

THE EVOLUTION OF SAUDI STRATEGIC CULTURE - TOWARD A MORE MODERATE ISLAM

Muhammad Bilal Iftikhar Khan
University of Management and Technology
mbikhan14@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia's strategic importance stems from its exceptional geographical position, abundant natural resources, and vital involvement in international trade. Saudi Arabia is a key player in international politics, trade, and security because of its location at the intersection of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Its varied topography which includes deserts, mountains, and coastal regions contributes to its strategic significance by presenting business prospects for industries like mining, tourism, and agriculture. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has the largest proven oil reserves in the world, which gives it significant clout in the global oil market and affects energy costs and stability. Through programs like Vision 2030, the country is also broadening its economic base, concentrating on industries like tourism, technology, and renewable energy. Additionally, its advantageous location along important shipping lanes strengthens its significance in global trade.

This study explores how Saudi Arabia's foreign policy and strategic culture have changed over time, especially under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) leadership from 2015 to 2023. By employing a comprehensive methodology that encompasses culture, history, geography, trade, and natural resources, the aim of this article is to examine how the initiatives of MBS have influenced Saudi Arabia's strategic culture.

Keywords: Strategic culture, monarchy, Wahhabism, security, foreign policy, Islam

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a major influence on Saudi Arabia's strategic perspective and decision-making procedures. Religious convictions, past events, symbols, and myths are cultural components that have a profound impact on the nation's strategic culture. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy aims, which include advancing Islamic solidarity and

aiding Muslim communities across the globe, are shaped by its steadfast adherence to Islam and Wahhabi doctrine. Saudi Arabia's strategic thinking and actions are also influenced by historical events, such as previous alliances and conflicts, underscoring the significance of historical context in interpreting policy decisions. The notion of strategic culture offers a framework for examining the ways in which Saudi Arabia's deeply embedded norms, values, and beliefs impact its choices regarding its diplomatic and military policies. This theory explains how cultural elements shape national security tactics. Strategic culture theory provides important insights into Saudi Arabia's strategic mindset and policy development. It has evolved from its early concentration on military culture to a broader analysis of societal norms and historical events.

SAUDI STRATEGIC CULTURE

The theory of strategic culture was originally articulated by Jack Synders in 1977 and is used as the theoretical framework for this research. Strategic culture is defined as "the shared beliefs, values, and norms that shape how states perceive threats, define their national interests and make foreign policy decisions." Strategic culture is a powerful influence on state behavior even in the face of other influences such as material abilities and international restraints (Lantis, 2009). Strategic culture helps to explain state behavior which includes the use of force, cooperation, and rationale for conflict. Since it is grounded in deeply held values and beliefs, it is comparatively steady and unaffected by change. Saudi strategic culture is a result of the dynasty's historical experiences, values, ideology and oil wealth, which made the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a big international player today (Lacey, 2010). An investigation into Saudi strategic culture and its evolution under Prince Mohammad bin Salman makes it possible to understand the rationale behind the Kingdom's changing foreign and domestic policies.

Saudi Arabia's strategic culture is mostly shaped by the monarchy, which has shaped the country's foreign policy, internal governance and security views over time. Examining the monarchy's historical evolution, state-building function, and current impact is necessary to comprehend the monarchy's historical growth and continued relevance (Hicks, 2021). Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, a religious cleric, collaborated with Mohammad ibn Saud, a local prince, to form the Saudi dynasty in the eighteenth century. This partnership (1744–1818) laid the groundwork for the first Saudi Kingdom by uniting political and religious authority. The Saudi Kingdom prioritized Wahhabism and territorial expansion, resulting in a distinctive political and theological character that is still relevant today (Khalili, 2017). The dynasty's

Iftikhar Khan: Saudi Strategic Culture

influence persisted even after the first Saudi Kingdom collapsed in 1818. The Al Saud dynasty resumed its dominance in 1824, which also collapsed in 1891.

King Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rehman created the present Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. The establishment of the current absolute monarchy and regional unification were made possible in large part by King Abdul Aziz's leadership (Al Rasheed, 2010). The monarchy in Saudi Arabia is essential to the country's strategic culture in many ways. The Saudi state derives its legitimacy from the monarchy, which is based on its theological and historical ties to Wahhabism. This connection enhances the monarchy's prestige both at home and in the region by enabling it to assert guardianship of the holy sites of Mecca and Medina (Long & Maisel, 2010).

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is also heavily influenced by the monarchy, which prioritizes maintaining regional stability and fending off perceived threats, mostly from Iran and its allies. The strategic objectives of the monarchy are also reflected in the close relations that have been developed with the United States through security cooperation and oil deals (Long & Maisel, 2010). The monarchy continues to be essential to Saudi Arabia's strategic culture, notwithstanding continuous social and economic changes. Despite encountering obstacles like shifting generations and economic diversification, the Saudi government persistently positions itself as the protector of stability and the upholder of Islamic principles.

WAHHABISM

The history and foreign policy of Saudi Arabia are closely linked to the strict interpretation of Islam according to the Wahhabi doctrine (Lacey 2010). This 18th-century partnership between Emir Muhammad al-Saud and the cleric Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab has had a significant and enduring influence on the country. The rigid social structure and uncompromising commitment to Islamic precepts are central to Wahhabi philosophy. From the creation of the first Saudi state to the creation of the second Saudi state and the resurgence of the al-Saud dynasty, Wahhabi ideology was the main force behind each revival. Ikhwan who helped Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rehman were all religiously motivated people who were inspired by the philosophy of Mohammad bin Abdul Wahab (Mandaville, 2022).

Wahhabism also shaped Saudi Arabia's prevailing social and religious norms and its influence on public perception could restrict the scope of policy alternatives available to the leadership. Religious academics affiliated with Wahhabism wield considerable influence on Saudi culture. Policy choices, especially those about social and moral concerns, could be influenced by interpretations of religious

scriptures and subsequent declarations (Cordesman, 2009). The ruling Al Saud family's approach to government and their claim to power has been shaped by Wahhabism and this gives them religious legitimacy (Al Rasheed, 2010). In short, decisions on social standards, internal policies and the Kingdom's place in the Islamic world could all be influenced by the influence of Wahhabism.

Moreover, decisions on foreign relations, alliances, and regional security could all be influenced by Wahhabi ideals. For example, the Kingdom's position on several subjects could be influenced by its desire to uphold Islamic principles and to thwart perceived enemies of Islam. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has incorporated such considerations in two primary ways.

1. Wahhabi interpretations of Islam are aggressively promoted by the Saudi government both nationally and globally. This includes providing funds for the building of madrassas (religious schools) and mosques that promote this particular ideology (Cordesman, 2009). In Pakistan and in the Sunni world during the Afghan Jihad, thousands of Saudi-funded madrassas proliferated (Blanchard, 2007).
2. Keeping a wary posture toward nations that follow different religious interpretations. Saudi Arabia has always been cautious about relations with countries that do not follow the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. This may surface as diplomatic aloofness or even animosity towards nations such as Iran that have sizable Shia populations. The Saudi government considers itself to be the protector of Sunni Islam and frequently criticizes what it considers to be opposing views of the religion (Cordesman, 2009). The Wahhabi ideology has had an immense influence on the development of Saudi strategic culture. Al Saud even relied on Wahhabi ideology to gain power.

SYMBOLS AND VALUES

Saudi Arabia's strategic culture is greatly shaped by its symbols and ideals, which have an impact on the country's foreign policy, security policy and the image it has of itself in the world. To create a feeling of national identity and to bring the varied Saudi populace together, symbols and ideals are essential. This is especially crucial

Iftikhar Khan: Saudi Strategic Culture

in a nation where there may be internal strife and a complicated tribal past (Cordesman, 2009). Saudi Arabia's strategic vision is shaped by its conservative social and cultural standards, which influence its attitudes towards women's rights, religious freedom, and social stability. The Kingdom's approach to foreign policy and administration is still shaped by traditional beliefs, notwithstanding recent social advances.

The establishment of the First Saudi State in the 18th century by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and Mohammad ibn Saud laid the foundation for Saudi Arabia's unique strategic culture. This period emphasized tribal loyalty, solidarity, and self-reliance (Khalili, 2017). These values are rooted in the Arab Bedouin tradition and continue to resonate in contemporary Saudi society. Moreover, the Kingdom's role as the guardian of the two holiest places in Islam, Mecca and Medina, provides it with access to religious leadership and geopolitical importance. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy and security goals are informed by these considerations (Keay, 2018).

GEOGRAPHY AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia commands an important strategic location. Large stretches of desert, such as the world's biggest continuous sand desert, the Rub' al Khali (Empty Quarter), and the Nafud Desert to the north, are a feature of Saudi Arabia's topography. Throughout history, these hostile environments have acted as natural barriers, influencing trade routes, settlement patterns, and military tactics. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's coastline on the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea offers access to important sea lanes, such as the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb, which are used by many of the world's oil exports. The Kingdom's geopolitical prominence is further enhanced by its strategic location at the center of the Arabian Peninsula, which puts it at the intersection of regional rivalries and interests. (Cordmesman, 2009).

Saudi Arabia had little choice but to become more defensive and circumspect as competing nations such as the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire rose to prominence. To preserve its autonomy while negotiating challenging geopolitical conditions, the nation deliberately pitted these outside entities against one another (Cordesman, 2009). As a result of its unique geographic circumstances, Saudi Arabia has developed a strategic culture that combines aggressiveness, pragmatism, and a concentration on regime survival. The Kingdom's stated security imperatives and strategic objectives are reflected in its foreign policy priorities, which include its relationship with Western countries and its participation in regional crises.

Furthermore, the susceptibility of Saudi Arabia to external challenges like transnational terrorism and Iranian incursion underlines the influence of geography in determining the kingdom's security strategy and risk evaluation (Niksch, 2015).

SECURITY CONCERNS

Saudi Arabia's security concerns and strategic culture are firmly entrenched in its historical background. Tension and rivalry with neighboring states characterized the 18th-century founding of the first Saudi Kingdom. This made the Saudi rulers feel vulnerable and fostered a desire for self-reliance (Cordesman, 2009). Saudi Arabia's autonomy was restricted during the Ottoman era in the 19th century, and the area was vulnerable to outside attacks. The need to preserve internal stability and prevent outside interference was emphasized by this experience. (Al Rasheed, 2010)

The legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy was called into question by the emergence of Arab nationalism in the middle of the 20th century. In response, the monarchy solidified its internal support by highlighting its Islamic character and positioning itself as a protector of Islamic principles. (Lippman, 2004) Saudi Arabia sided with the United States during the Cold War to oppose the perceived Soviet expansionist threat. The 1979 Iranian Revolution raised worries about the growth of Shi'a Islam in the region and directly challenged the Saudi monarchy on ideological grounds (Al Rasheed, 2022).

OIL WEALTH AND ECONOMIC POWER

Saudi Arabia became a significant force in the world economy when its enormous oil reserves were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century. In addition to supplying economic power, oil riches have shaped relationships, impacted Saudi strategic thought, and allowed the monarchy to make its mark both locally and globally. According to Lacey (2010) discovery of oil has made a barren land that nobody would have noticed into a large regional and international player.

Saudi Arabia drastically changed in the 20th century by the discovery of enormous oil reserves. The Saudi monarchy was strengthened by the oil cash inflow, which allowed them to strengthen their military, expand their authority domestically, and project power both regionally and internationally (Cordesman, 2009).

PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Saudi Arabia's strategic culture is significantly influenced by historical, ideological, and economic considerations, but social dynamics and public opinion also play an

important role. Because of the Saudi government's strict control over the media and public conversation, it is challenging to predict popular opinion on delicate matters about foreign policy or security concerns. People are discouraged from freely expressing their thoughts because of the fear that if they openly criticize the government or its policies, they will have to face the consequences (Hertog, 2011)

THE RISE OF PRINCE MOHAMMAD BIN SALMAN

Born in 1985, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) serves as Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and the country's first deputy prime minister. He is the second of King Salman's ten sons and has advanced swiftly through the Saudi government's echelons (Hubbard, 2020). MBS's ascent to prominence started in 2015 when, at the age of 30, he was named Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense. His quick rise cemented him as the heir apparent and hinted at a possible change in Saudi leadership (Henderson, 2019). In 2017, he further solidified his hold on power when he ousted his cousin Mohammed bin Nayef from the role of Crown Prince (Hubbard, 2020). Multiple factors are at play behind his extraordinary rise. Undoubtedly, his close relationship with King Salman, his father, was most important. MBS is perceived as a modernizer that promotes social and economic changes. Concerns about Saudi Arabia's future under his leadership were raised by his assertive foreign policy, concentrated power consolidation, and human rights complaints (Jones, 2017). The strategic culture of Saudi Arabia has been influenced by Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) ascent to the position of Crown Prince in 2017. Whether these modifications are a more basic mutation or an evolution within the current framework is an ongoing debate among academics.

Scholars like Cordesman & Obaid (2020) believe that, despite being novel, MBS's plans are in line with certain fundamental aspects of Saudi strategic culture. They argue that Crown Prince MBS pursues regional alliances to strengthen regional security and counter challenges like Iran, even while maintaining an aggressive foreign policy. Stenslie (2018) believes that MBS's social reforms—like letting women drive—is a continuation of the years-long process of incremental social liberalization, notwithstanding its significance. Scholars like Henderson (2019), however, argue that there is a visible mutation in Saudi policy under crown prince MBS, in contrast to the previous administrations. MBS has demonstrated a readiness to adopt a more muscular foreign policy, possibly departing from the prior emphasis on cautious diplomacy. This includes the involvement in Yemen and a more confrontational stance toward Iran.

MBS AND SAUDI STRATEGIC CULTURE

The year 2017 saw Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) ascend to the position of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and this was followed by a major change in the country's foreign policy. MBS's strong foreign policy is shaped and influenced by global political trends and forces. Although MBS's strategy has specific regional and national objectives in mind, it also functions in the larger framework of a rapidly changing global environment. Comprehending this dynamic is crucial to appreciate the intricacies of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy and its possible ramifications for both the region and the global arena (Henderson, 2020). As the US-China cold war is intensifying and the dawn of multi-polarity is visible, which is changing the balance of power in the world, MBS is carefully navigating to forge alliances with both powers to maintain his Kingdom's standing in this shifting environment (Zweri & Cengiz, 2024). It could be said that Saudi Arabia uses this strong foreign policy to acquire leverage and increase its negotiating power when dealing with both giants.

RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

A notable shift is observable in U.S.-Saudi relations under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Gause, 2023). The relationship between U.S. and Saudi Arabia was established in 1945 after the Quincy pact and the relationship grew stronger during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War signaled a significant shift in US foreign policy priorities away from a single concern with the Soviet Union and toward new global threats. The rise of radical Islamist groups as major security threats also forced a re-evaluation of US strategies, with a focus on counter-terrorism measures and the necessity of building security alliances in various regions. This re-evaluation was further influenced by major events like the Arab Spring and the Iran Nuclear Deal, which changed the Middle East's dynamics while also influencing US priorities and approaches in the region (Gause, 2023).

The Arab Spring, the Iran Nuclear Deal, the Biden administration's human rights policies, and its criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) are all major factors contributing to Saudi Arabia's sense of a shift in American objectives. Saudi Arabia is pursuing economic diversification and a more independent regional position as a result of this perceived shift, which has created a need for new relationships (Gause, 2023). Even though the U.S. dollar continues to dominate worldwide oil transactions, Saudi Arabia is becoming more open to accepting renminbi (RMB) and other international currencies in addition to the U.S. dollar for oil sales. This is an example of the country's economic diversification policy (Al Shareef, 2023). Saudi Arabia and Russia, due to their significant share of the world's

Iftikhar Khan: Saudi Strategic Culture

oil output, enjoy considerable influence over oil prices as leaders of OPEC+. They are coordinating policies which are against U.S. interests.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia under crown prince MBS has notably joined the BRICS alliance, which is led by China and Russia, and is thought of as a rival to the U.S. (Crisis Group, 2023). In addition to that, cautious moves by the Kingdom to deepen relations with Iran also point to a desire for more regional autonomy (Crisis Group, 2023). Historically, a key component of Saudi strategic culture has been reliance on the U.S. However, this dependence has clearly changed and evolved under the direction of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It is unclear whether or not this change is permanent or simply a reaction to the Biden administration's human rights policies. Future events and geopolitical dynamics may determine the entire scope and permanence of this mutation, which are unknown at this time (Cerioli, 2023).

RELATIONS WITH IRAN

There have always been tensions in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, due to ideological and geopolitical disagreements. This has friction escalated under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). During this period, several incidents have occurred that worsened the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Significant upheaval occurred in Bahrain, a Sunni-ruled monarchy with a Shiite majority, after the 2011 Arab Spring demonstrations. At the invitation of the Bahraini government, Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority nation, militarily intervened out of fear that the protests would expand and possibly result in a Shiite-led administration (Barany, 2013). Iran was accused of promoting and supporting the resistance in Bahrain, escalating tensions between the regional powers (Mabon, 2012).

An unexpected turn of events in 2023 saw a move in the direction of better relations between the two countries. China played a vital role in facilitating this renewed cooperation, which was marked by several significant events including a series of covert meetings conducted in Beijing (Crisis Group, 2023). The Joint Trilateral Statement, which was signed in March 2023 and signaled the resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, was the result of these efforts (Crisis Group, 2023). Saudi Arabia's strategic culture, which has historically been defined by Sunni leadership and regional domination, could change as a result of the country's warm relations with Iran. It might point to a change in direction toward a more realistic and cooperative foreign policy that emphasizes economic growth and regional stability.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has led major efforts to diversify the economy and reduce the kingdom's reliance on oil. His main initiative, Vision 2030, provides a detailed plan for developing non-oil industries like manufacturing, tourism, and technology. This change represents a possible metamorphosis in Saudi strategic culture, which has always been defined by worries about regional security and oil-dependent economic determinism (Kosárová, 2020).

DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has instituted several social reforms that represent a dramatic break from the nation's long-standing conservative standards. A shift towards a more dynamic and inclusive society is shown by the lifting of the ban on women driving, the promotion of entertainment and cultural events, and the relaxation of laws governing gender segregation. By encouraging more public involvement in determining strategic priorities and including a wider range of viewpoints in decision-making processes, this move towards openness has the potential to transform Saudi strategic culture (Bsheer, 2018). A freer and more open social milieu may foster a more sophisticated comprehension of national interests and a more cooperative method of developing strategic answers to local, national, and international problems.

CONCLUSION

MBS is trying to present himself as a reformer by promoting the narrative of "moderate Islam" against the ultra-conservative narratives associated with Wahhabism. He has gone so far as to publicly denounce the rigid adherence to Wahhabi doctrines, suggesting interpretations of Islamic texts must evolve with contemporary societal needs. For instance, he indicated that religious decisions must be made considering the "time, place, and mindset" of today, which was a challenge to the absolute authority of ancient religious figures and texts. This is one part of a greater effort to weaken the influence of the deeply entrenched clerical class in Saudi Arabian society (Lacroix,2019). While MBS's policies veer off towards a more modern understanding of Islam, in reality they are first and foremost a means to strengthen his political power and leverage over the religious establishment. Here lies a tension within Saudi Arabia's strategic culture: the religious monarchy versus the political ambitions of the monarchy (Shafi,2021).

REFERENCES

- Al-Hamadi, R. S. A. (2021). *The Changing Regional Order: The Case of Gulf Cooperation Council and the Blockade of Qatar in 2017* (Master's thesis). Qatar University, Doha
- Al-Rasheed, M. (2010). *A history of Saudi Arabia* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Al-shareef, S. (2023). The Gulf's shifting geoeconomy and China's structural power: From the petrodollar to the petroyuan? *Competition & Change*, 27(2), 380-401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10245294221095222>
- Bakir, A. (2018, May 1). Turkey's influence in Yemen. Turkey's Influence in Yemen. *TRT News*. <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/turkey-s-influence-in-yemen-17126>
- Barany, Z. (2013). Unrest and state response in Arab monarchies. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 24(2), 5-38.
- BBC News. (2016, January 2, 2016). Saudi Arabia executes Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-59075486>
- Beblawi, H., & Luciani, G. (1987). *The rentier state*. New York: Routledge.
- Blanchard, C. M. (2007). Islamic religious schools, madrasas: Background. In C. D. Malbouisson (Ed.), *Focus on Islamic Issues* (pp. 61-71). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Blanchard, C. M. (2010). *Saudi Arabia: background and US relations*. Darby, PA: Diane Publishing.
- Bsheer, R. (2018, May 21). How Mohammed bin Salman Has Transformed Saudi Arabia. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-mohammed-bin-salman-has-transformed-saudi-arabia/>
- Cerioli, L. (2023). Saudi Arabian strategy reassessment since 2003: The emergence of a regional leadership via Neoclassical Realist lenses. *International Area Studies Review*, 26(3), 287-303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22338659231180059>
- Cordesman, A. H. (2009). *Saudi Arabia: National security in a troubled region*. New York : Bloomsbury Publishing

- Cordesman, A. H., & Obaid, N. (2020). Saudi military forces and development. Nawaf Obaid Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.mafhoum.com/press7/197P82.pdf>.
- Darwich, M. (2018). The Saudi intervention in Yemen: Struggling for status. *Insight Turkey*, 20(2), 125-142.
- Gause III, F. G. (2023). The Kingdom and the Power: How to Salvage the US-Saudi Relationship. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/gregory-gause-kingdom-and-power-us-saudi-relationship>
- Ulrichsen, K. C. (2024). *Pursuit of Survival within the GCC. The Making of Contemporary Kuwait: Identity, Politics, and its Survival Strategy*.
- Zweiri, M., & Cengiz, S. (Eds.). (2024). *The Making of Contemporary Kuwait: Identity, Politics, and Its Survival Strategy*. Taylor & Francis.
- Henderson, A. (2017, April 21). Mohammed bin Salman: The meteoric rise of a Saudi prince. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cg56ennmpyjt>
- Henderson, A. (2020, December 10). Mohammed bin Salman and the future of Saudi Arabia. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cg56ennmpyjt>
- Henderson, R. D. (2019). *An unlikely alliance: Saudi Arabia and the United States from 1947 to the present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hertog, S. A. (2011). *Princes, merchants, and mamluks in Mamluk Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hicks, G. (2021). *Saudi Arabia's Strategic Culture: to What Extent Can Strategic Culture Help Us Understand the KSA's Strategic Decision-Making and Behaviour with Regard to Its Security Policy?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter (United Kingdom)).
- Hope, B., & Scheck, J. (2020). *Blood and Oil: Mohammed bin Salman's Ruthless Quest for Global Power*. London : Hachette UK.
- Hubbard, B. (2020). *MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed Bin Salman*. New York: Crown.
- International Crisis Group. (2023, March 17). *The Impact of the Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement on Middle East Conflicts*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran-saudi-arabia/impact-saudi-iranian>

Iftikhar Khan: Saudi Strategic Culture

- Jacobs, A. (2023, September 14). Understanding Saudi Arabia's Recalibrated Foreign Policy. *Crisis Group*. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/saudi-arabia/understanding-saudi-arabias>
- Jones, R. (2017). *Saudi Arabia in the 21st century: Reckoning and reform*. Hurst & Company.
- al-Rasheed, R. (2022). *The Iran–Saudi Arabia rivalry: Rekindling of Shia loyalty and Sunni fears in Bahrain*. In *Saudi Arabia and Iran* (pp. 74-95). Manchester University Press.
- Key, S. (2018). *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Khalili, R. (2017). Saudi Arabia's Strategic Culture. *The Quarterly Journal of Strategic Studies*, 10(1), 71-83.
- Kosárová, D. (2020, February). Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. In *Security Forum* (pp. 124-134).
- Lacey, R. (2010). *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. Viking.
- Lacroix, S. (2011). *Saudi Arabia in the new Middle East: From Petrostate to Kingdom in Crisis*. Columbia University Press.
- Lantis, J. S. (2009). *Strategic culture: From Clausewitz to constructivism*. In J. S. Lantis (Ed.), *Strategic culture and weapons of mass destruction: Culturally based insights into comparative national security policymaking* (pp. 33-52). Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Lippman, T. W. (2004). *Inside the mirage: America's fragile partnership with Saudi Arabia*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Long, D. E., & Maisel, S. (2010). *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Mabon, S. (2012). The Battle for Bahrain: Iranian-Saudi Rivalry. *Middle East Policy*, 19(2), 84.
- Mandaville, P. (2022). Wahhabism and the World. In P. Mandaville (Ed.), *Wahhabism and the World* (pp. 1-14). Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0001