

# Resisting change: Women and youth in a post-oil world

## Analysing Saudi Arabia's *Vision2030* reforms

LOTTIE CROGHAN

### Abstract

In this paper, I conduct a critical analysis of Saudi Arabia's *Vision2030* reforms. In 2016, the King of Saudi Arabia, Muhammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS), introduced economic reforms to diversify the economy away from oil dependency. I analyse Saudi Arabia's historic experience as a 'rentier state', and examine how the country plans to expand its economy beyond oil production. In doing so, I explore the effects of the *Vision2030* reforms on two key groups: women and youth. I find women and youth have historically been excluded from Saudi Arabia's economy, and while the *Vision2030* reforms acknowledge the economic deficits faced by these groups, the reforms do little to address the major structural problems preventing women and youth from full economic participation.

### Introduction

In this paper, I perform a critical analysis of Saudi Arabia's *Vision2030* reform program. Since the discovery of oil in 1932, Saudi Arabia has maintained economic stability as a rentier state, deriving the vast majority of its domestic income from oil production (De Bel-Air 2014, 4). Saudi Arabia's oil has made the monarchical Middle Eastern country wealthy, but it has also left the country vulnerable to economic shocks should the supply and demand for oil change (ibid., 4). Likewise, the dependency of oil has prevented economic diversification, and hampered the inclusion of women and youth into the workforce, who remain most vulnerable to the ageing, male-dominated workforce prominent in oil industries (Al-Rasheed 2013, 22). In order to improve Saudi Arabia's future economic outlook, Muhammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS) introduced the *Vision2030* reform program in 2016 which provided a detailed guide on how the country planned to diversify beyond oil to reach its full economic potential (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016). In this paper, I critically analyse the rollout of the *Vision2030* reforms, paying attention to proximate background context, the successes, and challenges involved in implementing the reforms. I also emphasise the effects of the *Vision2030* reforms on economic outcomes for women and youth. In doing so, I also provide historical background on Saudi Arabia's ascent into oil production, and how Saudi Arabia functions as a rentier state. I find the *Vision2030* reforms offer an ambitious and respectable initiative for economic change under autocratic circumstances, but they fall short of improving the current economic outlook for women and youth.

## Saudi Arabia and the rentier state theory

In this section, I provide an overview of the modern development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, contextualising the country's religious, political, demographic, and economic context. In doing so, I apply the 'rentier state theory' to analyse and explain Saudi Arabia's contemporary economic situation.

### Modern Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, or, formally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a landlocked monarchical dictatorship located on the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010, 85). The modern nation-state of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1932 by Ibn Saud. Saudi Arabia follows Wahhabism, a fundamentalist form of Islam, as its state religion. Saudi Arabia is home to 36 million people, and also contains a number of undocumented foreign expats, migrants and labourers who perform a significant population of the kingdom's unskilled workforce (De Bel-Air 2014, 3; UNICEF 2022). Today, Saudi Arabia is in the midst of a youth bulge, with children and young people accounting for much of the kingdom's population (Statistical Analysis and Decision Support Centre 2020). As a desert country with limited opportunity for agriculture and other natural resource-based industries, Saudi Arabia is dependent on oil as its primary industry and has the second largest oil reserve in the world (De Bel-Air 2014, 3). Profits made from oil exports fund the government and the monarchy, making Saudi Arabia one of the largest 'rentier states' in the world.

### Rentier state theory

Rentier state theory (RST) is a theory in political science first developed to explain how oil-dependent countries in the Middle East became wealthy. RST is based on the notion of 'rents'. Rents are profits made from the sale of natural resources (in this case, oil) to foreign entities (Beblawi 1987, 383; Mahdavy 1970, 428). Money produced from rents funds domestic governments in many Middle Eastern countries, removing the need for domestic citizens to work (Beblawi 1987, 383). As a result, countries relying on 'rents' to maintain the government have an atypical relationships between the state and its people. This dichotomy has posed interesting questions within political science over the relationship between natural resource wealth and democracy, with many high-profile examples of rentier states within the literature being dictatorships, particularly in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa (Haber and Menaldo 2011, 1; Herb 2005, 297; Oskarsson and Ottosen 2010, 1067; Ross 2001).

The academic literature on democratisation has proposed a number of theories to explain the potential relationships between dictatorship and oil wealth. The first mechanism theorised by the literature is the 'taxation effect'. The taxation effect suggests that as governments are not dependent on taxation from the public to produce an income, there is no economic incentive to democratise (Ross 2001, 332). Taxation has formed an important part in the creation of modern Western democracies, with the government's need to collect tax used as leverage to justify representation and voting rights (Herb 2005, 297). The lack of need to collect taxation in oil rentier states, thus, undermines one of the core motivations to democratisation in the Western canon. The second mechanism theorised by the literature is the 'repression effect'. The repression effect dictates that the vast wealth accumulated by the state enables the government to maintain a monopoly of violence over the population. Thus, governments can afford to, for example, buy off dissenters or develop other methods to maintain control through the military and police (Herb 2005, 297).

The final mechanism theorised by the literature is the 'modernisation effect'. The modernisation effect takes theoretical inspiration from Seymour Martin Lipset's modernisation

theory, who was the first individual to theorise the relationship between high economic development and democratisation (Herb 2005, 328, 338). The modernisation effect theorises the rentier state has limited motivation to invest in domestic economic development to improve the populations' living circumstances, and, instead, prefers to invest in its own power (Herb 2005, 330). As a result, the general population remains poor and unable to pressure the government into democracy (Herb 2005, 330.). In the academic literature, the modernisation effect is discussed in relation to the broader 'resource curse', which endeavours to explain why natural resource wealth results in poverty for the general population (Herb 2005, 357). The resource curse theory suggests countries with more natural resource wealth from products such as diamonds or oil experience lower rates of economic development and modernisation (Ross 2018, 200, 203). This occurs because natural resources are used by domestic and international actors for exploitation, instead of redistributing the profits gained from the export of such items among the population. The contemporary natural resource curse is often rooted in colonisation, whereby smaller countries, such as the United Kingdom or Japan, exploited foreign natural resources for domestic profit. The effects of the natural resource curse are also distributed unequally across the population, with men who are able to work in such industries often faring better than women or youth (Ross 2018, 213). Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, however, maintain such a high level of profit from their natural resources that the population are still able to benefit from trickle-down economic effects, or targeted reform programs such as the *Vision2030* reforms. In the final part of this section, I apply the RST to Saudi Arabia.

## Rentier state theory in Saudi Arabia

Oil rentierism has become integral to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's modern economic development. On 3 March 1933, the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) discovered vast oil fields in Saudi Arabia's al-Ahsay province (Bowen 2014, 330). At over 260 billion barrels of oil reserves (Wurm 2008, 8), Saudi Arabia operates one of the largest oil reserves in the world. In 1943, SOCAL became absorbed by the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), allowing the Saudi Arabian state greater control of its oil production, distribution, and profits.

Saudi Arabia developed rapidly as an oil rentier state, enabling the kingdom to become a regional and global power. World War II proved a disruption to Saudi Arabia's emerging oil industry, but the kingdom quickly recovered with the demand posed by the new Cold War era (Bowen 2014, 7). By 1951, the kingdom was producing almost a million barrels a day (Mansour 1973, 80). By the 1970s, Saudi Arabia was responsible for 10 per cent of the world's oil production and became the globe's third largest oil producer (ibid.). Although blessed with success from its oil reserves—owning around 23 per cent of the world's supplies (ibid., 2)—oil dependency left Saudi Arabia vulnerable and prone to economic booms and busts depending on the global financial climate. Likewise, the presence of a strong oil economy affected Saudi Arabia's ability to democratise, due the economic effects of oil on the development civil and political rights (Herb 2005, 298–299). Calls for reform and better financial management lingered for decades (Nehme 1994, 930), and while the kingdom implemented a series of Soviet-style development plans (Albassam 2015, 112), reforms never met demands. It is these contexts—rentierism, oil dependency, and the growing calls for change—that led to the emergence of the *Vision2030* reform program in 2016, to be explored in the next section.

## The Vision2030 reforms: Background, goals, success, and challenges

This section provides an overview of Saudi Arabia's *Vision2030* reforms. It looks at the contextual background to the reforms, its primary objectives, and provides a critical analysis of the reform's success and failures so far. The section finishes by analysing challenges the *Vision2030* reforms have in meeting the 2030 due date.

### Vision2030: Background and goals

In 2014, the global drop in oil prices caused mass economic panic in Saudi Arabia. By January 2016, oil prices per barrel had reached a record low of US\$28, from a high of US\$115 in June 2014 (Grand and Wolff 2020, 4). At the same time, government revenue dropped US\$187 billion from 2013 to 2015 (Grand and Wolff 2020, 4). It was becoming clearer: for as long as Saudi Arabia remained an oil rentier state, the kingdom would be vulnerable to economic shocks as a result of changes in the global oil economy, unless it expanded and diversified its economic outlook.

To address growing concerns, MBS launched *Vision2030* in 2016 as an economic plan to move the country out of oil dependency. The reforms were designed around three key themes: creating a vibrant society, fostering a thriving economy, and relaunching an ambitious nation (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016, 10). Inside the three broader themes are 96 strategic goals, and 13 *Vision Realisation Programs* (Grand and Wolf 2020, 14). The government set up a new Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) to monitor the implementation of the reforms (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016, 79). The fundamental purpose of the *Vision2030* reforms is to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy away from oil dependency by investing in the development of other industries (such as pharmaceuticals, mining, and tourism), as well as increasing opportunities in the private sector to create jobs for Saudis (*ibid.*, 51). The plan also sought to improve the sociocultural situation in Saudi Arabia by improving access to education and healthcare, and increasing women's participation in the economy (*ibid.*, 7, 45, 73). The *Vision2030* reforms scope—an entire rewiring of Saudi Arabia's tradition as a rentier state—has attracted the attention of international academics, who have debated the *Vision2030* successes, failures, and challenges to implementation (Grand and Wolff 2020; Habibi 2019; Khan 2016, 36; Magdalenat 2021; Schneider 2021). In the next section, I evaluate the successes of the reforms from 2016 to 2022, noting there are still eight years left on the reform's deadline.

### Vision2030: Successes

For international experts and policymakers, the overall success of the *Vision2030* reforms thus far has been mixed. There have been a number of successes. For example, through the widespread introduction of healthcare reforms in 2021, there have been significant improvements in Saudi Arabia's democratic medical system (Ali and Mohammed 2022, 1; Hassounah et al. 2020, 4). Another area which has seen improvements is infrastructure, especially transport safety, with the development of new roads and highway networks allowing greater internal mobility (Alshammari 2021). Additionally, Saudi Arabia has become a leader in digital bureaucracy reforms, implementing changes to make navigating online bureaucratic systems easier for civilians (Alshammari 2021). Elsewhere, there has been significant growth in Saudi Arabia's entertainment and tourism industries. Religious tourism remains one of Saudi Arabia's primary sources of non-oil related income, and the development of new hotels and improvements to security procedures has made the experience safer and more convenient for tourists (Ali and Salameh 2021, 279; Ibrahim et al. 2021, 4101). Likewise, several new World

Heritage Sites have been added in Saudi Arabia, increasing tourism interest (Ibrahim et al. 2021, 4106). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has expanded the cultural entertainment industry into cruise lines and festivals, which has created a significant number of domestic job opportunities, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic (Ibrahim et al. 2021, 4101).

Significant improvements to Saudi Arabia's economy have also been observed. For example, foreign direct investment into Saudi Arabia has increased from SR5.321 billion to SR17.625 billion, while the total foreign investment fund has reached a record SR1.6 trillion (Alshammari 2021). Likewise, non-oil exports have increased by 59 per cent in 2020 (Alshammari 2021). Saudi Arabia has also adopted a more sustainable approach to its economy and energy sectors (Alshammari 2021). While implementing full structural changes may still incur some challenges, some key indicators in Saudi Arabia have also improved under the *Vision2030* reforms.

Accurately evaluating the relative success and failures of the *Vision2030* reform program has proved a difficult task. Transparency measures have improved under the reform program, with clear strategic objectives being provided and certain progress checks being updated through the program's website (Grand and Wolf 2020, 41). However, in a highly controlled and autocratic political context, evaluating the authenticity and accuracy of such information remains an issue. In the broad contexts of analysing the successes and challenges posed by the *Vision2030* reform program, it is important to acknowledge the general lack of limited information available.

## Vision2030: Ongoing challenges to implementation

The main challenge to the successful implementation of *Vision2030* remains the ambitious scope and timeline. The scope of change outlined is commendable, but the breadth of change required is too significant for the timeline specified (Grand and Wolff 2020, 21). Even in an authoritarian context, the type of change desired may take years to implement. In addition, not all of the changes requested can be forced via direct economic and political intervention. For example, cultural and religious attitudes towards women and young people may take generations to unravel. Additionally, tourism, as Covid-19 has shown, is fragile and dependent on international interest and reputation. Likewise, it may take time for new industries to develop the necessary human capital, skills, and resources needed to provide a confident alternative to oil. It would be a worthy task for the Saudi government to re-evaluate timeline objectives and feasibility. In the next section, I explore challenges faced by women and youth in navigating a post-rentier state.

## Vision2030: Addressing structural deficits

*Vision2030* has provided a strong foundation for change. I argue the most significant challenge for the *Vision2030* reforms is its failure to account for the long-term socio-economic challenges facing women and youth. Addressing discriminatory social structures towards disenfranchised groups is essential in facilitating a long-term pathway for economic change in Saudi Arabia. If Saudi Arabia wants to survive its transition out of oil, improving socio-economic conditions for two vulnerable groups is key. To highlight this point, I look at two different marginalised groups in Saudi Arabia—women and youth—in broad strokes, to show how the challenges these groups face are underappreciated and unresolved by *Vision2030*.

## Women

In this section, I explore the effects of Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* reforms on women. I celebrate the *Vision2030* reforms as an opportunity for potential change and analyse the

*Vision2030's* approach to empowering economic opportunity for women. However, I also highlight the continuing need for Saudi Arabia to address the economic disadvantages facing women in navigating a post-oil society.

First, the *Vision2030* provides the most significant acknowledgement of the need to address economic problems concerning women in Saudi Arabia's history. The *Vision2030* reforms acknowledges the need to include women in the workforce by stating, 'Saudi women are yet another great asset' (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016, 37). The report states its goal is to increase female participation in the workforce from 22 per cent to 30 per cent. The *Vision2030* reforms also acknowledge the need to provide women with more educational opportunities to support a better pathway for women's economic inclusion in the country (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016, 37). Research shows women across Saudi Arabia want to achieve improved occupation, educational, and socio-political participation in Saudi society (Alshammari 2021). A number of improvements have been achieved. For example, women's participation in the economy reached 30 per cent in 2020, up from 19.4 per cent in 2017 (Alshammari 2021). In 2015, for example, women's enrolment in tertiary institutions was higher than men, exemplifying Saudi women's desire for economic and educational inclusion and opportunity, and more tolerant attitudes (Liloia 2019).

However, Saudi Arabia's strict conservative religious attitudes continue to prevent positive attitudes to gendered institutional change (Al-Rasheed 2013, 31). In recent years, there has been a growth in underground resistance movements which continue to protest for gendered economic, institutional, legal, political, and social change in Saudi Arabia. Activists' efforts have led to some easing of restrictions (Graham-Harrison 2019). For example, in the late 2010s, laws surrounding participation in public life, driving, and guardianship have eased, following domestic and international criticism (Graham-Harrison 2019; Human Rights Watch 2019). Still, Saudi Arabia struggles with gender equality and resistance to change. In the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, Saudi Arabia ranked 147 out of 156 countries (World Economic Forum 2021). Saudi Arabia's gender equality is most evident in the economy, where in 2015, unemployment among women was 32.8 per cent, more than five times higher than men (Naseem and Dhruva 2017, 25). Likewise, the existing oil economy heavily discriminates against women, who struggle to find job opportunities in the male-dominated industry (Al-Rasheed 2021, 22). Thus, while improvements have been made to women's economic situation in recent years, there remains a significant need to address the social, structural, and institutional discrimination women face in Saudi Arabia navigating economic empowerment and opportunity.

Finally, although, the *Vision2030* reforms do an adequate job of acknowledging the need to improve women's economic situation, concerningly, no significant effort has been made to address the core structural issues facing women in contemporary Saudi life (Al-Qahtani et al. 2020, 1270; Al-Rasheed 2013, 1; Naseem and Dhruva 2017, 23). This is a significant problem in terms of achieving the full outcomes desired by the *Vision2030* reforms. The kingdom may desire to improve economic circumstances for women, but without addressing the embedded patriarchal system within Saudi Arabia's cultural, economic, political, and social life, little long-term positive change can be expected (Al-Rasheed 2013, 4; Topal 2019, 6). Failure to properly appreciate the structural barriers contributing to women's current economic experience will mean that problems of gender inequality persist (Topal 2019, 7). For the reforms to be truly successful in integrating women into the economy, more recognition of the problems at hand, in addition to efforts to curb them, need to be undertaken.

## Youth

In this section, I explore the effects of Saudi Arabia's *Vision2030* reforms on youth in Saudi Arabia. Addressing the lack of opportunities for youth is essentially consolidating economic

change for future generations. Specifically, I explore the economic and educational disadvantages facing young people in Saudi Arabia, who remain economically disempowered by an oil-dependent state.

Overall, the *Vision2030* reforms make little mention of youth, a concerning oversight given the huge proportion of youth in the country (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2016). Saudi Arabia is in the midst of a ‘youth bulge’, in which 50 per cent of the population is aged under 25 (Courington and Zuabi 2011, 142; Urdal 2006, 607). The failure of *Vision2030* to formally address the challenges facing young people in Saudi Arabia is a major issue.

Saudi Arabia’s education system has undergone an intense period of modernisation in recent decades. Firstly, the number of schools and enrolments has increased significantly, and Saudi Arabia’s curriculum has been updated to contain instructional content beyond religious education (Elyas and Badawood 2016, 70; Nevo 1998, 36). Secondly, across the educational system, Saudi Arabia has also made investments in its digital learning sector to create twenty-first century classrooms (Al Ohali et al. 2018, 1; Ezzeldin and Alsharidah 2021, 96). Finally, the educational attainment rates for girls and minorities has improved (Liloia 2019). In sum, developments in educational attainment and quality have improved for young people in recent years; however, significant deficits remain in the quality and structure of Saudi Arabian education.

Still, Saudi Arabia’s education system is not designed to meet the demands presented by the *Vision2030* reforms. Firstly, the continued gender segregation of classrooms in Saudi Arabian grade schools no longer reflects broader modern public life. Additionally, funding into education remains low, as does the quality of English instruction (Allmnakrah and Evers 2020, 22; Alrashidi and Phan 2015, 1269). Most concerning, the curriculum has not been adapted to suit the needs of a modern, diversified economy, with subjects being theoretical as opposed to practical (Allmnakrah and Evers 2020, 22; Alrashidi and Phan 2015, 1269). Additionally, the university sector faces significant obstacles with respect to gender inequality, digitalisation, and the overall quality and international reputation of its institutions (Alhazim 2003, 479; Hamdan 2005, 42).

In addition to ongoing problems facing youth in the education sector, youth in Saudi Arabia also face challenges associated with chronic unemployment. In 2021, youth unemployment was at 28 per cent, although still down overall from a record high of 35 per cent in 2005 (O’Neill 2022). The nature of Saudi Arabia’s oil rentier state has made it challenging for youth to find durable non-oil jobs. For youth without family and financial connections, carving a future is a significant challenge. Curbing the crisis of youth unemployment should be of a salient concern to the kingdom, because it was in such similar conditions the Arab Spring occurred—educated, unemployed young men and women, unable to fulfil their hopes and dreams (Arampatzi et al. 2018, 80; Campante and Chor 2012, 167). To prevent this fate, Saudi Arabia needs to make an effort to improve job opportunities in sectors beyond entertainment and tourism, into areas in which skilled graduates desire to work, such as engineering, medicine, and private businesses, which would be beneficial to the state and the people. Youth in Saudi Arabia face a significant number of challenges navigating the post-oil future. The *Vision2030* reforms depict a plan for Saudi Arabia that cannot currently be attained due to the lack of awareness surrounding the prevailing structural socio-economic issues faced by the kingdom’s most marginalised groups in society: women and youth. Failure to properly acknowledge and remedy the issues involved will prevent the full implementation of the *Vision2030* reforms by the deadline.

## Conclusion: Charting a future out of oil

This essay provided a critical review on the current progress of the *Vision2030* reforms, introduced by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2016. I began by placing the reforms in the broader history of Saudi Arabia as an oil rentier state, then moved on to breaking down the context, goals, successes, and immediate challenges to implementation. I then analysed the effects of the reforms on the educational and economic opportunities experienced by two key disadvantaged groups in Saudi Arabia's society—women and youth. I found while the *Vision2030* reforms have provided an apt and commendable foundation for change, more effort and time is required to address fundamental structural issues of Saudi Arabia's conservative, oil-driven society. To promote future change, the kingdom should encourage a more transparent approach to the implementation process and consider adopting a more realistic timeline. In sum, the *Vision2030* reforms provide a strong and positive foundation for economic change in Saudi Arabia, but they fall short of achieving their transformational goals for women and youth in the country.

## References

- Albassam, BA. 2015. 'Economic diversification in Saudi Arabia: Myth or reality?' *Resources Policy* 44: 112–117. [doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2015.02.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2015.02.005).
- Ali, A and AA Salameh. 2021. 'Role of travel and tourism sector in the attainment of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia: An analytical study', *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 19, no. 2: 276–290. [doi.org/10.21511/ppm.19\(2\).2021.23](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.19(2).2021.23).
- Ali Alasiri, A and V Mohammed 2022. 'Healthcare transformation in Saudi Arabia: An overview since the launch of Vision 2030'. *Health Services Insights* 15. [doi.org/10.1177/11786329221121214](https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329221121214).
- Alkhazim, MA. 2003. 'Higher education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges, solutions, and opportunities missed'. *Higher Education Policy* 16, no. 4: 479–486. [doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300035](https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300035).
- Allmnakrah, A and C Evers. 2020. 'The need for a fundamental shift in the Saudi education system: Implementing the Saudi Arabian economic vision 2030'. *Research in Education* 106, no. 1: 22–40. [doi.org/10.1177/0034523719851534](https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523719851534).
- Almalki, KA, MS Al Mosallam, TZ Aldaajani and AA Al-Namazi. 2022. 'Landforms characterization of Saudi Arabia: Towards a geomorphological map'. *International Journal of Applied Earth Observation and Geoinformation*, 112: 102945. [doi.org/10.1016/j.jag.2022.102945](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jag.2022.102945).
- Al Ohali, Y, A Al Suhaibani, N Palavitsinis, and A Koutoumanos. 2018. 'Digital transformation of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Deploying a country-wide learning management system for K-12 education', in *The 17th European conference on e-learning*: 1–2.
- Al-Qahtani, MMZ, TTY Alkhateeb, MAZ Abdalla, SAM Elsayed, EMM Ibrahim, and GSE Mawad. 2020. 'The economic empowerment of Saudi women in the light of Saudi Vision 2030'. *Asian Economic and Financial Review* 10, no. 11: 1269–1279. [doi.org/10.18488/journal.aefr.2020.1011.1269.1279](https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.aefr.2020.1011.1269.1279).
- Al-Rasheed, M. 2013. *A most masculine state: Gender, politics and religion in Saudi Arabia*. New York: Cambridge University Press. [doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139015363](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139015363).
- Al-Rasheed, M. 2021. *The son king: Reform and repression in Saudi Arabia*. Oxford; United States: Oxford University Press. [doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197558140.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197558140.001.0001).
- Alrashidi, O and H Phan. 2015. 'Education context and English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An overview'. *English Language Teaching* 8, no. 5: 33–44. [doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n5p33](https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n5p33).
- Alshammari, H. 2021. 'What Saudi Vision 2030 reform plan has achieved at the five-year mark'. *Arab News*, 27 April 2021. [www.arabnews.com/node/1849981/saudi-arabia](http://www.arabnews.com/node/1849981/saudi-arabia).
- Arampatzi, E, M Burger, E Ianchovichina, T Röhrich, and R Veenhoven. 2018. 'Unhappy development: Dissatisfaction with life on the eve of the Arab Spring'. *Review of Income and Wealth* 64: S80–S113. [doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12388](https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12388).



- Beblawi, H. 1987. 'The rentier state in the Arab World'. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 4: 383–398.
- Bowen, WH. 2014. 'The history of Saudi Arabia'. *Greenwood Press* [Preprint].
- Campante, FR and D Chor. 2012. 'Why was the Arab world poised for revolution? Schooling, economic opportunities, and the Arab Spring'. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26, no.2: 167–88. [doi.org/10.5040/9798400665318](https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400665318).
- Cheibub, JA, J Gandhi, and JR Vreeland. 2010. 'Democracy and dictatorship revisited'. *Public Choice* 143, no. 1: 67–101. [doi.org/10.1007/s11127-009-9491-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-009-9491-2).
- Courington, K and V Zuabi. 2011. 'Calls for reform: Challenges to Saudi Arabia's education system'. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 12, no. 2.
- De Bel-Air, F. 2014. 'Demography, migration and labour market in Saudi Arabia'. Gulf Research Center.
- Elyas, T and O Badawood. 2016. 'English language educational policy in Saudi Arabia post-21st century: Enacted curriculum, identity, and modernisation: A critical discourse analysis approach'. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* 3, no. 3: 70–81. [doi.org/10.18275/fire201603031093](https://doi.org/10.18275/fire201603031093).
- Ezzeldin, SMY and MAM Alsharidah. 2021. 'Teacher digital empowerment level in light of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia s Vision 2030: Reality and aspirations'. *Elementary Education Online* 20, no. 2: 96–96.
- Graham-Harrison, Emma. 2019. 'Saudi Arabia allows women to travel without male guardian's approval'. *The Guardian*, 2 August 2019. [www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/saudi-women-can-now-travel-without-a-male-guardian-reports-say](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/saudi-women-can-now-travel-without-a-male-guardian-reports-say).
- Grand, S and K Wolff. 2020. *Addressing Saudi Arabia 2030: A 2020 review*. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council.
- Haber, S and V Menaldo. 2011. 'Do natural resources fuel authoritarianism? A reappraisal of the resource curse', *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 1: 1–26. [doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000584](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000584).
- Habibi, N. 2019. 'Implementing Saudi Arabia's vision 2030: An interim balance sheet', *Middle East Brief* 127: 1–9.
- Hamdan, A. 2005. 'Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements'. *International Education Journal* 6, no. 1: 42–64.
- Hassounah, M, H Raheel, and M Alhefzi. 2020. 'Digital response during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia'. *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22, no. 9: e19338. [doi.org/10.2196/19338](https://doi.org/10.2196/19338).
- Herb, M. 2005. 'No representation without taxation? Rents, development, and democracy', *Comparative Politics*: 297–316. [doi.org/10.2307/20072891](https://doi.org/10.2307/20072891).
- Human Rights Watch. 2019. 'Saudi Arabia: 10 reasons why women flee'. 30 January 2019. [www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/30/saudi-arabia-10-reasons-why-women-flee](http://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/30/saudi-arabia-10-reasons-why-women-flee).
- Ibrahim, AO, FM Bashir, H Ojobo, YA Dodo, I Abdulmumin, and OI Christian. 2021. 'Opting for enriching Saudi Arabia's tourism attraction sites towards the realization of Vision 2030'. *Elementary Education Online* 20, no. 5: 4101–4101.
- Khan, M-H. 2016. 'Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030'. *Defence Journal* 19: 36–42.
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2016. 'Vision2030'. [www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rc0b5oy1/saudi\\_vision203.pdf](http://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rc0b5oy1/saudi_vision203.pdf).
- Lilioia, Alainna. 2019. 'Saudi Women are going to college, running for office and changing the conservative country'. *The Conversation*, 25 March 2019. [theconversation.com/saudi-women-are-going-to-college-running-for-office-and-changing-the-conservative-country-109938](http://theconversation.com/saudi-women-are-going-to-college-running-for-office-and-changing-the-conservative-country-109938).
- Magdelenat, M. 2021. 'Ambition and delusion: Assessing Mohammed bin Salman's "Saudi Vision 2030" five years on'. *Oxford Business Review*. [oxfordbusinessreview.org/ambition-and-delusion-assessing-mohammed-bin-salmans-saudi-vision-2030-five-years-on/](https://oxfordbusinessreview.org/ambition-and-delusion-assessing-mohammed-bin-salmans-saudi-vision-2030-five-years-on/).
- Mahdavy, H. 1970. 'The patterns and problems of economic development in rentier states: The case of Iran'. In *Studies in the economic history of the Middle East*, edited by MA Cook, 67. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mansour, H. 1973. 'The discovery of oil and its impact on the industrialisation of Saudi Arabia: A historical analysis'. PhD thesis, University of Arizona.
- Naseem, S and K Dhruva. 2017. 'Issues and challenges of Saudi female labor force and the role of Vision 2030'. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues* 7, no. 4: 23–27.

- Nehme, MG. 1994. 'Saudi Arabia 1950–80: Between nationalism and religion'. *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 4: 930–943. [doi.org/10.1080/00263209408701030](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209408701030).
- Nevo, J. 1998. 'Religion and national identity in Saudi Arabia'. *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 3: 34–53. [doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701231](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701231).
- O'Neill, A. 2022. 'Youth unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia in 2021'. *Statista*. [www.statista.com/statistics/812955/youth-unemployment-rate-in-saudi-arabia/#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia%20in%202021&text=The%20youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in,to%2028.84%20percent%20in%202021](https://www.statista.com/statistics/812955/youth-unemployment-rate-in-saudi-arabia/#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia%20in%202021&text=The%20youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in,to%2028.84%20percent%20in%202021).
- Oskarsson, S and E Ottosen. 2010. 'Does oil still hinder democracy?' *The Journal of Development Studies* 46, no. 6: 1067–1083. [doi.org/10.1080/00220380903151058](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380903151058).
- Ross, ML. 2001. 'Does oil hinder democracy?' *World Politics* 53, no. 3: 325–361. [doi.org/10.1353/wp.2001.0011](https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2001.0011).
- Ross, ML. 2018. 'The politics of the national resource curse'. *The Oxford handbook of the politics of development*, edited by Carol Lancaster and Nicolas van de Walle. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Statistical Analysis and Decision Support Centre. 2020. *Saudi youth in numbers*. Riyadh: Statistical Analysis and Decision Support Centre.
- Schneider, F. 2021. 'The stalling visions of the Gulf: The case of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030'. Washington Institute. [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/stalling-visions-gulf-case-saudi-arabias-vision-2030](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/stalling-visions-gulf-case-saudi-arabias-vision-2030).
- Topal, A. 2019. 'Economic reforms and women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia'. *Women's Studies International Forum* 76, no. 102253. [doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102253](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102253).
- UNICEF. 2022. 'Country profiles: Saudi Arabia'. [data.unicef.org/country/sau/](https://data.unicef.org/country/sau/).
- Urdal, H. 2006. 'A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence', *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3: 607–629. [doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2006.00416.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2006.00416.x).
- WorldAtlas. 2022. 'Maps of Saudi Arabia'. [www.worldatlas.com/maps/saudi-arabia](http://www.worldatlas.com/maps/saudi-arabia).
- World Economic Forum. 2021. *Global gender gap report 2021*. Switzerland: World Economic Forum.
- Wurm, I. 2008. *In doubt for the monarchy*. Frankfurt: PRIF Reports.