to build positive ties with all regional and global powers. On the regional front, he is rebuilding relations with all regional countries, including those that were once considered archrivals of the Kingdom. Under MBS, the kingdom has mended its ties to Yemen and Iran and re-established ties to Syria, Qatar, and Turkey. Furthermore, the process of normalization with Israel has also been initiated by him. Additionally, he introduced many reforms to the Kingdom, such as granting women the right to drive, passports, and employment in all sectors of the economy, as well as permission for the entertainment sector. MBS has chosen to use diplomacy as a strategy. However, MBS has a lot of obstacles to overcome to achieve its goals through diplomacy. Among the major challenges are the hostility between nations, such as that between Israel and Iran, the interests of great powers in the region, the existence of non-state actors, and terrorist activity in the area. Moreover, the October 7 war halted any major development in all peace processes for the time being because many parties were somehow involved.

References

- Ożarowski, R. (2023). Mohammed bin Salman's rising to power. Chances for transition in Saudi Arabia? *Przegląd Strategiczny*, 15, 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ps.2022.1.10>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Jain, S. (2015). Saudi Arabia: King Salman faces the 21st century. *Strategic Analysis*, 39(3), 280–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2015.1022318>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Cochran, J. A. (2019). The Rise in Power of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 28(2), 369–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12195>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Zaccour, A. (2021). Saudi Arabia: How MBS deposed his cousin Mohammed bin Nayef as crown prince. The Africa Report. <https://www.theafricareport.com/64599/saudi-arabia-how-mbs-deposed-his-cousin-mohammed-bin-nayef-as-crown-prince/>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Hussain, N., & Shakoor, F. (2017). The role of leadership in foreign policy: A case study of Russia under Vladimir Putin. *IPRI Journal*, XVII(1), 1-25. <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Article-No.-1w17.pdf>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Iran's Khamenei demands Israel stop bombardment of Gaza. (2023, October 17). *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2023/10/17/irans-khamenei-warns-israel-that-bombardment-of-gaza-could-bring-response>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- OIC summit rejects justifying Gaza attacks as Israeli self-defence. (2023, November 11). *DAWN*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1788501>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Saudi foreign minister discusses Israel-Hamas war and wider challenges in Middle East. (2024). *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcSS1kXDqN4>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Abbas, S. Q. (2024). Normalization of Relations Between Israel and Arab States: An Iranian Perspective. In *Normalization of Relations Between Israel and Arab States: An Iranian Perspective* (pp. 181–197). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-7765-9_10
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Levitt, M., & Fellow, F.-W. (2023). *How America and its allies can stop Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran from evading sanctions and financing terror*. House Committee on Financial Services, 25, 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/6901>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Houthis defiant after warning over Red Sea attacks. (2024, January 4). *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67878906>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Wynbrandt, J. (2010). The Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the Wahhabi-Al Saud alliance (1258–1745). In *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*. Infobase Publishing.
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Kerr, S., & Al-Imran, A. (2014, June 24). *Mohammed bin Salman: The meteoric rise of Saudi Arabia's new crown prince*. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/c8e51b7c-57f6-11e7-80b6-9bfa4c1f83d2>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Middle East Monitor. (2017, October 25). *Saudi Crown Prince vows to destroy extremism in Saudi Arabia*. *Middle East Monitor*. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171025-saudi-crown-prince-vows-to-destroy-extremism-in-saudi-arabia/>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Cafiero, G. (2021, January 19). What does the Al-Ula summit mean for Turkey? *Daily Sabah*. <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/oped/what-does-the-al-ula-summit-mean-for-turkey>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Iran and Saudi Arabia agree to restore relations. (2023, March 10). *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/10/iran-and-saudi-agree-to-restore-relationships>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Commuri, M. (2023, May 17). One Step Forward, Two Steps Behind: The US Shift Away From the Middle East | *Perryworldhouse*. <https://global.upenn.edu/perryworldhouse/news/one-step-forward-two-steps-behind-us-shift-away-middle-east>
[Google Scholar](#) [Worldcat](#) [Fulltext](#)
- Staff, A. J. (2023, June 5). US committed to Saudi-Israeli normalization, Blinken tells AIPAC. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/5/us->

[committed-to-saudi-israeli-normalisation-blinken-tells-aipac](#)

[Google Scholar](#)

[Worldcat](#)

[Fulltext](#)

Middle East Monitor. (2023, September 21). Iran: Normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel is “betrayal” of Palestinians, says Raisi. *Middle East Monitor*.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230921-iran-normalisation-between-saudi-arabia-and-israel-is-betrayal-of-palestinians-says-raisi/>

[Google Scholar](#)

[Worldcat](#)

[Fulltext](#)

Nagi, A. (2023, October 10). Catching Up on the Back-channel Peace Talks in Yemen. *International Crisis Group*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian->

[peninsula/yemen/catching-back-channel-peace-talks-yemen](#)

[Google Scholar](#)

[Worldcat](#)

[Fulltext](#)

Cleveland, C., & Pollock, D. (2023, December 21). *New poll sheds light on Saudi views of Israel-Hamas war*. The Washington Institute.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/new-poll-sheds-light-saudi-views-israel-hamas-war>

[Google Scholar](#)

[Worldcat](#)

[Fulltext](#)

Staff, A. J. (2024, April 19). Timeline of Iran-Israel escalation since the war on Gaza began. *Al Jazeera*.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/19/how-iran-israel-tensions-have-escalated-since-the-war-on-gaza-a-timeline>

[Google Scholar](#)

[Worldcat](#)

[Fulltext](#)