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ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department Of Political Science and
Public Administration

**THE CASE OF SAUDI ARABIA UNDER
MOHAMMED BIN SELMAN'S LEADERSHIP
OF THE THESIS**

Master Thesis

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Supervisor
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Annamaria CSISZER

Istanbul – 2025

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the structural transformation the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is witnessing during the rule of Prince Mohammed bin Salman in economic, social, and political perspectives related to Saudi Vision 2030. In this regard, the study applied the theory of structural transformations to analyze such transformations and then made some comparisons between those transformations that took place in the Kingdom and others in the UAE and Qatar. The study adopted a qualitative analysis approach based on secondary sources, including official speeches, reports from international organizations, previous studies, and academic articles.

The findings revealed that the Kingdom is striving with effort to decrease its dependence on oil by developing new sectors like tourism, technology, and renewable energy; projects such as NEOM and Qiddiya are the most prominent examples of achieving economic diversification. On the social level, the study showed major reforms that empowered women and improved education and, despite some challenges with resistance from conservative groups, contributed to an enhancement of social and educational rights. On the level of political reforms, the enhancement of transparency and fighting against corruption contributes to the stability of a political system the Kingdom seeks. However, the Kingdom faces several challenges, such as the resistance of some traditional groups to change in the social and political spheres.

The study concluded that these structural transformations represent essential steps towards achieving Saudi Vision 2030, with significant progress towards building a more diverse and sustainable society and economy.

Keywords: Saudi Vision 2030, structural transformations, economic diversification, social reforms, political reforms, sustainable development.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Suudi Arabistan Krallığı'nın Prens Muhammed bin Selman döneminde tanık olduğu yapısal dönüşümü, Suudi Vizyonu 2030 ile bağlantılı olarak ekonomik, sosyal ve siyasi açılardan analiz etmektir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, söz konusu dönüşümleri analiz etmek için yapısal dönüşümler teorisini uygulamış ve ardından Krallık'ta gerçekleşen dönüşümler ile BAE ve Katar'da gerçekleşen dönüşümler arasında bazı karşılaştırmalar yapmıştır. Çalışmada resmi konuşmalar, uluslararası kuruluşların raporları, önceki çalışmalar ve akademik makaleler gibi ikincil kaynaklara dayanan nitel bir analiz yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir.

Bulgular, Krallığın turizm, teknoloji ve yenilenebilir enerji gibi yeni sektörler geliştirerek petrole olan bağımlılığını azaltmak için çaba sarf ettiğini ortaya koymuştur; NEOM ve Qiddiya gibi projeler ekonomik çeşitliliğin sağlanmasının en önemli örnekleridir. Sosyal düzeyde, çalışma, kadınları güçlendiren ve eğitimi iyileştiren önemli reformlar gösterdi ve muhafazakar grupların direnişiyle karşılaşılan bazı zorluklara rağmen, sosyal ve eğitim haklarının geliştirilmesine katkıda bulundu. Siyasi reformlar düzeyinde, şeffaflığın artırılması ve yolsuzlukla mücadele, Krallığın aradığı siyasi sistemin istikrarına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ancak Krallık, bazı geleneksel grupların sosyal ve siyasi alanlarda değişime direnmesi gibi çeşitli zorluklarla karşı karşıyadır.

Çalışma, bu yapısal dönüşümlerin, daha çeşitli ve sürdürülebilir bir toplum ve ekonomi inşa etme yolunda önemli ilerlemelerle birlikte Suudi Vizyonu 2030'a ulaşma yolunda temel adımları temsil ettiği sonucuna varmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suudi Vizyonu 2030, yapısal dönüşümler, ekonomik çeşitlendirme, sosyal reformlar, siyasi reformlar, sürdürülebilir kalkınma.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	i
ÖZET	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
INTRODUCTION	1

CHAPTER ONE HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF SAUDI ARABIA

1.1. Formation and Unification of the Saudi Arabia Kingdom.....	9
1.2. Post-Unification Developments.....	11
1.3. Political and Religious Foundations.....	11
1.4. Economic Growth and Challenges.....	13
1.5. Strategic Geopolitical Position.....	15
1.6. Influence in Regional and Global Affairs.....	16
1.7. The Political System in Saudi Arabia.....	18

CHAPTER TWO ECONOMY: STRUCTURE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

2.1. Economic Challenges and Vulnerabilities.....	22
2.2. A Paradigm Shift in Saudi Economic.....	22
2.3. Mechanisms Of Saudi Economic.....	23
2.4. Role in Diversifying the Economy and Economic Reforms.....	24
2.5. Energy Markets of Saudi Arabia.....	27
2.6. Social Change Theory.....	30
2.7. Factors Influencing Social Change.....	33

CHAPTER THREE SAUDI ARABIA: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

3.1. Governance and Political Dynamics.....	38
3.2. Social Reforms and Societal Impact.....	40
3.3. Domestic And International Relations.....	42

CHAPTER FOUR ADVANCEMENTS AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SAUDI CONTEXT

4.1. Advancements And Digital Transformation.....	46
4.1.1. National Transformation Program (NTP).....	46
4.1.2. Smart Cities and NEOM.....	47
4.1.3. Digital Economy and Job Creation.....	47

4.1.4. Cybersecurity and Data Protection	48
4.1.5. Renewable Energy Initiatives.....	48
4.1.6. Future Technologies and Innovations	49
4.1.7. Science and Technology Policies	50
4.1.8. Education and Workforce Development	51
4.2. Structural Transformation in the Saudi Context	52
4.2.1. Structural Transformation Theory Definition	52
4.2.2. The Importance of Structural Transformation Theory.....	53
4.2.3. Dimensions of Structural Transformation Theory	54

**CHAPTER FIVE
METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

5.1. Methods of analysis	57
5.2. Analysis And Results	57
5.2.1. Content analysis	58
5.2.2. Thematic analysis within the framework of structural transformation theory	62
5.2.3. Comparative analysis	71
DISCUSSION	75
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	80
REFERENCES.....	82

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Documentary Analysis: Studying A Collection of Documents	49
Table 2. Saudi Arabia's Economic Transformation	59
Table 3. Social Transformations Analysis Table	61
Table 4. Economic Transformation	62
Table 5. Comparative Economic Transformation	74
Table 6. Comparative Social Transformation	77
Table 7. Comparative political Transformation	79



INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has undergone far-reaching transformations that have reshaped the nation's identity internally and externally. At the forefront of these reforms is Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose vision and ambitions have come to characterize the transformational program known as "Vision 2030." This ambitious initiative goes beyond traditional economic policy, being a structural reform movement that aims to diversify the Kingdom's sources of income, encourage sustainable development, and transform the country's social and political institutions in line with today's world goals. This study aims to examine the structural transformation in Saudi Arabia and the changes that have occurred and the developments under the rule of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The choice of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as the focus of this study is deliberate and significant. Bin Salman represents a new breed of leadership, not only in Saudi Arabia but also across the wider Middle East region. As one of the region's youngest leaders, his leadership is consistent with the global trend of younger leaders assuming positions of power to lead revolutionary reforms. Individuals of his generation are the embodiment of creativity and ambition, often unencumbered by conventional wisdom and willing to challenge established norms in order to advance bold and progressive agendas. His leadership is therefore particularly relevant in the context of thinking about the structural changes taking place in Saudi Arabia. His leadership reflects a growing recognition that next-generation leaders can bring fresh thinking and bold decisions to address the pressing challenges of the 21st century.

As the case study of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has shown, this study highlights the enormous impact of leadership on structural transformation. His leadership has led to reforms that were previously unimaginable in Saudi Arabia. For example, the relaxation of social controls, the promotion of women's rights, and the development of the cultural and entertainment industry have dramatically changed the country's social framework. On the political front, his emphasis on openness, anti-corruption campaigns, and bureaucratic reforms have begun the process of restoring

trust in government institutions, thereby aligning them with global standards of governance. The reason Mohammed bin Salman was chosen as the subject of this analysis is the extent of his influence. Vision 2030 is not just a policy document, but a personal manifesto for transformation that has been vigorously promoted by the Crown Prince. His leadership style, a mix of pragmatism and ambition, has attracted international attention, placing Saudi Arabia at the forefront of regional and international reforms.

The Kingdom's alignment with global powers, investment in visionary schemes such as NEOM, and bids to host international events such as Formula 1 and cultural festivals all point to a new Saudi narrative, one that is forward-thinking and globally oriented. In short, Mohammed bin Salman's leadership signals a dramatic shift toward modernization and reform in Saudi Arabia. His youth, vision, and determination to transform the Kingdom's identity have made him a central figure in the global discourse on revolutionary leadership. This study looks at his leadership as representative of global trends in terms of young leaders leading change, as well as the specific challenges and opportunities of leading a country in the midst of profound transformation. His leadership not only shapes the future of Saudi Arabia, but also shows how visionary leadership can address issues of structural change in the face of a rapidly evolving global order.

Historically, the Kingdom has relied heavily on oil as the main source of income, which has made its economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. In the context of growing economic challenges and external pressures on fossil fuel-dependent countries, comprehensive reforms aimed at reducing dependence on oil and creating a diversified economy capable of succeeding in the global market have been well in order. In this context, Saudi Vision 2030 is a bold initiative to achieve an ambitious economic transformation into a sustainable one. This vision focuses on the development of new sectors such as renewable energy, technology, tourism, and industry, while raising the status of the Kingdom as a strong economic and regional power.

However, the conceptual model envisioned goes beyond the mere economics to include social and political aspects as well. Regarding social aspects, the Kingdom has instituted meaningful reforms aimed at increasing women's empowerment, promoting their rights, expanding their participation in the labor force, and promoting improvement in the quality of education as well as cultural diversity. The above social reforms represent a marked change in the fabric of Saudi society, which has shown greater willingness to embrace global changes. On the political level, the kingdom has undergone a set of administrative adjustments aimed at enhancing transparency, fighting corruption, and improving the effectiveness of government through restructuring government agencies and developing their operating mechanisms.

The changes currently taking place in Saudi Arabia closely resonate with the tenets of "structural transformation theory," which underlines the need to reorganize the economy, society, and political systems as a prerequisite to achieving all-inclusive and sustainable development. This theoretical lens is appropriate for the study of ongoing transformations taking place in Saudi Arabia, since it emphasizes the need to synchronize all dimensions for sustainable change.

Concurrently, these changes should not be discussed in isolation from the regional perspective. Other Gulf states, such as the UAE and Qatar, have provided the most interesting instances of economic diversification and social development, thus enabling comparisons that will help deepen the understanding of the uniqueness of the Saudi experience as well as the differences and similarities with those other experiences. For example, the UAE has been able to establish a diversified economy based on industries like tourism, aviation, and technology. On its part, Qatar has chosen to develop infrastructure and to invest energy revenues in both local and international development projects.

Therefore, this study is of importance because it attempts to explore and analyze the structural changes that have taken place in Saudi Arabia from a multi-perspective approach. The analysis does not simply look at the domestic reforms; it rather places these reforms in a comparative context with other experiences across the Gulf region. This research seeks to provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the

contemporary changes taking place in the Kingdom under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman, with a particular focus on the economic, social, and political aspects through the descriptive analytical method that relies on the analysis of official discourses, previous research studies, and international reports.

This research aims not only to shed light on the Kingdom's achievements in meeting the goals of Vision 2030 but also to raise questions about the challenges it has faced along its path to structural transformation. How can these reforms help achieve inclusive and sustainable development? What lessons can be learned from the experience of other Gulf countries that can be applied to avoid obstacles and further improve the reform effort? These questions lie at the heart of grasping the nature of current changes and their implications for the future of the Kingdom.

In a nutshell, this research aims to understand the complexity of transformation in Saudi Arabia through an in-depth analysis of various dimensions of structural change, with special focus on Saudi Vision 2030 and the experience of the Saudi leadership in this respect. This research initiative, therefore, is designed to provide strong and holistic views on the pragmatic application of the theories of structural transformation to enrich the understanding of the Saudi experience within its local, regional, and international contexts.

Research Problem

While Saudi Arabia undergoes radical transformations under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman, many challenges and questions have arisen regarding how effective these reforms are and to what extent they achieve the SDGs. Even though impressive efforts have been made under Saudi Vision 2030, there is still a dire need to understand how these structural transformations impact the economic, social, and political aspects and their strengths and weaknesses.

On the other hand, the Kingdom is similar to other Gulf countries like the UAE and Qatar, which have also implemented development programs for diversifying the economy and achieving social and political development. But questions arise as to how different the Saudi Arabian experience will be from those countries and how the

Kingdom will benefit from the successes and challenges of other countries in formulating its development policies.

Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

To what extent have the structural transformations in Saudi Arabia altered the economy, society, and politics?

How far can these transformations be understood in terms of the theory of structural transformation?

What are the similarities and differences between the Saudi experience and the experiences of UAE and Qatar?

What are the challenges facing the Kingdom to achieve the goals of Saudi Vision 2030?

Research Objectives

This research paper is going to study the structural transformation in Saudi Arabia in light of Vision 2030 through the analysis of structural changes in major economic projects such as NEOM, social reforms like women's empowerment and education, and political developments related to fighting corruption and enhancing the efficiency of institutions. It also aims to apply the theory of structural transformation to understand the relationship between these dimensions and their impact on achieving comprehensive development.

The research also encompasses the comparison of the Saudi Arabian experience with the UAE and Qatar experiences for the purpose of identifying similarities and differences that may exist, and the challenges Saudi Arabia faces in its development path. The ultimate goal of the research is to present practical recommendations that support the realization of Vision 2030 and ensure the sustainability of structural transformation at the economic, social, and political levels.

Significance of the Research

The importance of this research is that it sheds light on the structural transformations taking place in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030, led by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as a comprehensive development model aimed at restructuring the economy, society, and politics. This research contributes to academia by applying the theory of structural transformation to analyze these changes, thereby enhancing scientific understanding of the processes of transformation in the Gulf context. It also presents an empirical analysis of initiatives and policies to be pursued in diversifying the economy, empowering women, and enhancing governance, assessing the success of the pursued reforms, and determining the challenges and opportunities associated with them.

Additionally, this research provides an analytical comparison between Saudi Arabia and its Gulf counterparts, the UAE, and Qatar, to learn from their experiences. It is a scientific and practical tool to support decision-makers and researchers in understanding the nature of these transformations and the impact they have on achieving sustainable development in the Kingdom and region.

The Method Of The Research

This research will, therefore, rely on qualitative data analysis obtained from reliable and various secondary sources. Such an approach allows a profound analysis of the structural reforms taking place in Saudi Arabia in light of the economic, social, and political dimensions of the changes. A qualitative approach has been adopted as this study places significant emphasis on comprehending the complex dynamics associated with these reforms and on perceiving how they are framed and implemented within Saudi Vision 2030.

Qualitative approaches provide comprehensive insight into the context in which structural transformation is happening within the Kingdom, beyond mere numbers and statistics to in-depth texts, official speeches, and academic documents. This approach

allows flexibility in studying the interaction between economic, social, and political policies and their impacts on society and the economy. It also allows focusing on the different contexts that influenced the success or challenges of the reforms.

5.2. Data Collection The research is based on secondary data, which comprises official speeches, academic works, press articles, and reports issued by international organizations.

Official discourses: the speeches of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and high-ranking Saudi officials, the focus is on a close reading of the speeches themselves for an understanding of the strategic vision for the reforms. They will be analyzed to examine in detail the key messages and stated goals that Saudi leadership is focusing on.

Academic studies and journal articles: For setting the theoretical framework for the transformation context, academic studies have been employed, while journal articles allow one to keep track of continuing developments in detail and the many views expressed on Saudi Vision 2030.

Official reports and reports of international organizations: These documents enhance the understanding of policies and initiatives in greater detail, showing their implications within a country and internationally.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF SAUDI ARABIA

1.1. Formation and Unification of the Saudi Arabia Kingdom

In the early 1900s, when there were a lot of problems between tribes and between different parts of the world, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud stepped up as a creative leader and led the difficult process of bringing together different parts of the world into what we now call Saudi Arabia.

There is a kingdom in Saudi Arabia, which means that the king, the crown prince, and key government bodies are very important. Tribal ties and the way things work in the region have a big impact on political decisions, which shows how government systems have changed over time. Concerns about domestic security, including problems with terrorism and nationalism, are also talked about in this chapter. The chapter also looks at the kingdom's foreign policy plans toward Iran, the Gulf States, and Western partners.

As we start to look into Mohammed bin Salman's leadership, this historical and global background will help us find our way through the complicated and nuanced parts of Saudi Arabia's past. It is important to understand the past in order to understand the paradoxes and changes that are happening in the country now that the Crown Prince is in charge. The goal of this study is to get through all of these complicated issues and give an in-depth look that goes beyond the surface, putting light on the huge changes Saudi Arabia has gone through and is still going through. (Abukhalil, 2011).

Abdulaziz's plan to bring the tribes together was based on a deep understanding of how tribes work and a level of political skill that was essential for building partnerships. Starting with taking back Riyadh in 1902, he carefully grew his territory by managing the complex clan networks that controlled the Arabian Peninsula (Nour Mohammadi, & Seifi, 2019).

The most important step in this effort to unite the country was Abdulaziz's takeover of the Hejaz region in 1924. This was a turning point that put the holy towns of Mecca and Medina under his control. This not only strengthened his position as leader, but it also gave him control over some of Islam's greatest places, which raised the religious and political status of the country.

Setting up an absolute dynasty became the main idea behind the government. Abdulaziz became King when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was officially recognized in 1932. This change was the end of an amazing process of unity that went beyond clan and regional differences and laid the groundwork for the new kingdom.(Nour Mohammadi, & Seifi, 2019).

After it was united, Saudi Arabia went through a huge change when it found and developed huge oil supplies. This changed the country's economy and put it on the world stage. This newfound wealth, along with strategic global factors, had a big impact on the kingdom's path, shaping its policies and relationships over the next few decades.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, the oil ban of 1973, and the Gulf Wars were all important events in history that made it clear how complicated Saudi Arabia's political situation is. These events not only showed how strong the kingdom was, but they also showed how its role in shaping the politics of the area is changing. (Ferguson, 2023).

This history is woven together with the lasting impact of Wahhabism, a strict interpretation of Islam that has had a major impact on Saudi Arabia's social and religious policies. The careful balance of the government system, which is deeply rooted in the royal family, has changed over time to represent how the kingdom has dealt with problems both inside and outside the country. (Helms, 2020).

The oil boom caused an unprecedented level of success, but it also revealed weaknesses that have led to problems we face today. As a result of these problems, Saudi Arabia made the deliberate choice to broaden its economy and become less reliant on oil income. This was done to ensure long-term growth and resiliency in a world that is changing quickly (Ferguson, 2023).

Basically, the creation and union of Saudi Arabia are the result of many strategic partnerships, global factors, and leaders with a clear vision. Abdulaziz Ibn Saud's work as the founder of a single state sets the stage for how future leaders, like Mohammed bin Salman, will handle the challenges of government, regional dynamics, and global interactions.

1.2. Post-Unification Developments

Saudi Arabia's time after union is a good example of a time when things changed a lot in terms of economy, politics, and society. The wise guidance of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud led to the creation of the Kingdom. After that, Saudi Arabia's path changed drastically, having effects on both the region and the world.

The finding and growth of large oil supplies were key events in this period of change, which completely changed the kingdom's social and economic situation. Because these supplies are so important strategically, they put Saudi Arabia at the top of the global energy market. This led to unimaginable economic growth and wealth. This newfound wealth made it possible for the kingdom to take on big development projects and become a major player on the world stage.

The kingdom's answers to these problems showed how diplomatically smart and strategically ahead of the curve it is. They also strengthened its role as a calming force in a region that is becoming more unstable. (Ferguson, 2023). The oil money brought in a lot of money, which pushed the country forward and made it clear that the economy needed to be more diverse. Comprehensive economic changes were made when it became clear that relying too much on oil income could threaten long-term security. As a result of measures like Vision 2030, the government is trying to build a more diverse economy, encourage new ideas, and make the economy less vulnerable to changes in the price of oil.

In the bigger picture of history, the time after union saw how Saudi Arabia's internal and foreign issues interacted in complex ways. The kingdom's involvement in regional wars, diplomacy efforts, and strategic partnerships showed how serious it was about keeping the peace and protecting its own national interests.

Along with these changes in the economy and politics, there were also changes in culture and society. It was tried to show that Saudi Arabia was modern and active as it became more important on the world stage. Efforts to improve education, give women more power, and encourage cultural understanding showed a more complex way of moving society forward while still upholding established values. (Braibanti, 2019).

After the country was united, it became very complicated, and each new Saudi leader had to find a way to balance custom and progress. The kingdom's approach was characterized by carefully balancing policies that protected cultural identity with a focus on global changes. This showed a dedication to long-term growth and international cooperation.

In sum, what has happened in Saudi Arabia since it became one country is a dynamic and complex growth. The kingdom's current socio-economic and geopolitical situation is based on the strategic decisions made during this time. These decisions made it possible for future leaders, like Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to deal with the challenges and opportunities that come with this complicated historical timeline.

1.3. Political and Religious Foundations

A lot of different historical events, clan traditions, and the strong impact of Wahhabism can be seen in Saudi Arabia's political and religious underpinnings. This complex interaction has not only shaped the kingdom's government, but it has also set the stage for its unique role in regional and global events.

What Wahhabism Does: Wahhabism, a strict interpretation of Islam that dates back to the 18th century, is at the heart of Saudi Arabia's religious and social policies. Wahhabism, which is related to the Hanbali school of Sunni Islam, has been very important in shaping the kingdom's culture and religious law. According to traditional Islamic principles, the kingdom follows these rules very closely because of the kingdom's impact on schools, the law, and social norms. (Ferguson, 2023).

There is a fine line between what Wahhabism does and what it does in Saudi Arabia. It is an important part of both faith and cultural validity, but how it is understood and used has changed over time. There have been subtle changes in the connection between the government and religious groups. Each new leader has changed how Wahhabism is interpreted to fit the new social and political situation.

A History of Changes in Political Structures: Since Abdulaziz Ibn Saud unified Saudi Arabia, its political structure has changed a lot. The country is based on the idea of an absolute monarchy, which means that the ruler has power over the executive, the legislative, and the legal branches. In Islam, Mecca and Medina are the two greatest towns. The king is both the leader of the country and the guardian of these cities. (Nour Mohammadi & Seifi, 2019).

The ruling family, which is called the House of Saud, is very important in making political decisions in a kingdom. Political security in the country is helped by the complicated relationships within the ruling family, which are based on a web of partnerships and deals to share power. The selection of important roles, like the crown prince, shows how power works within the family.

Within Saudi Arabia's political history, tribal ties have been very important in creating the system. A recurrent theme has been the careful balance between central power and tribe liberty. (Abukhalil, 2011). Efforts have been made to include tribal leaders in the political process to make sure that the government stays safe and works well.

Growth in the economy and problems: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's political history has had a huge impact on its economy. The oil boom that started in the middle of the 20th century made the kingdom's economy very successful. But this wealth also showed Saudi Arabia's weaknesses, since it became too dependent on oil money.

Because of problems in the economy and the need to diversify, Vision 2030 was made. Published big goals of this change plan are to make the country less reliant on oil, encourage economic growth, and encourage new ideas. (Helms, 2020). The complicated connection between political choices and economic policies shows that the

kingdom is serious about making sure the economy will be stable for a long time. (Braibanti, 2019).

That being said, Saudi Arabia's political and religious roots are a dynamic balance between custom and change. Wahhabism, government structures, and economic needs all interact in complex ways that affect not only how the kingdom works within itself but also how it interacts with other countries in the area and around the world. To fully understand Saudi Arabia's modern character and its path under the direction of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, it is important to understand these roots.

1.4. Economic Growth and Challenges

Saudi Arabia's economic history is deeply connected to its political and historical roots. It is a story of unimaginable growth, strategy changes, and the need to be environmentally friendly. A story of economic change takes place against the background of oil wealth, which has created both chances and challenges that have shaped the kingdom's current economic environment.

The Oil Boom and Its Importance Around the World: The oil industry's changing effects are at the heart of Saudi Arabia's economic story. The oil boom in the middle of the 20th century made the country famous for its economy and made it a key player in the world energy market. Huge oil supplies were the key to the kingdom's economic growth. They brought in a lot of money that was used to fund big building projects and solidified the country's place on the world stage.

There were some problems with the strategy move to use oil to boost the economy. The oil fortune brought the kingdom a lot of money, but it also made it very dependent on oil earnings. This dependence, along with the fact that oil prices change all the time, made it even more important to diversify the economy and make it last. (Abukhalil, 2011).

Vision 2030 and Economic Reforms: In answer to these problems, Saudi Arabia revealed Vision 2030, a broad and bold plan for reforms that will bring about a new era

of strong and diverse economies. Vision 2030, which is led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, wants to make the country less dependent on oil, boost industries other than oil, and encourage new ideas and business.

Vision 2030 is complex and has many parts, including economic, social, and artistic ones. To achieve economic growth, key areas like tourism, technology, and green energy are being developed. Parts of the economic reform plan include selling off state-owned businesses, building a strong private sector, and making it easier for businesses to do business. (Ferguson, 2023).

What are the challenges and needs for sustainability? Even though Vision 2030 is a big-picture plan for changing the economy, it won't be easy to put into action. Because the economy is becoming more diverse, the traditional economic structure needs to change fundamentally. This means that people need to be able to adapt and be strong in the face of global economic uncertainty.

Getting rid of unemployment, especially among young people, improving schooling to meet the needs of a more diverse economy, and making sure the move away from oil dependence goes smoothly are all important issues that need to be dealt with right away. It's not easy to make changes to social and cultural rules that are in line with global standards while still protecting national identity. This makes the process of economic transformation even more complicated. (Braibanti, 2019).

Recent changes in the global economy, such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in oil prices, make it even more important to have a strong and flexible economic framework. After taking the initiative to adopt economic changes and making smart investments in new areas, Saudi Arabia is now on the right track to achieve long-term economic growth.

In the end, Saudi Arabia's economic progress and problems show how custom and change are constantly balancing each other. Working toward Vision 2030 shows that the kingdom wants to make its economy less vulnerable, encourage diversity, and become an active player in the world economy. It is important to understand these

economic factors in order to fully understand Saudi Arabia's current situation and its hopes for a bright and stable future.

1.5. Strategic Geopolitical Position

Saudi Arabia's key geographic situation is a major factor in determining its part in the area and around the world. This huge kingdom is in a very important geographical spot, right in the middle of the Middle East, surrounded by important countries and in charge of Mecca and Medina, which are Islam's two holiest cities.

Significance in geography: Saudi Arabia is very important in world politics because of where it is located. The kingdom is a key link between the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa and is surrounded by countries: Iraq to the north, Jordan and Kuwait to the northwest, and Yemen to the south. Its strategic value as a route for world trade is increased by its closeness to major trade routes like the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. (Abukhalil, 2011).

The fact that the kingdom's southern border touches the war zone in Yemen shows how important it is to the safety and peace of the area. Saudi Arabia's shoreline on the Red Sea makes it a marine hub, connecting it to trade lines and highlighting its naval importance in the world.

Guardianship of Islam's holiest cities: Saudi Arabia's guardianship of Mecca and Medina is a key part of its strategic position. Because these towns are so important to the Islamic faith and travel, they give the kingdom a special religious power. This guardianship affects not only the kingdom's policies at home, but also those of the rest of the Islamic world.

Saudi Arabia's important role in the Islamic community is strengthened by the fact that it hosts millions of visitors every year during the Hajj. When you combine faith leadership with global concerns, it makes the kingdom's soft power and foreign impact stronger.

Roll in World Energy Markets: As the world's biggest oil producer, Saudi Arabia plays a big part in world energy markets, which is also important for geopolitics. The kingdom is a founder member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which makes it a major player in oil production and price changes. Saudi Arabia has a lot of political and economic power because it can affect oil prices around the world.

Participation in Regional Alliances: Saudi Arabia's strategic alliances strengthen its position in the world's politics. Its role as a calming power in the Arabian Gulf is strengthened by its active involvement in regional groups like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The kingdom is committed to changing the way things work in the region, as shown by its diplomacy efforts, relationships with nearby countries, and participation in regional battles. (Ferguson, 2023).

It's hard to find the right mix in these complicated global situations because Saudi Arabia wants to protect its own national interests while also helping to keep the area stable. Being able to use its strategic location, diplomatic skills, and economic power shows that the kingdom will continue to be an important player in Middle Eastern and global politics. To fully understand Saudi Arabia's complicated political system and its larger impact on the world stage, one must first understand how geopolitics work. (Nour Mohammadi, & Seifi, (2019).

1.6. Influence in Regional and Global Affairs

As a major player in both the region and the world, Saudi Arabia has a complex impact that goes far beyond its limits. The kingdom has a big effect on regional and world events in many areas. This is because it has a long history, strong allies, and skilled political skills.

Diplomacy and alliances in the region: The country has a lot of power in regional issues because it is an involved member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). As a founding member, Saudi Arabia works with its neighbors to solve problems they all face, encourage economic unity, and keep the peace in the are Its

dedication to peace and wealth for everyone is shown by its strategic partnerships with countries like the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. (Braibanti, 2019).

The kingdom's diplomacy efforts in the Arab world, especially in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, also show that it can act as a peacemaker and a leader. Saudi Arabia is committed to regional relations in general, and its efforts to support peace and security in the area are part of that.

Leadership in OPEC: Saudi Arabia has a lot of power in the world's energy markets because it is the boss of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The kingdom's choices about how much oil to produce and how much to charge for it have big effects on the world economy. This economic power boosts Saudi Arabia's international standing, giving it a unique mix of economic muscle and strategic skill to handle world affairs.

Counterterrorism and Security Cooperation: Saudi Arabia's dedication to the safety of the region is shown by its active involvement in the fight against terrorism. Working together with other countries in the region on projects like the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition shows that the kingdom is serious about fighting radical ideas and making the area safer. (Abukhalil, 2011).

The country is also a key player in the fight against terrorism around the world because it works together on security issues with the US and other Western partners. This way of working together shows that Saudi Arabia cares about peace and security around the world.

International Reach and Soft Power: Saudi Arabia's international reach goes beyond the Middle East to Asia, Africa, and Europe, among other places. (Helms, (2020)). The kingdom's economic projects, cultural contacts, and charity work all add to its "soft power," which makes it more powerful on the world stage.

Programs like the King Salman Center for International Peace help with cultural diplomacy, which encourages people to understand each other and work together. Helping people in war zones and funding development projects are examples of

humanitarian work that the kingdom does to show its dedication to the security and well-being of the world. (Ferguson, 2023).

Regional Conflicts and Mediation: Saudi Arabia's impact is often obvious in its involvement with regional conflicts. The kingdom's part in resolving disasters like the war in Yemen shows how much it cares about keeping the area stable. Even though things are complicated, Saudi Arabia's work to end conflicts makes it a key political player in figuring out how the complex regional relationships work. (Nour Mohammadi, & Seifi, 2019).

To sum up, Saudi Arabia has a lot of power in regional and world matters. It has economic, political, and security responsibilities. The kingdom's role as a regional and global power is formed by its dedication to security, cooperation, and economic diplomacy. This is based on a deep understanding of its location in the world's politics. To fully understand the kingdom's larger effect on world politics, you need to know about this power.

1.7. The Political System in Saudi Arabia

A unique mix of historical custom, modern government structures, and a careful balance between central power and clan ties make up Saudi Arabia's political environment. Although Saudi Arabia's government structure is based on the ideas of an absolute ruler, it has changed over the years to adapt to both internal and foreign obstacles.

Monarchy and Leadership Succession: The monarchy is the most important part of the government structure. The king is the head of state and guardian of Mecca and Medina, which are the greatest towns in Islam. Under the model of absolute monarchy, the monarch has power over the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches. The government uses agnatic rank to decide who should take the throne. The most qualified prince does this.

The crown prince, who is the heir apparent, has the most important job in the kingdom. It is customary for the king to choose the crown prince, who has a big say in

how the kingdom runs. Because of the king's role as the symbolic guardian of Islamic ideals and the fact that leadership changes often, the country has a unique political dynamism (Ferguson, 2023).

Royal Family Dynamics and Governance: The royal family, the House of Saud, is very important to the way things are run. Political security is helped by the royal family's complex web of relationships and deals to share power. Senior members of the royal family, tribal leaders, and religious scholars are all consulted before decisions are made. This makes sure that governance is done in a way that benefits everyone.

Tribal ties, which are very important in Saudi Arabian culture, also affect how politics work. To keep the government running smoothly, efforts are made to include tribal leaders in the democratic process. The kingdom's political strength comes from the way the central government and tribal sovereignty work together. (Abukhalil, 2011).

Governmental Bodies and Making Choices: There are many government groups in the political system that are in charge of making and carrying out policies. The king is in charge of the Council of Ministers, which is the main governing body that makes big policy choices. The Shura Council is an advice group that helps people have their say on important national problems and encourages them to be involved in the process of government.

The consultative process of making decisions also applies to running the provinces through their governments. The king chooses these groups, which are very important for dealing with local problems and promoting growth in the area.

Judicial System and Sharia Law: Sharia law, which is an Islamic law, is at the heart of Saudi Arabia's judicial system. Islamic law (Sharia) and native tribal practices work together to make the laws. Sharia law is enforced by the judges, which is led by the Supreme Judicial Council. It also keeps an eye on court cases. Even though the laws have been updated, following Islamic beliefs is still very important to running the country.

Problems and Solutions: Saudi Arabia's government faces problems from both inside and outside the country. Finding the right mix between old-fashioned ways of running things and the need to make things more modern is always hard. Vision 2030's plans to change the economy and society show that people are taking action to deal with these problems and make sure things stay stable in the long run. (Braibanti, 2019)

In the end, Saudi Arabia's political system is a lively mix of custom, modern government, and the freedom to change. The kingdom's political strength comes from the monarchy's role as a calming force and the complicated relationships between the royal family and its clan ties. To understand how complicated Saudi Arabia's government is and where it fits in the current political scene, you need to know about this complicated political web.



CHAPTER TWO

ECONOMY: STRUCTURE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

2.1. Economic Challenges and Vulnerabilities

Saudi Arabia has always been built on the oil business because it sends more oil than any other country. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF)] About 90% of government income, 80% of export gains, and 40% of GDP came from oil. The economy of the kingdom was very sensitive to changes in oil prices around the world because it depends so much on one good: oil prices. This was clear from the fact that the economy had trouble when oil prices were low, like during the oil price crash of 2014–2016.

The kingdom's oil-dependent economic model posed several challenges, including:

- The government's income changed a lot when the price of oil went up and down, which hurt spending and the economy's stability.
- Limited variety: The Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) says that the government's power over the oil industry made it hard for other industries to grow. This limited the variety of the economy and new ideas.
- There was a lot of waste and a lot of people working for the government because people were dependent on jobs. When money from oil came in, the state sector became the major source of jobs.
- There were a lot of young people out of work, even though the government spent a lot of money to try to fix the problem. One reason for this was that the schools weren't preparing students for the job market.
- New technologies and a move toward green energy sources could make the world's oil market change. This could lower the long-term need for oil, which would hurt Saudi Arabia's business plan.

2.2. A Paradigm Shift in Saudi Economic

A lot of work has been done by lawmakers and academics to figure out how weak an economy is that lives on oil. Both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank did research that showed Saudi Arabia needed to diversify its economy and depend less on oil revenues to keep it growing. Arabic academic papers, such as those from the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, also talked about the underlying problems the Saudi economy has and the need for big changes [King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center.

The economy of Saudi Arabia before Vision 2030 is in a bad place because it depends too much on oil income and has a lot of problems within the country. New ideas, economic growth, and sustainability need to be at the center of our new strategy. This is clear from both governmental and academic study. Because of these issues, Vision 2030 was made. Its goal is to change Saudi Arabia's economy so that it depends less on oil, supports the growth of industries other than oil, and builds a better, more varied economy.

Vision 2030 is a big change in the way Saudi Arabia runs its economy and plans its future. Its goal is to get the country off of oil and into other industries so that the economy can grow. In April 2016, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman began work on Vision 2030. It has a lot of plans, goals, and outcomes that are meant to change the business, society, and government of the country. A lot of information is given about Vision 2030 in this section. Examples from Arabic and other languages are used to show how it plans to achieve economic variety and long-term growth.

Vision 2030 is structured around three primary themes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. The objectives include:

In order to make the country less reliant on oil, other businesses must grow, such as technology, entertainment, tourism, and green energy.

As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says, improving public service areas means making things like roads, schools, hospitals, and social services better so that people in Saudi Arabia can live better lives.

Increasing jobs and business: Creating jobs for young people in the kingdom by supporting business and private sector growth.

For the fourth goal, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) says that Saudi Arabia should become a good place to spend money by opening up some areas and improving the business climate.

2.3. Mechanisms Of Saudi Economic

To achieve these objectives, Vision 2030 outlines several strategies and mechanisms, including:

To help with assets outside of oil, the Public Investment Fund (PIF) is being changed to become the largest national wealth fund in the world [Public Investment Fund (PIF) (2017)..

The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) says that the National Industrial Development and Transportation Program (NIDLP) is designed to help with four key things: mining, energy, transportation, and industry. Its goal is to boost variety and economic growth.

Privatization and businesses that work with the government (PPPs): According to Al Rajhi Capital (2016), letting go of state-owned companies and promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) can help the economy grow and lower government spending.

Fourth, changes to the government: making the country more business-friendly and attracting foreign direct investment by changing the laws and rules Oxford Business Group (2017).

The intended outcomes of Vision 2030 are ambitious and multifaceted, aiming to transform Saudi Arabia into an economic powerhouse and a hub for trade, innovation, and tourism. Key outcomes include:

Cutting down on oil sales: the money made from them will drop from 90% of the budget to less than 30%.

We want the government to make SAR 1 trillion by 2030, up from SAR 163 billion now. This means getting it to make money from things other than oil.

Giving the private sector a bigger role: raising the private sector's GDP share from 40% to 65%

Growing the tourism industry: Getting 100 million people every year by 2030 and making the tourism industry a bigger part of the GDP

The unemployment rate should go down from 11.6% to 7%, giving Saudis the chance to find work.

2.4. Role in Diversifying the Economy and Economic Reforms

Dubai's business is getting more interesting thanks in large part to the Vision 2030 plan. So that the country is ready for a future without oil, the plan focuses on the growth of sectors other than oil. This is meant to lower the risks that come with changing oil prices. This will help the economy of Saudi Arabia grow over the long run and make it more competitive on a global level. Vision 2030 can only reach its goals if it is well-worked on, constantly watched, and adaptable to issues within and outside the country.

Vision 2030 is Prince Salman's big plan to make things better. Several changes to the economy have been made to make the kingdom's economy less reliant on oil. Many things, like technology, pleasure, and travel, have changed a lot because of these changes. A lot of jobs and progress in the private sector have been lost because of them as well. This part gives a full picture of how important these changes are by using examples from Arabic and other places with economies.

As a key part of its plan to make the economy more diverse, Vision 2030 has worked hard to boost the tourism industry. The plan has big goals to make tourism a bigger part of the kingdom's GDP every year. A lot of people want to visit every year. A lot more tourists from other countries can now visit Saudi Arabia thanks to projects like the Red Sea tourism project, more services for Umrah and Hajj, and the creation of tourist cards. What the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) says is that these steps should make the tourism industry's contribution to the economy much bigger. This will create more jobs and improve business opportunities.

The Saudi people didn't have many fun things to do before Vision 2030. But the changes have made it possible for movie houses and shows to open again and for the General Entertainment Authority to be made. People's lives have gotten better, and this has also opened up new business possibilities. It has also brought in money from other countries, which has helped the US entertainment industry grow. Arabian Business says that the entertainment industry's growth will create many jobs and help the economies of different areas such as shopping, relaxation, and media.

Vision 2030 knows that one important way to bring the business up to date is to use technology. The government wants to use technology to help the economy grow, as shown by the National Transformation Program (NTP) and the creation of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA). Digital infrastructure, banks, and smart city projects like NEOM are now getting more attention, which shows that the plan to build a knowledge-based economy has changed. McKinsey & Company says that these changes in technology should help people come up with new ideas, make things run more smoothly, and make Saudi companies compete with others around the world.

Vision 2030 says that having less unemployment and more business growth is one of its key goals. To get more people to start their own businesses and make it easier for companies to start up and grow, rules, cash incentives, and support programs have been changed. As part of the Saudization plan, more Saudis are being sent to school and trained to work in the private sector. That way, the skills of the workers can adapt to the needs of a wider range of industries. More private companies are going into areas that

the government used to run [Oxford Business Group]. This means that the private sector will be very important to the economic future of the kingdom.

With Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia made big changes to its economy. These changes have big effects on the economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the rest of the Middle East. If Saudi Arabia changes its economic policies and programs, it could affect other countries in the GCC's plans for growth, financial flows, and economic trends. This is because Saudi Arabia has the largest economy in the GC There are Arabic and non-Arab sources used to support the points made in this section, which looks at the economic effects of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 on the area

With Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia wants to grow its economy and depend less on oil. This fits with the GCC's bigger goal of making its member states more economically united and united. Since the kingdom is putting more effort into things like tourism, technology, and green energy, there are new business and trade opportunities in the area. Vision 2030's work to grow the green energy industry is one way that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) can be inspired to work together on clean energy projects. This is because everyone in the area wants growth that lasts.

Vision 2030 is Saudi Arabia's full plan to broaden its economy. Other oil-dependent economies in the Middle East can learn from this plan. If nearby countries want to grow their economies, they can learn a lot from how the kingdom has tried to change its public sector, get foreign investment, and grow businesses besides oil. For example, both the UAE and Bahrain have started similar plans to improve their industries that aren't related to oil. All of this shows that the area is becoming more economically diverse, which was helped by Saudi Arabia's changes.

Around the world and Saudi Arabia are putting money into Vision 2030 business projects, like those run by the public business Fund (PIF). This could make the kingdom an even better place to put your money in the area. A lot of money is put into projects like NEOM and the Red Sea tourist growth. These projects also help the area's infrastructure, transportation, and business sectors grow. This is good for economies close because it means more chances to do business and work together across countries.

The goal of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia is to make the country safer and more job-friendly, which indirectly makes the area safer. Safety for everyone and growth in the economy go hand in hand. Saudi Arabia might be able to help other countries in the area get their economies back on track and safe by showing them how to make big changes to their economies. There are a lot of social and economic issues in the Middle East, so this is very important. Troubles with the economy have often caused trouble in society.

2.5. Energy Markets of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has a big effect on how energy works all over the world because it makes the most oil. The decisions the kingdom makes about how much oil to make and how much to charge for it have a big impact on the price and amount of oil around the world. This has an impact on energy markets all over the world. One example is that Saudi Arabia is the leader of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). This means that it can organize the oil production policies of its member countries so that oil costs stay the same or change as the world economy does.

It is part of Vision 2030 to invest in green energy sources like wind and solar power so that Saudi Arabia's energy business can grow beyond oil. The plan to expand is in line with the move toward green energy around the world. It also makes Saudi Arabia a key player in the movement toward cleaner energy sources. The Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative are two projects that show the country is serious about battling climate change and cutting down on greenhouse gas production [Saudi Green Initiative]. These projects also have an effect on how people around the world talk about energy strategy.

Vision 2030 calls for a lot of changes to be made to banks and trade. It will be easy for Saudi Arabia to join the world economy after these changes. It is easy for businesses to do business in the kingdom, and the stock market is now open. The kingdom has also started big projects where investors from around the world can put their money to work. When Saudi Aramco went public for the first time in 2019, it was the biggest IPO ever. That was proof that Saudi Arabia wants to get along better with other countries' money markets (Saudi Aramco).

In 2005, Saudi Arabia became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This was a big step towards making its economy work with trade systems around the world. The government has worked hard to make trade deals with other countries since then. In order to get better access to markets around the world, it has also changed its rules to meet foreign ones. It is now working to get free trade deals. Dream 2030 wants to get trade and business from all over the world so that the country doesn't need as much oil money. These steps are part of that plan.

Also, the fact that Saudi Arabia will host the G20 meeting in 2020 shows how much stronger it is becoming in the world's economic government. The kingdom used this chance to ask other countries to work together to solve world issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to switch to clean energy sources. This made it even more of an important player in shaping the future of economic policies around the world. This is the Saudi G20 Secretariat.

It is a big plan for Saudi Arabia to improve its economy, society, and place in the world. It's called Vision 2030. It brings big chances and big problems. It is the main goal of this big plan to make the economy more diverse, boost social freedoms, and make Saudi Arabia more well known around the world. To meet these goals, though, there are a lot of hard social, political, and economic problems that need to be fixed. With cases from both Arabic and other countries, this study lists the issues and chances that come with Vision 2030.

There are issues with society that make it hard to do Goals for 2030: Social norms and values that have been strongly rooted for decades need to change in order for society to become more open. This means that there need to be more jobs, more chances for women to be involved in public life, and more fun and cultural events. Some Republicans don't like this change, even though most people do. Because of this, it's been harder to make big changes in society quickly.

Problems with politics: Goal 2030 wants to make big changes in the way politics work, like making the public sector more open, better managed, and more efficient. It might be hard to get these changes through the kingdom's difficult political processes

and special interests if they threaten the way things are now. Political problems from the outside, like the war in Yemen and the tense relationship with Iran, could also make it harder to carry out Vision 2030.

Problems with the Economy: Getting the economy off of oil causes a lot of problems with the economy. For example, a lot of money needs to be spent on new areas to train workers and make the economy more business-friendly so that foreign companies want to arrive. It can also be hard for the kingdom to pay its bills because oil costs change and the world economy is hard to predict.

2.6. Social Change Theory

Social change is a continuous process that relates to the changes taking place in the structure, organization, values, and behavioral patterns of a given society. Basically, social change is the movement of societies from one state to another owing to the interaction of many contributing factors of technology, economics, politics, and culture. Change can be incremental, as in the slow cultural transformations, or dramatic and sudden, as in the social and political revolutions (Smith, 2020).

Social change refers to the dynamics that remake the relations of individuals and societies and redefine functional roles and institutions. Some of the many forms in which it can occur include:

- The movement, for instance, from traditional agricultural societies to industrial ones.
- Globalisation and its growing influence upon cultural identity. (Giddens, 2013)
- The altering role of women and their contribution to social and political life. (Harper & Leicht, 2018).

Social change theory provides an analysis of how societies change, the causes entailing such change, and the consequences that such change brings about on the level of individuals and society as a whole. This theory encompasses a number of approaches,

each explaining the phenomenon in question from different angles based on a multitude of social and historical contexts (Ritzer, 2015).

2.6.1. The Evolutionary View

One is an evolutionary view, and one of the most leading foundations the theory of social change was based on, is because it concentrated on the idea that human societies are continuously in the course of moving from the state of simple uncomplicatedness into a more highly advanced complicated state. It is from this view that the change of society through successive historical stages is expressed because it undergoes a pattern of gradual growth leading to the improvement of its social structure (Turner, 2019).

The most famous exponent of this perspective, indeed known as the "Father of Sociology", is Auguste Comte. Comte argues that societies progress in their effort to explain natural and social phenomena in three major stages:

- Theological stage: The explanation of phenomena through religion and superstitions characterizes this stage where societies use supernatural entities and gods for justifying the occurrences of an event.

- The metaphysical stage: During this stage, religious explanations are abandoned for philosophical ones and metaphysical thinking becomes a heavy factor in explanations.

- The scientific stage: This is supposedly the apex of social development whereby scientific and systematic thinking becomes the dominant method of understanding everything that surrounds us (Alexander, 2012).

Comte asserts that "social progress is a gradual and orderly process guided by reason and science" (Comte, as cited in Thompson, 2021). In this respect, the approach of social change could be described as an unavoidable process with successive changes to more progressive advanced types.

2.6.2. The Conflictual View

The conflictual view by Karl Marx is another important foundation in the theory of social change. It views social change as the result of ongoing struggle between social classes and determines the struggle between the bourgeoisie (the ruling class) and the proletariat (the working class) to be a driving force for radical transformations in the structure of society (Collins, 2016).

According to Marx, the capitalist system has internal contradictions whereby the ruling class exploits the working class to achieve its profits, leading to tensions and conflicts culminating in social or economic revolutions. As he simply puts it, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017).

For instance, the Industrial Revolution made these conflicts evident since the movement towards large-scale production and the exploitation of wage laborers created an economic division between factory owners and workers, bringing about significant changes in social and economic organization. According to Marx, these conflicts are a driving force that propels societies to transform and progress

2.6.3. Functionalism

Functionalism, on the other hand, followed by sociologists such as Émile Durkheim, views how societies solve pressures and changes for stability and a point of equilibrium. In this theory, the concept of social change is rather a necessity or a need that occurs when societies experience stressors or changes in the surrounding environment that require structural adjustments to help restore equilibrium (Parsons, 2015).

As Durkheim said, "social change is brought about by variations in the division of labor that result in increased functional and institutional specialization" (Durkheim, cited in Giddens 2021). For example, in simple societies, economic and social activities were organized together and nondifferentiated. Further in the process of evolution, differentiation within labor arose and provided new social structures answering the

needs of society. Durkheim further claimed that social change is not a threat but rather a method to achieve cohesiveness and balance within the society itself where the social roles and institutions are changed to suit the new needs.

2.6.4. Cultural Dynamics

Weber views cultural dynamics as playing a leading role in social change. In other words, Weber does not see cultural values and beliefs merely as a reflection of economic status but rather as independent factors playing a significant role in shaping society. This aspect is well reflected in the analysis done by him on the Protestant ethic and the development of Western capitalism.

Weber says, "Culture is not a passive element, but a force capable of reshaping the social order" (Weber, as cited in Kalberg, 2018). For example, Protestant values of hard work, saving, and investment helped nurture the spirit of capitalism, thus bringing a major economic transformation to Europe.

Secondly, cultural dynamics refer to the change in language, values, customs, and beliefs which dynamic results in the transformation of social structure. A change in education pattern or the status of women in society, for example, is an outcome of certain cultural dynamics compelling broad social changes.

Evolutionary, conflictual, functionalist, and cultural dynamics are some of the significant theories underlying social change. While the evolutionary view focuses on growth in gradual ways, the conflictual view sees social change as a result of class struggle. The functional view underlines that adaptation and balance are crucial for the stability of societies, while cultural dynamics emphasize the role of values and beliefs in shaping change. These foundations reflect the complexity and multifaceted nature of social change and its impact on various aspects of life as argued by Harper & Leicht, 2018.

2.7. Factors Influencing Social Change

Factors of social change form one of the basic areas of interest in sociology, given that they illustrate how these very factors bring about a change in structure, culture, and behavior in societies. All these factors work together in an interactive and complicated way, making social change a multidimensional phenomenon. The following is a more detailed explanation of the main factors;

2.7.1. Technological Factors

Technology drives the radical changes in societies' fortunes, shifting people's ways of living and interacting with one another. Technological development includes specific invention along with improvement in tool and methods of various spheres of life (Castells, 2010).

- **Industrial Revolution:** A major technological transition throughout history, in which the basic form of subsistence changed from agriculture to industry; marked the shift from manual labor to machines. Changes in technology made production more efficient. For example, work and migration patterns changed with the move to the industrial cities.

- **Digital Revolution:** The advent of the Internet and digital technology made life more technologically driven. This revolution wholly changed how communication, education, and commerce functioned, and it brought in concepts such as telework and e-learning (Smith, 2019).

Castells adds, "Technology is not just an instrument of change but a force that reshapes social and cultural relations, making it one of the fundamental agents of social change" (Castells, 2010).

2.7.2. Economic Factors

Economic changes deeply affect the structure of societies, reshaping patterns of production, consumption, and distribution, leading to tremendous social transformations.

- **Transition from Agricultural to Industrial Economies:** In the nineteenth century, societies experienced a major transformation with the emergence of industrial economies, changing class relations and social roles (Sen, 2015).

- **Economic Globalization:** Recent decades have witnessed increased interconnectedness of global markets, driving innovation but also creating inequalities (Piketty, 2014).

- **Economic Crises:** The 2008 global financial crisis, among other similar events, made many rethink their economic policies and pay more attention to social justice in the process (Stiglitz, 2019).

2.7.3. Political Factors

Political ideologies, systems, and laws have a great impact on changing society.

- **Revolutions and Political Movements:** The French and Russian Revolutions are examples of changes that completely transformed political and social systems.

- **Democracy and Human Rights:** Democratic movements in the 20th century promoted governance reforms and human rights (Inglehart, 2018).

- **Government Policies:** Public policies in forms of educational reform or welfare are some of the driving forces for social development and equality (Sen, 2015).

2.7.4. Cultural Factors

Cultural values, customs, and traditions remain one of the strong drivers of change in societies. Changes within the cultural domain reshape the structure and relationships that compose societies (Appadurai, 2013).

- **Education and Gender Equality:** Greater emphasis on education has enhanced the status and employment opportunities for women.

- **Cultural Globalization:** Global media has given rise to hybrid cultures, mixing the local and the global.

2.7.5. Social Movements

Social movements are a significant agent of change because they reflect collective aspirations toward better conditions.

- **Civil Rights Movement:** It changed the discriminatory laws and brought equality in the United States (Tilly, 2015).

- **Environmental Movements:** Contemporary movements for climate action reshape policies and priorities on an international scale (Klein, 2019).

2.7.6. Disasters and Crises

Natural disasters and health crises often drive rapid change in societies.

- **Natural Disasters:** Events such as earthquakes and floods reshape migration and resource distribution.

- **Health Crises:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation and redefined health system priorities (World Health Organization, 2021).

2.7.7. Demographic factors

Other factors affecting the structure of societies and the nature of social change include changes in population structure. For instance, birth and death rates have been either high or low, causing changes in the structure of the population. For example, the aging population in countries has changed policies on health and social care (Sundaram, 2019).

- Migration: Population movements resulting from migration reshape cultures and social structures in receiving and sending countries. Migration often leads to cultural exchanges, but also challenges in integration policies (King & Skeldon, 2020).

From everything mentioned above, factors of technology, economy, politics, culture, social movement, disaster, and demography have come forward as very significant pillars for comprehending social change. These elements influence each other in forming developed changes across every dimension of human society. Whatever be the effect-whether brought on by technological advancement or caused by sudden crises-it always turns out to be a part of human society's dynamics (Giddens, 2017).

CHAPTER THREE

SAUDI ARABIA: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

3.1. Governance and Political Dynamics

A lot has changed in Saudi Arabia's government and politics since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) took office in 2017. Along with Vision 2030, this part will talk about what these changes mean for the Kingdom's government and how things

Under MBS, power has been set up very quickly. One of the most important things that will ever happen. It used to be harder to see who in the royal family had the most power in Saudi Arabia's government. It was the most important thing when the top kings agreed on something. But MBS's rise was different from this plan because it gave him and his guards more power. Vision 2030 is a big plan to help social and economic growth and get Saudi Arabia off of oil. More changes are coming soon to make Vision 2030 happen faster. This one is part of that plan. The goal is to make a choice quickly and easily.

A number of smart moves have made this concentration easier, which is very important. Just to name a few changes, the Crown Prince's main economic and military roles have been moved around, and new bodies have been created that report directly to him (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018). The website for Saudi Vision 2030 says that the Council for Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) gives MBS full control over change plans and economic strategy.

Besides MBS, the country has also gone through many political and social changes that are meant to make it more modern. Human Rights Watch (2018) says that women finally got the right to drive again in 2018. This is a big step toward more rights for women. The country's social structure is also changing because of more leisure activities and cultural events. These events are putting the strict rules that have long governed Saudi society to the test (BBC News, 2018).

Some changes are happening, but politics are very tightly in charge right now. There are now more open doors for people from outside the kingdom, but the government is also tough on people who try to cause trouble. In 2017, protesters, business leaders, and members of the royal family were arrested as part of a large effort to fight crime (Al Jazeera, 2017). But experts from other countries say this is just a way to keep power and silence critics (foreign Monetary Fund, 2019). A lot of people support this because they want to stop cheating.

That's right, the Saudi government is a country, which means that the King can make Islamic law-based rules and make sure they are followed. The people who serve on the Shura Council are chosen by the King. The Council has some power in the government but mostly just listens (The World Bank, 2019). In this system, the royal court actually makes all the choices about the government. With his power, MBS makes changes quickly.

There are big changes in the economy because of how MBS runs the government. The Crown Prince has tried to make the economy more varied and put power in one place through Vision 2030. A lot of money from other countries has come to Saudi Arabia because of this. Buyers are confident in the safety and direction of Saudi Arabia's economic policy (Bloomberg, 2020). This economic goal is shown by projects like NEOM, the Red Sea tourist project, and the movie business's growth (NEOM home page).

But because of how decisions are made and how easy it is to fight back publicly, it's hard to say how long this model will last. Some people say that the need to quiet critics and the lack of political diversity could scare investors and stop people from coming up with new ideas (Financial Times, 2019).

In the end, MBS has changed a lot about Saudi Arabia's history and government. A rise in power, big plans to change the economy and society, and a tough balance between control and growth are some of these changes. It took longer for these changes to happen, but they have made Saudi Arabia what it is today. They also show how hard it is to lead a society that is usually very rigid through times of change that can't be

stopped. We still do not know what these changes will mean for the safety, economic growth, and social stability of the country in the long run. In light of this, this subject is worth continuing to study and follow.

3.2.Social Reforms and Societal Impact

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has started a big plan to change the world since he became king. Vision 2030 is the name of these changes, which are part of a bigger plan. People and culture will come to life more with this project. The goal is for Saudi Arabia's economy to depend less on oil and have more types of work. An important part of this plan is to base the Saudi social contract on Islamic norms.

Women now have more rights, which is a very clear sign of change. It's interesting that women could drive again in 2018 after not being able to for decades. It was both a sign and a good idea for more women to go to work (Vision 2030, 2016). Another change is that women can now travel, get IDs, get married, or split up without the approval of a male protector (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

After being banned for 35 years, movies were last shown in 2018. A group called the General Entertainment Authority was also made. This was a big step toward more openness in the arts and nightlife. Many young people in the kingdom like this move. It also helps the economy by getting people to spend more on fun things and bringing in tourists from other countries (General Fun Authority, 2018).

Egypt has done a lot to make sure that faith doesn't play a big role in everyday life. The religious cops have less power now that MBS is in charge, and he is pushing for a more reasonable view of Islam. This is part of a bigger plan to question the religious elite's traditional views and support a national identity that blends Islamic past with modernity (Council on Foreign Relations, 2017). What these changes mean for society and how people react to them

Different Saudis have different ideas, and this is evident in how they have reacted to these changes. Many Saudis, especially young people, like these changes because they believe they will make society more open and public. Women now have

better opportunities and live better lives. They also play a greater role in business and public life.

Some people have fought against these changes and said bad things about them. Some people believe they happen too quickly or hurt deeply held beliefs. Along with Americans, people from other countries have been very interested in these changes, especially since protesters and activists are going to jail. This is especially true for women's rights activists (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

In Saudi Arabia, people are going through both good and bad changes. They could improve Saudi society by making it livelier and busier in some ways. Less bias against women at work and more open culture spaces can both help the economy grow a lot.

But the changes also make people question views and ideals they have held for a long time. If you want to solve society issues, you need to be careful. MBS has unified power and shut down people who don't agree with him, so people also wonder if the changes will last and what will happen to Saudi society in the future.

To sum up, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman started big social changes that will have an effect on how people live in the country and are in line with the goals of Vision 2030. These changes have been a big part of Saudi Arabia's past. These changes have been big compared to the past, and they are still making a difference. They also show us a possible future where everyone in Saudi Arabia will be able to be more open and friendly. But these changes will only work if they can find a way to change customs while still honoring them, focus on economic goals while also supporting social unity, and balance the needs of a totalitarian government with the dreams of a young, active population.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) was in charge of foreign policy and a lot of other things surrounding other countries. Everything moved quickly and often caused a stir. This year, Saudi Arabia has reaffirmed its important role as a key power in the Middle East. It has also worked to support the bold Vision 2030 by making new friends and trading with other countries. This area was going through a lot of

changes, and Saudi Arabia was having a hard time. During this time, we will talk about some of the most important parts of the country's relationships and foreign policy.

3.3. Domestic And International Relations

Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), has pursued a dynamic and often assertive foreign policy, significantly impacting its relationships with neighboring countries. This chapter delves into the complexities of these relationships, exploring strategic alliances, regional disputes, and the broader implications of Saudi policies.

The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East is intricate, marked by historical rivalries, religious schisms, and the ever-present influence of external powers. As the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia since 2017, Mohammed bin Salman has sought to reposition the Kingdom as a dominant regional player, aiming to secure its interests against a backdrop of instability and regional power shifts.

Saudi Arabia's role within the GCC has been central to its regional policy. The GCC, a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman—has served as a platform for Saudi leadership in the Gulf region. However, relations within the GCC have experienced strains, particularly highlighted by the Qatar diplomatic crisis in 2017.

In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, severed diplomatic ties with Qatar, imposing economic sanctions and a blockade. The coalition accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region through its relationships with Iran and Islamist groups. The crisis highlighted the deep-seated tensions within the GCC, driven by diverging foreign policies and competing visions for regional leadership. Notably, the blockade was lifted in January 2021, signaling a potential thaw in relations and a gradual restoration of unity within the GCC.

In contrast to the tensions with Qatar, Saudi Arabia has maintained strong ties with the UAE and Bahrain. These relationships are underpinned by political alignment, shared economic interests, and mutual concerns about regional security threats,

particularly from Iran. The UAE and Bahrain have been key partners in Saudi-led military campaigns, such as the intervention in Yemen, and have cooperated closely on economic initiatives, including oil production policies within OPEC+.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has been significantly shaped by its involvement in Yemen. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of Arab states in a military intervention against the Houthi rebels, who had taken over much of Yemen, including the capital, Sana. The Saudi-led intervention aimed to restore the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and counter Iranian influence in the region.

The conflict in Yemen has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and in need of aid. Saudi Arabia has faced international criticism for airstrikes that have resulted in civilian casualties and for contributing to what the United Nations has called the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

Despite extensive military engagement, the conflict has reached a stalemate, with significant implications for Saudi foreign policy. The protracted nature of the conflict has strained Saudi resources and exposed vulnerabilities in its military capabilities. It has also complicated relations with Western allies, particularly the United States, where there has been increasing legislative and public pressure to reduce military support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a defining feature of Middle Eastern geopolitics, characterized by sectarian divisions, competing influences, and direct and proxy conflicts. Under MBS, Saudi Arabia has adopted a more confrontational stance toward Iran, perceiving it as an existential threat to regional stability.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have engaged in several proxy conflicts, most notably in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. In these countries, both nations support opposing factions, reflecting broader sectarian and geopolitical tensions.

Saudi Arabia has expressed significant concerns over Iran's nuclear program. In response to the potential threat posed by a nuclear-armed Iran, Saudi Arabia has indicated that it might pursue its own nuclear capabilities, raising fears of a nuclear arms race in the region.

Mohammed bin Salman's tenure as Crown Prince has seen a reassertion of Saudi influence across the Middle East, with an aggressive foreign policy that seeks to counter perceived threats and stabilize the region under Saudi leadership. While this approach has solidified some regional alliances, it has also led to tensions and conflicts that have complex humanitarian and strategic consequences. As the Kingdom navigates these challenges, the evolution of its foreign policy will continue to have profound implications for regional dynamics and international relations.

For the country, the US has always been an important part of its foreign policy. Oil and safety are at the heart of the relationship. It has had its ups and downs, but MBS is still in charge and the bond is still strong. Human rights and the war in Yemen have been bad, but the U.S. has still sold a lot of weapons to Saudi Arabia. Coming from a military point of view, this link is important for more than just selling guns. To help Vision 2030 grow Saudi Arabia's economy, the U.S. should spend a lot of money. This is also good for business.

The last few years have been very different between China and Russia. Now that they are part of OPEC+, they work together on the oil market more. They both want to keep the price of oil the same all over the world. The fact that both sides want this has kept the relationship going even though they've had fights in the past. Russia and Saudi Arabia have also talked about working together on issues like nuclear energy and safety. It has a lot of different ways to deal with its relationships with other countries.

China is now a more important partner for Saudi Arabia because it is a bigger economic power. China gets a lot of money and technology from the kingdom. They also buy a lot of oil from the kingdom. This is especially true for Vision 2030 areas like technology, green energy, and infrastructure. The way China and Saudi Arabia get along is a good example of Riyadh's "look east" approach. The kingdom wants to make more

business and security connections as the world changes. This plan will help them do that.

It has been a star in the area as a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC wants to unite the Gulf states around a common idea for a military and economic union. Now that the ban on Qatar is over, Saudi Arabia is trying to bring Iraq into the Arab family. This shows that the country has changed its mind about how to keep the area safe. The U.S. also helped make the Abraham Accords possible. These agreements have changed how the U.S. and Israel do business and talk to each other. The Middle East's government has changed a lot.



CHAPTER FOUR

ADVANCEMENTS AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SAUDI CONTEXT

4.1. Advancements And Digital Transformation

As part of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has embarked on an ambitious digital transformation journey, aiming to harness the power of digital technologies to fuel economic growth, enhance government efficiency, and transform everyday life for its citizens. This strategic pivot towards digitalization is a cornerstone of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan to diversify the economy away from oil dependency and establish Saudi Arabia as a leading global hub for technological innovation.

Vision 2030 recognizes digital transformation as a crucial driver of economic diversification, improved governance, and enhanced quality of life. It integrates cutting-edge technologies across various sectors, including government services, healthcare, education, and the economy, to create a modern state that can adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

4.1.1. National Transformation Program (NTP)

The National Transformation Program, launched as part of Vision 2030, sets specific targets for digital transformation. It aims to increase the efficiency of the public sector by implementing digital solutions, reducing costs, and improving the speed and quality of service delivery. Key initiatives under the NTP include the expansion of e-government services, digital upskilling of the workforce, and support for digital entrepreneurship.

One of the prominent features of Saudi Arabia's digital transformation is the expansion of e-government services through platforms like *Absher* and *Tawakkalna*. These platforms have revolutionized how citizens and residents interact with the government, providing access to a wide range of services from legal documentation to health services, which significantly reduces administrative burdens and improves transparency.

- *Absher*, for instance, allows citizens to perform a variety of governmental procedures online, such as renewing passports, applying for permits, or registering a change of address.
- *Tawakkalna*, developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been pivotal in managing health services and information dissemination related to the virus, showcasing the agile deployment of digital tools in crisis management.

4.1.2. Smart Cities and NEOM

At the forefront of Saudi Arabia's digital transformation are its smart city initiatives, most notably NEOM. NEOM is envisioned as a model for the future global economy that integrates the latest in green technologies, digital infrastructure, public transportation, and artificial intelligence. The project promises to be a living lab for innovation, drawing on best practices from around the world to create a sustainable and futuristic urban environment.

- NEOM's infrastructure includes a significant emphasis on renewable energy sources, particularly solar and wind energy, which align with the Kingdom's sustainability goals.
- Advanced transport systems like autonomous vehicles and high-speed transit options are planned to minimize carbon footprints and enhance connectivity within the city.

4.1.3. Digital Economy and Job Creation

Vision 2030 places a strong emphasis on developing a robust digital economy to foster innovation, attract investments, and create jobs. This strategy includes:

- Encouraging international tech giants and startups to set up regional headquarters in Saudi Arabia.
- Promoting the growth of local tech startups through venture capital funding and incubation programs.

- Developing digital skills among Saudi nationals to prepare them for future jobs through initiatives like *Future Skills*, a program that partners with global institutions to train youth in fields like AI, robotics, and cybersecurity.

4.1.4. Cybersecurity and Data Protection

With the rapid expansion of digital services, cybersecurity remains a critical priority. Saudi Arabia has established the National Cybersecurity Authority to oversee the protection of critical infrastructure and to safeguard personal and government data against cyber threats.

- The authority is tasked with creating a secure cyber environment that can support the nation's ambitious digital goals.
- Comprehensive strategies have been developed to enhance the cybersecurity skills of the workforce and to implement robust cybersecurity standards across all sectors.

4.1.5. Renewable Energy Initiatives

As part of its ambitious Vision 2030 program, Saudi Arabia has committed to transforming its energy sector through extensive renewable energy initiatives. This commitment is not just about reducing the kingdom's dependence on oil but also about leading the region towards a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

Saudi Arabia, historically known as the world's largest oil exporter, is repositioning itself as a global leader in renewable energy with significant investments in solar, wind, and other renewable technologies. These initiatives are integral to the kingdom's Vision 2030 goals of economic diversification, sustainability, and technological innovation.

The move towards renewable energy is driven by several strategic imperatives:

- **Economic Diversification:** Reducing the economy's reliance on oil revenues by investing in renewable energy, which offers new sources of income and employment opportunities.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Addressing global environmental concerns, including climate change and air pollution, which are critical for the kingdom's long-term environmental health.
- **Energy Security:** Enhancing the security of energy supply by reducing the domestic consumption of oil and gas, thereby preserving these resources for export and generating additional revenue.

Saudi Arabia's renewable energy strategy includes several high-profile projects aimed at boosting the country's renewable energy capacity significantly by 2030:

The Saudi Vision 2030 Renewable Energy Program: This program aims to produce 58.7 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy by 2030, with solar energy accounting for the vast majority. The program is divided into several phases, involving both large-scale utility projects and smaller-scale residential solar systems.

NEOM Solar and Wind Projects: As part of the NEOM city project, the development includes plans for a vast deployment of solar and wind facilities that capitalize on the area's abundant sunlight and wind resources. These projects are expected not only to supply energy for NEOM but also potentially to export electricity.

The Red Sea Tourism Project: This ambitious project plans to power its facilities entirely through renewable energy sources. The initiative includes the installation of solar panels and innovative renewable solutions that minimize environmental impact.

The Renewable Energy Project Development Office (REPDO): REPDO manages the competitive process for contracting renewable energy projects, working under the Ministry of Energy, Industry, and Mineral Resources to facilitate and support Saudi Arabia's renewable energy goals.

4.1.6. Future Technologies and Innovations

In addition to solar and wind, Saudi Arabia is exploring other renewable technologies:

Green Hydrogen Projects: NEOM's plans include setting up facilities to produce hydrogen using renewable energy, which can be used in fuel cells for clean transportation solutions.

Geothermal and Marine Energy: Pilot projects are being considered to explore the potential of geothermal energy and the kinetic energy of marine currents, which could provide additional renewable sources to the kingdom's energy mix.

While the ambition is high, the transition to renewable energy in Saudi Arabia faces challenges:

Infrastructure Development: Building the necessary infrastructure to support a widespread renewable energy network is capital intensive and technically complex.

Regulatory Frameworks: Establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework to manage this new energy system is crucial for attracting investments and ensuring project viability.

Cultural and Economic Adjustments: Transitioning from an oil-based economy requires significant cultural and economic adjustments, including workforce retraining and creating public awareness about the benefits of renewable energy.

Saudi Arabia's renewable energy initiatives represent a transformative component of its Vision 2030 objectives. By investing in renewable resources, Saudi Arabia is not only enhancing its energy sustainability but is also positioning itself as a leader in the global energy transition. The success of these initiatives will play a critical role in determining the kingdom's economic future and its contribution to global environmental goals. As these projects continue to evolve, they will undoubtedly influence the broader regional and international energy landscapes.

4.1.7. Science and Technology Policies

As part of its Vision 2030 blueprint, Saudi Arabia has committed to a transformational journey not only to diversify its economy but also to establish a knowledge-based economy. This ambition is anchored strongly in the development and

implementation of forward-thinking science and technology policies that aim to stimulate innovation, support research and development (R&D), and prepare the Kingdom for the technological demands of the future.

The strategic importance of science and technology in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is evident through its comprehensive policies aimed at integrating advanced technologies into the economy, enhancing educational systems to focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and fostering a culture of innovation across all sectors.

The main objectives of Saudi Arabia's science and technology policies under Vision 2030 include:

- **Innovation Enhancement:** Promote and support innovation in technology and sciences to improve competitiveness in the global market.
- **R&D Infrastructure:** Build state-of-the-art research facilities and foster collaborations between universities, private companies, and international research centers.
- **Human Capital Development:** Develop a skilled workforce proficient in new technologies and capable of driving the country's innovation ecosystem.
- **Economic Diversification:** Reduce the dependency on oil by promoting technological advancements in various economic sectors, including renewable energy, biotechnology, information technology, and artificial intelligence.

4.1.8. Education and Workforce Development

Education policies under Vision 2030 emphasize STEM education and aim to prepare young Saudis for the technological jobs of the future:

- **Expansion of STEM Education:** Educational reforms have been implemented to integrate STEM subjects early in school curriculums to boost interest and proficiency in sciences and technology.

- **Scholarships for Advanced Studies:** The government offers scholarships for students to study at top global universities, focusing on fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and green technologies.
- **Vocational Training and Continuous Learning:** Vocational training centers and online learning platforms are being developed to provide continuous learning opportunities for the workforce, ensuring they stay relevant in an evolving job market.

Enhancing the R&D ecosystem is central to Saudi Arabia's technological ambitions:

- **Research Grants and Funding:** Significant funding has been allocated to universities and research centers to undertake projects in priority areas. This includes grants for both basic and applied research.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encouraging collaboration between public institutions and private enterprises to drive innovation and commercialize research findings.
- **Innovation Hubs and Incubators:** Establishment of technology parks and business incubators, such as the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) and Dhahran Techno Valley, which provide an ecosystem for innovation and commercialization of technology.

4.2. Structural Transformation Theory and its application in the Saudi Context

4.2.1. Structural Transformation Theory Definition

Structural Transformation Theory has to do with the study of changes in structure which happen to societies as they move from traditional economic, social, and political stages to more advanced ones. The idea of this theory is based on understanding how the economic and social structure gradually changes through the reallocation of resources between different economic sectors. This shift reflects the transition from economies based on agriculture or natural resource extraction to modern economies focused on industry and services, improving the level of productivity and distribution within society.

According to Kuznets, 1971, structural transformation is "a process that shifts the focus from low-productivity sectors to high-productivity sectors, enhancing economic growth and raising the living standards of individuals." This shows that structural transformation encompasses not only economic transformation but also a holistic process in which changes occur in all aspects of social and political life.

4.2.2. The Importance of Structural Transformation Theory

The importance of structural transformation theory lies in the fact that it explains how traditional rentier economies can be transformed into diversified economies reliant on modern sectors. Structural transformation is necessary to achieve sustainable economic growth that does not rely solely on a single sector, such as oil, but rather on many economic sources. Saudi Arabia is a prime example of this process. Vision 2030 aims to transform the Saudi economy from an oil-based economy to a diversified economy that relies on industry, tourism, renewable energy, and technology.

Structural transformation is, according to McMillan & Rodrik (2011), "a critical factor in improving economic productivity and achieving sustainable development by changing the structure of the national economy so that it expands into new sectors and reduces reliance on traditional sectors." This is clearly seen in Saudi Arabia's strategy aimed at reducing dependence on oil. Besides economic change itself, structural transformation presupposes far-reaching social changes. In Saudi Arabia, structural change has brought about wide repercussions on the structures of Saudi society, especially in women's empowerment, education, and issues of human rights. For example, women have been allowed to drive and work in previously prohibited fields. These do not aim at achieving only social justice but also in providing human capital that will add to the development of the economy.

As Kinninmont (2017) denotes, "Saudi Arabia's social reforms are part of the structural transformation strategies that look toward changing the social composition to become more inclusive and educated in order to contribute effectively in the economy." This reveals that structural transformation in Saudi Arabia is not limited to an economic perspective but also entails radical social composition.

The theory is not confined to the economic and social dimensions but also extends to the political dimensions. Structural transformation requires political reforms in line with economic and social changes, such as improving governance, promoting transparency, and tackling corruption. In Saudi Arabia, political reforms were part of Vision 2030, which aimed at improving the business environment and promoting political stability.

In the words of Lynch (2018), "Saudi Arabia's political reforms represent an important step toward structural transformation, whereby the leadership pursues the modernization and development of administrative structures and promotes transparency and accountability." This indicates the important role of Saudi Arabia's leadership in implementing political reforms that support economic and social transformation in equal measure.

4.2.3. Dimensions of Structural Transformation Theory

Structural transformation is an all-encompassing process aimed at effecting fundamental changes in the structure of the economy, society, and politics with a view toward sustainable development. The process depends on an interacting set of dimensions that support one another to create comprehensive and integrated transformation.

4.2.3.1. Economic dimension

The diversification of income sources, the rise in productivity, and sustainable job opportunities are part and parcel of structural transformation-economic transformation-that forms one of the very significant pillars of this process. In the nature of transition from reliance on traditional sectors, which would include agriculture and extractive resources like oil and gas to modern ones: technology, manufacturing, and advanced services, the economic transformation rests.

The literature on the subject argues that economic transformation requires integrated strategies, including investment in infrastructure, innovation stimulation, and development of human skills for emerging sectors. As Rodrik (2016) explained:

Structural transformation is not only about the reallocation of resources across sectors but also, importantly, about productivity enhancements within these sectors through innovation and technological development.

This approach enhances the economy's resilience and ability to adapt to global changes, such as shifts in energy markets or digital advances.

4.2.3.2. The social dimension

The structural transformation is also interwoven with social transformation, which centers on human capital development and the realization of social justice. This includes investing in education, empowering women, and reducing the socio-economic gap between different groups in society.

According to a World Bank report, 2020:

Improving Education and developing human skills are the key to sustainable social transformation in that it enhances productivity and promotes an active participation in the economic cycle.

Empowerment of women is one of the vital components of social transformation that influences economic and social development. These are usually associated with the development of integral social protection programs to step up social security.

4.2.3.3. Political dimension

The political dimension of structural transformation revolves around strengthening governance, transparency, and institutional stability. Political and administrative reforms are essential to facilitate structural transformation, as they create an environment conducive to attracting investment, enhancing trust in institutions, and ensuring sustainability.

Hertog (2020) noted that:

“Successful political transformation depends on restructuring institutional systems to ensure efficiency and transparency in resource management and enhance accountability.

These below efforts include reforming the administrative system to keep pace with economic and social changes, including streamlining government procedures, fighting corruption, and ensuring the rule of law.

Yet again, one should consider that these three dimensions are not mutually exclusive, but largely intertwined for holistic transformation to take place. The economic changes create a favorable environment for social development; political reforms support economic and social trends by way of creating a better business climate and maintaining stability. Any backwardness along one of these dimensions may significantly hamper the advancement of structural transformation in general. It is a long-term process that needs to be grounded on a clear strategic vision, with sustained investments across all economic, social, and political dimensions. Cross-sectoral cooperation, active participation of all parties concerned, is of crucial importance for such transformation that would certainly enhance the countries' capacity to respond to current and future challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

5.1. Methods of analysis

Content analysis: Used to analyze official texts and speeches to extract key messages and understand the content of policies and reforms.

Contextual comparison: A careful comparison between the structural transformation experiences of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to identify similarities and differences.

Drawing lessons learned: The successes and challenges faced by other countries are analyzed to provide recommendations for Saudi Arabia's reform process.

5.2. Analysis and Results

The study relies on the theory of structural transformation to explain the dynamics of change. The theory focuses on how to move from reliance on traditional sectors to modern sectors, while promoting sustainable development at all levels.

The study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of structural transformations in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman, while comparing it with the experiences of other Gulf countries. Through a comprehensive methodology that relies on qualitative and comparative analysis, the study seeks to highlight the strengths and challenges of these transformations, and provide a broader insight into the role of leadership and reforms in achieving sustainable development.

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the structural transformations that have taken place in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). The analysis is based on the theory of structural transformation, focusing on the economic, social, and political reforms implemented under Saudi Vision 2030. These transformations will be studied extensively using secondary sources such as official speeches, international reports, academic studies, and media reports.

5.2.1. Content analysis

In fact, to carry out a large-scale content analysis based on the structural transformation theory, I depend on an array of documents that include reports, research, and major speeches related to economic, social, and political transformations in Saudi Arabia. I will create a table of these documents, analyze each document within the framework of structural transformation theory.

Table 1. Documentary analysis: Studying a collection of documents

N	Document Type	Title/Topic	Source	Analyzing the document within the framework of structural transformation theory
1	Government Report	Saudi Vision 2030	Ministry of Economy, 2016	The report seeks to reduce dependence on oil and promote non-oil sectors. It is consistent with structural transformation, which requires restructuring the economic system in line with global changes.
2	Letter	Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 speech	Mohammed bin Salman, 2017	The speech clarifies the strategic directions towards a non-oil economy and is in line with the structural transformation by focusing on the private sector and investing in technology and renewable energy.
3	Academic Study	Economic transformation in Saudi Arabia	Kinninmont, 2017	The study shows an in-depth analysis of the transformation of the Saudi economy towards economic diversification, reflecting the structural transformation that requires greater diversity in the socio-economic structure.
4	International Report	Human Development Report 2020	United Nations, 2020	The report discusses socio-economic transformations in Saudi Arabia such as women's empowerment and improving education, which is directly linked to the structural transformation that aims to change the social and political structure.
5	Academic Study	Social reforms in Saudi Arabia	Hertog, 2020	The study focuses on women's empowerment and other social changes that represent key dimensions of structural transformation in the Kingdom. These changes indicate a restructuring of social and economic relations.
6	Government Report	Saudi Energy Strategy 2030	Ministry of Energy, 2021	The report highlights the shift in the energy sector from oil to renewable energy. It corresponds to the structural transformation through the energy transition to more sustainable alternatives.
7	Academic Study	Political transformations in Saudi Arabia	Lynch, 2018	The study discusses political reforms and transparency in Saudi Arabia, which is in line with the structural transformation that requires the restructuring of government agencies and public policies.
8	Letter	Mohammed bin Salman's speech at the G20 summit	Mohammed bin Salman, 2020	The speech reflects strategic directions in politics and economics in the context of structural transformation, promoting an inclusive future that enhances the Kingdom's global competitiveness.
9	International Report	International Transparency Index	Transparency International, 2021	The report highlights Saudi efforts to promote transparency and combat corruption, which is an essential part of the structural transformation of government institutions.
10	Academic Study	Women in the Saudi labor market	Al-Fahad, 2019	The study examines the changes in the role of women in the Saudi economy, a structural shift in economic and social relations in the Kingdom.
11	Government Report	The future of smart cities: NEOM project	Ministry of Economy, 2021	The report showcases the Kingdom's vision for structural transformation in the development of smart cities such as NEOM, reflecting the trend towards a digital and sustainable economy.
12	Academic Study	Developments in higher education in Saudi Arabia	Al-Mulhim, 2020	The study examines reforms in higher education and vocational training, part of the structural transformation that aims to improve the educational structure to empower Saudi youth.

Saudi Arabia is an ambitious project that aims to bring about sweeping changes in the economic, social, and political structure of the kingdom. This analysis is based on a review of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's speeches and academic studies that shed light on the structural dimensions of these transformations.

5.2.1.1. Analysis Of Official Speeches

1. Mohammed bin Salman's 2017 speech: The Starting Point for Comprehensive Economic Transformation

In this speech, the crown prince referred to the need to move from an oil-dependent economy to a diversified economy that supports innovation and the digital economy. He said:

“ We aim to create a more diversified and stronger economy by focusing on innovation and the digital economy” (Bin Salman, 2017).

It is, in fact, the formal proclamation of the beginning of this path of structural transformation. This focus on digitization and innovation reflects a broader trend of restructuring traditional economies in a more sustainable way toward resilient challenges.

2. Mohammed bin Salman's G20 2020 speech: Focus on women and youth empowerment

The Crown Prince declared the importance of empowering women and youth, saying:

“Through innovative development strategies, we seek to build an open and diverse society that supports women and youth to be at the center of national development”.

This speech reflects a fundamental social shift, with the kingdom striving to expand the base of participation in the labor market. The emphasis on women's empowerment serves to dismantle the traditional social structure that has so far

circumscribed their role, while the empowerment of youth strengthens their leading role in development projects.

3. Mohammed bin Salman's Saudi Green Initiative 2021 Speech: Environmental Sustainability as a New Pivot

The Crown Prince emphasized the Kingdom's commitment to sustainability, saying:

“ We aim to reduce carbon emissions and create a green economy based on sustainable energy sources ” (Bin Salman, 2021).

This speech represents a fundamental environmental shift towards building a green economy centered on renewable energy and low-carbon technologies. This commitment reflects the reshaping of the economic structure in order to stand in line with the global environmental agenda, enhancing resilience and the sustainability of the Saudi economy.

4. Mohammed bin Salman's National Investment Strategy 2021: Attracting global investment

As part of the National Investment Strategy, the Crown Prince announced:

“ Attracting local and international investments estimated at 12 trillion riyals to achieve the goals of Vision 2030 ”.

This statement underpins investment as one of the primary drivers for economic transformation. The Kingdom is setting out to create an environment for emerging industries like Artificial Intelligence and FinTech and calls for developing a flexible business climate that would support local and international investments.

5.2.1.2. Analysis Of Previous Studies

1. Kinninmont (2017): Economic Diversification as a Priority

The research explored the economic dimensions of Vision 2030, articulating that economic diversification marks a necessary starting point in the process of change. In such light, it has been explained that historical dependence on oil has rendered Saudi Arabia vulnerable to economic changes determined by global price fluctuations.

It also underlined the new sectors that Saudi Arabia is looking to develop, including tourism, entertainment, and manufacturing, which will help reduce the dependence on oil. Besides, it highlighted the pivotal role of investing in innovation and technology.

Transformation takes time to change the traditional economic structure, which means flexible strategies are needed to deal with financial and human challenges during the transition period.

2. Hertog (2020): Challenges of Structural Transformation

This study dealt with structural and social challenges facing Vision 2030. The researcher noted that structural transformation in Saudi Arabia requires reworking social and economic relations, which is complex in a conservative society.

Hertog suggested that traditional groups might hold fewer friendly views toward new reforms; particularly, those touching on issues relevant to the role of women and youth.

The Saudi Arabian government needs to balance economic and social reforms with the maintenance of stability in the social and political system, entailing a complex challenge for managing transition.

3. Al-Fahad (2019): Women's Empowerment as a Tool for Social Change

The study focused on the role that can be played by women in societal transformation amidst Vision 2030, addressing issues relative to progress done in terms of integrating women within the labor markets and increasing economic participation by such women.

Their studies are showing that women's contribution to the labor market could increase from 20 percent to 30 percent until the end of year 2020, emphasizing in the new legislation supporting this, like easing work and travel restrictions.

She noted that women's empowerment contributes to social justice and sustainable development. The study added, however, that overcoming stereotypes requires constant efforts in creating long-lasting change.

4. Al-Mulhim (2020): Education as a Pivot for Economic Transformation

This study focused on the role of education in attaining the goals of Vision 2030. It explained that human capital development is the cornerstone of any sustainable economic transformation.

The study addressed the need to redesign higher education programs to align with the requirements of the future labor market, especially in technical sectors. It has underlined the training of young people for technology, artificial intelligence, and innovation.

It is emphasized in this study that to change the education system takes time and huge investment; at the same time, creating an appropriate infrastructure is required along with involving the private sector to support technical and technical education.

5. According to the IMF report (2023), the Saudi economy has seen remarkable growth in the non-oil sectors, with the non-oil sector growing by 5.5% in 2022. This sector is expected to contribute 40% of GDP by 2030, reflecting the deep structural transformation the Kingdom is undergoing.

One outstanding example of such transformation is the NEOM project-a smart city based on advanced technology in transportation, energy, and communications. The project is expected to provide about 380,000 jobs in 2039 and a further step towards developing the Saudi economy away from oil dependence (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

Saudi Arabia is also developing its position in renewable energy, striving to be one of the largest producers of solar energy in the world. The transformation does not stop at industrial sectors; it also includes digital transformation, whereby the Kingdom is developing an enabling environment for technological innovation, making it one of the largest technology markets in the Middle East.

Social transformations in Saudi Arabia are recording tangible progress, with many reforms that have been advanced to raise the social and economic status of individuals in society. Among these transformations, the most striking is the empowerment of women, through several initiatives launched to increase their participation in the labor market by improving laws that allow women to participate in various economic sectors.

6. According to Kinninmont (2017), “the Kingdom's social reforms represent an important step towards a more diverse and inclusive society,” reflecting the significant impact these changes are having on the overall lives of Saudis. For instance, the labor market participation of women has increased from 18% in 2010 to 30% in 2023, which is proof of significant strides in the realm of women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is focusing its efforts on the development of an educational sector to meet global needs. It also has set up a large number of universities and advanced research centers with programs offering highly technical educations in various subjects. Additionally, with education, comes the enhancement of the Saudi youth's technological capabilities and preparedness for the future.

Moreover, the Kingdom has undergone changes in cultural openness, such as allowing major cultural and artistic events, including the Juwayriyah Festival and other events that enhance Saudi culture and art. These changes reflect the desire of the kingdom to make it an entity capable of interacting with global cultures.

The political reforms are the most important aspect of structural transformation in Saudi Arabia. In fact, under Vision 2030, the Saudi government aims to modernize the political and administrative system of the kingdom in an effort to ensure

transparency, combat corruption, and achieve good governance. To that end, the National Anti-Corruption Commission was established to combat corruption in the public sector, reflecting the state's desire to improve the business environment and community engagement.

7.As Lynch (2018) emphasized in his study, “Saudi Arabia is adopting a set of political reforms aimed at improving government performance and enhancing transparency, which enhances the confidence of citizens and investors in the Saudi political system.” These efforts are aimed at achieving political stability that supports economic and social change.

Legal legislation has also been continuously updated to support economic growth, including the improvement of the legal environment for the private sector and enhancement of investors' rights. In addition, the kingdom seeks to restore political stability at the regional level by enhancing its regional role and foreign relations.

Saudi Arabia tries to enhance its regional and international role through the building of strategic alliances with GCC countries, the United States, and Asian countries, raising its capability to influence regional and international politics. The stability of the environment is a result of this, contributing to economic development and structural reforms.

8.Peterson (2021) also noted that “Saudi Arabia seeks to diversify its foreign relations and focuses on enhancing the stability of the region by building strong strategic alliances with major powers”.

Despite the significant progress in the implementation of the theory of structural transformation in Saudi Arabia, its implementation still faces some challenges. The most prominent of these challenges is social resistance from some traditional groups in Saudi society, who may not be accepting of rapid changes. The Kingdom also faces challenges related to foreign labor, as the Saudi economy is reliant on foreign labor, which acts as an obstacle to the full implementation of structural transformation.

9.Hertog (2020) noted that “Saudi Arabia's structural transformation faces significant challenges, particularly with resistance to change from some traditional forces in society, as well as difficulties related to the kingdom's dependence on foreign labor”. However, despite these challenges, the Saudi government continues its work to modernize the labor market and increase the employment of citizens in various economic sectors; this is part of structural reforms within the kingdom. These challenges require the adoption of new policies that correspond to the structural transformations that the Kingdom is witnessing.

Other ingredients of the structural transformation have to do with economic reforms, as Saudi Arabia diversifies its economy by shoring up non-oil sectors: tourism, renewable energy, and technology. The Saudi Vision 2030 report estimates that billions of dollars have been channeled into key projects that should wean the country from depending on oil, including solar energy projects that will create as many as 15,000 jobs by 2030.

These include activating renewable energy and supporting sustainable tourism through initiatives such as NEOM, Qiddiya, and King Salman Energy City. These economic reforms are a key element in the sustainability of the Saudi economy away from dependence on oil.

5.2.2. Thematic analysis within the framework of structural transformation theory

Saudi Vision 2030 (Ministry of Economy, 2016) and the government report on Energy Strategy 2030 (Ministry of Energy, 2021) are consistent with the theory of structural transformation in that they focus on restructuring the economy away from oil dependence and toward renewable energy, technology, and the private sector. These economic shifts show how economic systems are being adjusted to keep up with global changes.

5.2.2.1. Social reforms and women's empowerment

According to Hertog (2020) and Al-Fahad (2019), it can be seen that the Kingdom has changed its social structure by empowering women in the labor market and education, reflecting a structural transformation that contributes to stimulating the entire society towards social and economic progress.

The political transformations analyzed by Lynch (2018?) and Transparency International 2021 show ways to advance transparency and combat corruption as part of political structural transformation. Such political reforms seek to enhance the performance of governments and reduce institutional obstacles to structural change.

5.2.2.2. Cultural shifts and social relations

Discourses such as Mohammed bin Salman's speech at the G20 Summit (2020), and the academic study by Kinninmont in 2017 on the issue of cultural transformations are testimony that the Kingdom is elaborating a new social culture, representative of the changing contributions to the restructuring of Saudi society. This will go in tandem with a structural transformation, which needs its social structures to be changed to make them more inclusive and diverse.

5.2.2.3. Saudi Arabia's Economic Transformation

Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman, is seeking a structural transformation in the structure of the national economy. The aim of the economic reforms was to reduce dependence on oil as the main source of revenue by diversifying the Saudi economy through the development of other sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, technology, and non-oil industries.

One of the main pillars of the economic reforms in Saudi Vision 2030 is to increase the diversification of the national economy. In this vision, the kingdom seeks to broaden the base of its economy away from a heavy reliance on oil through massive investments in non-oil projects. Among these, one of the most visible projects is the smart city NEOM, which is located on the Red Sea coast. The Saudi Ministry of

Economy reported in 2022 that NEOM is "one of the largest development projects in the region, seeking to develop economic and innovative zones in a number of areas such as renewable energy, technology, and high-tech industries" (Ministry of Economy, 2022).

The share of oil in the Kingdom's GDP has also been on a gradual decline, as depicted by economic statistics. Oil comprised about 40% of GDP in 2020, while in 2023, the share dropped to about 30%, according to the IMF report (2023). This shift represents an important step toward achieving the Saudi Vision's goals of economic diversification and increasing reliance on non-oil sectors.

This aspect involves the development of the tourism sector, as the Kingdom is seeking to attract foreign investment in this sector. By launching mega projects such as the Red Sea Project and Qiddiya, the Kingdom aims to turn tourism into a major source of non-oil revenue. According to the World Bank report (2023), Saudi Arabia seeks for the tourism sector to be an essential part of the economy, with its contribution reaching 10% of GDP by 2030.

On this one, there has equally been massive development in Vision 2030 in respect to renewable energy, where it will make 50 percent production toward its commitment into renewable by the end of 2030 to move its people off polluting conventional sources into cleanliness, which means environmentally sustainability for the kingdom in all respect. (Hertog, 2020).

Table 2. Saudi Arabia's economic transformation

Sector	Data/Indicators	Source	Notes
GDP	Increase in non-oil GDP (2020)	Saudi General Authority for Statistics	Non-oil sectors to grow by 5% in 2020
Investment in Renewable Energy	Investments in solar and wind energy projects (2020)	Saudi Ministry of Energy	\$10 billion pumped into renewable energy projects
NEOM Projects	\$500 billion budget allocated for NEOM project	Al-Riyadh Newspaper	NEOM project aims to create a non-oil economy

5.2.2.4. Social Transformations in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi leadership is seeking, through women's empowerment, education, and cultural openness, to achieve fundamental changes in the structure of Saudi society. These social transformations come within an integrative project for sustainable development that encompasses all segments of society.

The most outstanding feature of social transformation in Saudi Arabia has been the empowerment of women. In this regard, the Kingdom has undertaken several reforms over the past few years, where in 2018, women were allowed to drive cars, and this was a landmark moment for women's rights in the Kingdom. Many opportunities have also been opened up for women in the field of work, as many sectors that were previously prohibited for women have been identified, such as the buying and selling sectors in markets.

The World Economic Forum report, 2023, showed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had been on the move in reducing the gender gap. The country moved from 140th place in 2017 to 95th in 2023. This is a sign of the determination of the state in making sure all members of society, including women, are given equal opportunities.

Another aspect of the social reforms is the expansion of education: the Kingdom embarked on reforming the education system to meet the requirements for the new knowledge economy. The Ministry of Education, in a report issued in 2021, emphasized the importance of providing equal educational opportunities to all, opening the way for Saudi youth to participate in modern industries such as artificial intelligence, big data, and modern technology. Furthermore, there has been some cultural opening in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030, whereby cultural and entertainment activities have been allowed to hold openly, including concerts, film festivals, and international sports events. All these changes help promote Saudi cultural identity and reflect the will of the Kingdom to become part of the global knowledge economy.

Table 3. Social Transformations Analysis Table

Domain	Data/Indicators	Source	Notes
Women's Empowerment	Increase women's participation in the workforce to 22% (2020)	Saudi General Authority for Statistics	Increasing the percentage of women in leadership positions
Education	Implement programs to develop university education and increase international partnerships	Saudi Ministry of Education	Enhancing digital education in Saudi universities
Cultural Changes	Organize concerts and festivals in the Kingdom	Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper	Supporting cultural and artistic openness within Vision 2030

5.2.2.5. Political Transformations in Saudi Arabia

The political transformations in Saudi Arabia are part and parcel of the structural transformation that is happening in the Kingdom, including modernizing the political and administrative system to offer a more propitious environment for investment and development. Among these reforms, the most conspicuous ones are the improvement of transparency, fighting corruption, and human rights.

In the light of Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom has made giant strides in the fight against corruption, starting with the 2017 corruption arrest campaign that included prominent figures from the royal family, businessmen, and government officials. It also established the National Anti-Corruption Commission with the aim of enhancing transparency and reducing corruption in all sectors. According to the report from Transparency International, 2022, the Kingdom has improved its business environment by enhancing the laws and regulations that ensure fairness in procedures and combating corruption. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is working on renewing the administrative system to guarantee the speed and efficiency of decision-making. It has established a number of independent government bodies, such as the Local Content and Government Procurement Authority, with the aim of reducing bureaucracy and enhancing administrative efficiency. These political reforms create an enabling environment for the private sector and local and international investors.

Table 4. Political transformation analysis table:

Politics	Data/Indicators	Source	Notes
Administrative Reforms	Developing the transparency system in government departments	Ministry of Civil Service	Government Oversight and Transparency Reports
General Anti-Corruption Authority	Reducing corruption through reform strategies	National Anti-Corruption Commission	Increased investigations and prosecution of high-level corrupt individuals
Legal Reforms	Legal amendments to enhance human rights	Saudi Ministry of Justice	Implementation of new laws related to the protection of human rights

An expanded comparison between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar in the context of structural transformation theory

5.2.3. Comparative analysis

Theory of structural transformation is a comprehensive means of studying the dynamic process of change that occurs in economies, societies, and political systems when countries move away from traditional agriculturally oriented economies to modern industrial, service-based economies. The transformation involves drastic changes on many fronts, ranging from the redistribution of resources to the changes in the labor market, technological change, institutional change, and social and political realignments. The theory explains how economic development and growth result in income distribution, urbanization, education, and overall welfare of society to transform (Sachs & Warner, 2015).

In the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, structural transformation theory provides a paradigm to understand how these countries have utilized their natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons, to drive economic diversification, modernization, and social development. Though the three countries started at a similar juncture as resource-rich Gulf states, their strategies and achievements in terms of structural transformation present sharp contrasts due to differences in policy choices, patterns of investments, and institutional reform (Cohen, 2016).

5.2.3.1. Economic transformation

1. Saudi Arabia

As the largest economy in the Gulf Cooperation Council, Saudi Arabia has taken a giant leap to diversify its economy away from oil with its Vision 2030 initiative. The initiative focuses on industrial diversification, innovation, and development of non-oil sectors such as tourism, entertainment, and technology. Structural change is witnessed in its transition towards privatization, foreign investment openings, and mega-projects such as NEOM and the Red Sea Project. These reforms are complemented by social reforms including women empowerment, education modernization, and easing of social restraints (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

Saudi Arabia is experiencing a revolutionary economic and social change, spurred by Vision 2030, a wide-ranging strategic vision that seeks to end the nation's reliance on oil revenues while stimulating economic diversification and modernization of society. The ambitious plan relies on mega investments, institutional overhaul, and emphasis on innovation and sustainability. One of the earliest movers in this shift is NEOM, a \$500 billion future city designed to be a global hub for technology, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence. NEOM will draw international talent and investment by providing a cutting-edge quality-of-life experience powered solely by renewable energy. The second key component is the Red Sea Project, which leverages Saudi Arabia's natural coastal assets to create a world-class luxury tourism resort, complementing the country's vision to position tourism as a strategic pillar of the economy. The efforts are bearing fruit with the growth of the Saudi non-oil economy by 5.4% in 2021, a remarkable performance amidst global economic uncertainty (World Bank, 2022). In addition, the country is striving to develop the private sector, foreign direct investment, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Social reforms, including expanding the participation of women in the labor market and easing cultural restrictions, have been accompanied by economic programs, propelling Saudi Arabia's structural transformation (World Bank, 2022).

2. United Arab Emirates

The UAE is one of the best examples of rapid and well-designed economic transformation in the Middle East. Its vision, grounded in long-term goals like the UAE Vision 2021 and the Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy, prioritizes a commitment to sustainability, the adoption of technology, and international competitiveness. The diversification of its economy has enabled the UAE to attain since non-oil sectors currently account for over 70% of GDP (IMF, 2021). Tourism, financial services, logistics, and real estate are some of the major sources of this diversification. Cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi are now global hubs for business, innovation, and culture with millions of visitors and investors coming to seek their opportunities every year. The tourism sector, in particular, is a pillar of the economy of the UAE, supported by top-class infrastructure, iconic developments, and international events such as Expo 2020 Dubai, which showed the country's vision for sustainable and inclusive development (UAE Vision 2021, 2017).

Expatriates are also the force driving the economic transformation and labor market in the UAE and constitute a large majority of the population. The UAE has taken steps to make room for global talent, including long-term residency visas, improved work environments, and entrepreneurship-friendly policies. Besides, the UAE is investing heavily in renewable energy projects, i.e., Masdar City, and leading the clean technology sector, which reflects its commitment to sustainable development and green economy aspirations (Soubra, 2021; Smith, 2020). Through a series of such efforts, the UAE has been able to diversify its economy and gain increased global competitiveness (Kumar & Shah, 2022).

3. Qatar

Qatar's economy is guided by the Qatar National Vision 2030 that seeks to diversify Qatar's economy, reduce its dependence on hydrocarbons, and create a sustainable, knowledge-based economy. Despite these aspirations, Qatar's economy remains dominated by the LNG industry that produces the overwhelming majority of revenues. This reliance poses a challenge to economic diversification in general. To

address this, Qatar has invested in the establishment of world-class infrastructure, enhanced education, and innovation. The establishment of Education City, a group of world-class universities and research institutions, is evidence of the investment in human capital development (Al-Kuwari, 2021). Furthermore, the 2022 FIFA World Cup has been a driver for mega-infrastructure projects, such as stadiums, transport networks, and urban planning, in an attempt to continue transforming the country (Hassan & Youssef, 2020). Even though these attempts are a step in the right direction, Qatar's economy faces structural impediments to mitigating its vulnerability to LNG export reliance. Even with massive non-oil investment, the OECD (2021) adds, gas exports remain the focus of the country's economy. However, Qatar is employing its riches to establish sovereign wealth funds, i.e., the Qatar Investment Authority, that invest strategically across global markets in order to provide long-term economic security and diversification (OECD, 2021; Al-Fahad, 2022).

Table 5. Comparative Economic Transformation

Metric	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates	Qatar
GDP (2023, USD)	\$1.02 trillion	\$507 billion	\$216 billion
Non-Oil GDP Contribution	~50%	~70%	~42%
FDI Inflows (2022, USD)	\$7.9 billion	\$25 billion	\$5.7 billion
Sovereign Wealth Fund Assets	\$776 billion (PIF)	\$830 billion (ADIA)	\$475 billion (QIA)
Unemployment Rate	8.0%	3.4%	0.1% (one of the lowest globally)

5.2.3.2. Social Transformation

1. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has undergone an unprecedented transformation over the past few years, particularly in terms of social and cultural development. These changes are part of Vision 2030's broader ambitions, which embrace not only economic diversification but also social development, gender equality, and cultural openness. Most evident among the social transformations has occurred in the area of women empowerment. Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in improving women's employment. The International Labor Organization (ILO) (2022) states that the proportion of the labor market held by women has grown from 19% in 2016 to 33% in 2022. This is due to

policy reforms that have relaxed constraints on women's rights, including the opening of the driving career for women and new employment opportunities in the majority of sectors (Rashid, 2022). These plans reflect Saudi Arabia's commitment to incorporating gender as its own part of modernizing society. Alongside gender equality, a Quality of Life Program to improve the overall standard of living has been launched. The program focuses on enriching Saudi society's social and cultural life by building leisure activities, quality of urban spaces, and supporting cultural events and activities that facilitate openness (Saudi Vision 2030, 2020). It seeks to make society more vibrant and diverse, making Saudi Arabia an even more desirable destination to domestic and foreign communities alike. In addition, entertainment, tourism, and sports reforms are driving the Kingdom's drive to diversify the economy and reposition its social brand (Al-Mohammed, 2021).

2. United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is situated in a special position in the Gulf with an extremely diverse and cosmopolitan population, of which approximately 85% are expatriates. This has had an impact on the country's social policy, education, and innovation. Social policies in the UAE are closely related to the strategic development of building a knowledge-based economy, and human capital formation and education are among the central pillars (Khan & Sayeed, 2021). The UAE has invested significantly in building a world-class education system, with some of the best international universities and institutions in the world. New York University Abu Dhabi is among the world's best institutions to establish a campus in the UAE, demonstrating the country's commitment to academic excellence and innovation (Al-Mansoori, 2022). The presence of these world-class universities in the UAE has also helped to establish the UAE as a global hub for education, research, and innovation. The focus on education is complemented by the push to develop highly skilled, multinational professionals that put the UAE at the cutting edge of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and beyond. With its educational progress, the UAE has also initiated social reforms that are more inclusive and tolerant in nature, with the vision of creating a more open society. Among these reforms are policies of expatriate integration, embracing diversity in cultural and religious practices, and promoting gender equality. These policies create

a cosmopolitan environment that is attractive to both investors and expatriates and make the UAE a leading business and cultural hub in the Middle East (Gulf News, 2021).

3. Qatar

The social and educational developments in Qatar have played a critical role in the country's attempt to position itself as a regional and global leader in knowledge-based sectors. Qatar National Vision 2030 emphasizes the development of human capital by heavily investing in education, research, and social infrastructure. The most evident feature of Qatar's education reform is the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development, which has established branches of prestigious international universities in Qatar. Weill Cornell Medical College Qatar, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, and Northwestern University Qatar are some of the universities that deliver top-class education in various fields, making Qatar's vision of an intellectual and academic excellence center a reality (Al-Kuwari, 2021; Hassan & Youssef, 2020). The project not only improves the country's education system but also attracts global talent and builds a well-trained and competitive labor force. Qatar's dedication to education is evidenced by its high levels of spending in the sector, which have surpassed those of most other Gulf countries. The World Bank (2020) continues that Qatar's spending on education has positioned the country at the top of destinations for higher education in the region, making the country competitive in the global knowledge economy. In addition to education, Qatar has also built social infrastructure that supports a high quality of life, such as healthcare, housing, and social services (Al-Fahad, 2022). The nation's attempt to build an educated and inclusive society is demonstrated through the hosting of major global events, including the 2022 FIFA World Cup, that have served as a platform to demonstrate Qatar's cultural and structural advancement (Carnegie Endowment, 2021).

Table 6. Comparative Social Transformation

Metric	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates	Qatar
Workforce Participation (Women)	33% (2022)	18%	37%
Education Spending (% of GDP)	~4.6%	~3.2%	~6.2%
Population (2023)	36 million	9.9 million	3 million
Expatriate Population (%)	~40%	~85%	~90%

5.2.3.3. Political Transformation

1. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a multi-faceted political transformation in line with its Vision 2030 strategy. The transformation is intended to consolidate governance, increase transparency, and promote the interests of hitherto marginalized groups like women. One of the core political transformations is the representation of women in the Shura Council, which is an advisory body that helps shape the legislative agenda of the country. Through enhancing political decision-making roles of women, Saudi Arabia shows that it is committed to modernizing political institutions and promoting gender equality (Al-Mohammed, 2021). Apart from internal reforms, Saudi Arabia is committed to expanding its regional and global influence through strategic political and economic alignments. The Kingdom has signed numerous diplomatic and trade treaties, cementing its position in organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab League, and OPEC. Aside from this, Saudi Arabia has gone out of its way to forge alliances with superpowers such as the United States, China, and Russia as part of a move to diversify its foreign policy and emerge as a bigger player in global politics. These steps, in the view of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2022), are at the core of Saudi Arabia's elevated political function both within the Gulf and internationally.

2. United Arab Emirates

The UAE has a well-deserved reputation for focusing on political stability and managing the economy. The country's political framework has a combination of centralized leadership and wide-ranging autonomy granted to every emirate. Political stability in the UAE has been one of the forces driving its economic growth and

emergence as a regional economic and cultural center. The government in the country has invested heavily in ensuring that there is a politically stable environment conducive to innovation and foreign investment (Kumar & Shah, 2022). Politically, the UAE has taken a leading role in the region, particularly in conflict resolution and mediation among different groups within the Middle East. The UAE has taken part in diplomatic efforts to bring an end to conflicts in Yemen, Libya, and other regional hotspots, often putting itself at the forefront of conflict resolution and peacekeeping (Atlantic Council, 2022). Second, the UAE has cultivated strong international alliances with Western and Eastern powers, which has bolstered its global diplomatic power. The Atlantic Council (2022) recognizes that UAE's political innovation, particularly its engagement in multilateral diplomacy and economic cooperation, has enhanced its global image as an example of regional stability.

3. Qatar

Qatar's political development has been marked by its assertive pursuit of diplomacy and soft power. The nation has also emerged as a significant international conflict broker, employing its riches, media influence (through Al Jazeera), and diplomatic ties to become engaged in peace negotiations and play the role of an impartial mediator during crises (Carnegie Endowment, 2021). Qatar has focused on projecting itself as an international diplomatic player, making investments in soft power efforts that reinforce its role on global opinion without resorting to traditional hard power. Qatar, as part of its diplomacy, has also boosted its global presence through the hosting of gigantic global events such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup and support for international bodies such as the United Nations (Al-Fahad, 2022). The Carnegie Endowment (2021) argues that the soft power strategy of Qatar alongside its large natural gas resources—has allowed the country to cultivate its global standing and emerge as a force to be reckoned with in global diplomacy. The policy not only enhances the reputation of Qatar, but also makes the country a driving force behind political and economic trends all over the globe.

Table 7. Comparative Political Transformation

Metric	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates	Qatar
Global Soft Power Rank (2023)	23rd	10th	24th
Major Diplomatic Alliances	GCC, OPEC, G20	GCC, UN, WTO	GCC, UN, Mediation Initiatives
Women in Politics (%)	20% (Shura Council)	Minimal	Minimal

The table showing the main differences between the three countries in terms of economic, social, and political transformation according to the framework of structural transformation theory.



DISCUSSION

This study, therefore, attempts an analysis of the structural transformation that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone during the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman, focusing on aspects of economic, social, and political transformation. Structural transformation theory was used as an analytical framework in understanding these changes in the context of Saudi Vision 2030. The main objectives are to examine how economic, social, and political reforms affect national growth in Saudi Arabia, as well as compare these transformations with other countries that have undergone similar transformations like the UAE, and Qatar,

In this paper, the authors have relied on a qualitative analysis methodology using secondary sources such as official speeches, reports of international organizations, previous studies, and academic articles. Documentary analysis was applied to analyze the political and economic content in documents such as MBS speeches, government reports, and academic studies. Comparisons were done to compare the transformation in Saudi Arabia with other countries.

The economic structural change that Saudi Arabia has undergone during Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) time is reflective of a wider change across economic, social, and political domains. The use of theory on structural change as an analytical lens allows for close scrutiny of how the changes align with the overall vision of Vision 2030 while, at the same time, highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities of the Saudi case. By contrasting these transformations with parallel developments in the UAE and Qatar, the study takes a close examination of the Gulf region's modernization strategy.

Saudi economic reforms also take center stage in Vision 2030, emphasizing the imperative of diversifying beyond dependence on oil. The Kingdom has initiated mega-projects such as NEOM, Qiddiya, and the Red Sea Project to build new sectors of the economy, including tourism, technology, and renewable energy. These are a major step towards a knowledge and services-based economy.

As Hertog (2020) contends, such investments reveal a strong commitment to the country's de-hydrocarbonization, but their actualization hinges on a great number of conditions, among them the ability to mobilize adequate foreign investment and to make projects viable.

For comparison, the UAE has already progressed far in diversification, with more than 70% of GDP contributed by non-oil sectors. Dubai, in fact, has become a world hub for trade, tourism, and finance, fueled by stable policy and investment strategy. Qatar, however, is still reliant on LNG exports, which contribute 70% of its revenues, though it has also invested in non-oil sectors as part of Qatar National Vision 2030.

While Saudi Arabia's economic ambitions are unparalleled in scale, concerns such as project delays, overspending, and potential geopolitical risks cast a shadow on sustainability. Kinninmont (2017) points out that the Kingdom's dependence on oil revenues continues to support its ability to fund these ambitious projects, creating a paradox where the diversification process is dependent on a strong oil market.

Social reform within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been strongly proactive, particularly in advancing the roles of women and gender equality. The approval allowing women to drive motor vehicles in 2018 was a landmark moment, symbolizing the country's commitment to change. The number of women working has increased from 19% in 2016 to 33% in 2022, which represents significant progress. Saudi Arabia has also invested funds into educational reform, prioritizing learning through technology and preparing its youth for a modern economy.

Conversely, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have experienced rapid social change as a result of their very cosmopolitan expatriate population, which accounts for 85% and 90% of each country's population, respectively. The UAE has an education system that includes top universities, providing a highly educated workforce. Likewise, Qatar is currently the largest spender on education with institutions like Georgetown University and Weill Cornell Medical College available there.

However, the social reforms in Saudi Arabia face unique challenges. Kinninmont (2017) points out that cultural conservatism and resistance from traditionalist groups are significant challenges. Unlike in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, where social modernization occurred more rapidly and with less societal resistance, Saudi Arabia must balance reform efforts with a commitment to its highly rooted traditions. This

dichotomy makes the Kingdom's social evolution a more complex and gradual process.

Saudi political reforms initiated by MBS have been towards improving transparency, combating corruption, and making government more efficient. Initiatives such as providing a voice for women's empowerment within the Shura Council and administrative reforms indicate an effort to reform the political setup. Lynch (2018) believes that the reforms have the ability to make political stability in the Kingdom even more significant, specifically through the solution of problems like corruption, which has been undermining people's trust over time.

In contrast, the United Arab Emirates has been politically stable with a centralized political system that is able to contain a degree of autonomy within its component emirates while still facilitating the implementation of cohesive national policies. Its active participation in regional diplomatic processes has also supported its political influence. Qatar, however, has depended on soft power tactics, employing its financial means, media power—most significantly through Al Jazeera—and mediation efforts to enhance its international profile.

While Saudi Arabia's top-down political reforms are promising, they are founded upon a vulnerable balance between the forces of modernization and long-standing political structures. Top-down reforms might not receive the people's support they require for longevity, as suggested by Hertog (2020).

Saudi Arabia's structural transformation in Vision 2030 is an audacious and bold effort at remodeling the economy, society, and politics of the Kingdom. In comparison to the attempts observed in the UAE and Qatar, those of Saudi Arabia are marked by their sheer ambitiousness and sophistication; however, they also encounter special challenges like societal resistance and the reliance on oil revenues. The available literature, including research by Hertog (2020) and Kinninmont (2017), affirms that the Kingdom is on the correct path while noting the necessity for careful regard to elements such as project feasibility and sustaining popular support for reforms.

Finally, while Saudi Arabia has the same goals as the UAE and Qatar, its path of change illustrates its own particular socio-economic conditions to make it an interesting case study for modernization in a conservative setting.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Economic transformations: The study confirms that Saudi Arabia is trying to diversify its economy through massive investments in non-oil sectors like tourism, technology, and renewable energy. Besides the fact that the kingdom remains dependent on oil, projects like NEOM and Qiddiya are supposed to turn it into a global economic hub.

2. Social transformations: These include social reforms like the empowerment of women, improvement in education; such are the most noticeable outcomes of structural transformation. Although society has been a big challenge in accepting these changes, there has been an improvement in social and educational rights.

3. Political reforms: Saudi Arabia has been implementing political reforms toward increasing transparency and fighting corruption that could be part of the long-term stabilizing factors for the political system. Generally, political developments are keeping pace with economic and social transformations.

4. Challenges: Notwithstanding these advances, challenges in implementing these transformations remain, including the resistance of some traditional groups to change in the social and political spheres.

5. Structural transformations: These changes currently sweeping the Kingdom under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman are key steps toward the realization of Saudi Vision 2030. Though not without challenges, there is notable progress toward the creation of a more diversified and sustainable society and economy.

based on the conclusion these recommendations could be presented

1. Labor market empowerment: The role of women in the economy of the Kingdom should be further encouraged, particularly in industries of technological and innovative importance.

2. Investment in Digital Education: The skills of the future generation can be developed through more intense investments in digital education.

3. Encourage Transparency and Fight Corruption: The Saudi government should promote policy reforms that focus on transparency and anti-corruption.

4. Expand the social transformations: The Kingdom shall keep on supporting the initiatives for improving the social rights of human beings and reducing social disparities between genders.

5. Innovation and the Digital Economy: The country needs more investment in digital innovation to realize diversification of the economy and its competitiveness.



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