

Mohammed bin Salman, a dictator in the making?

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Abstract

Both the Middle East and Europe are still struggling with the massive waves of displaced people that followed the U.S. invasion of Iraq that later spilled over into Syria and also spawned the one of the worst terrorist organizations in history, ISIL. The issues in Iraq all relate back to Saddam Hussein and the way he ruled his regime. Decades later, Saudi Arabia finds itself in a similar situation as Iraq was in after Saddam Hussein invaded Iran. Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman has had a meteoric rise to power since he became defence minister in 2015, but he has also dragged Saudi Arabia into a seemingly never ending war in Yemen that has cost over a hundred billion dollars, killed over 10,000 civilians and created the world's worst humanitarian crisis spanning years now. The war currently seems to be never ending, which is eerily similar to Saddam Hussein's Iraq/Iran war. This thesis looks into whether or not Saudi Arabia might suffer the same future with Mohammed bin Salman in power potentially for decades, as Iraq did with Saddam Hussein as a full blown dictator. The early signs from Mohammed bin Salman are eerily similar to the early years of Saddam Hussein. Furthermore, Mohammed bin Salman has orchestrated events over the last couple of years for better and worse including the Qatar-crisis, lifting the ban on female-drivers in Saudi Arabia, seemingly ordered the assassination of the Journalist Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Turkey. All of which has certainly increased his notoriety internationally, but he has a tighter grab on the power than ever before after his unprecedented move in 2017, where he used an anti-corruption campaign to rid himself of his rivals, while also bringing in more than a hundred billion dollars in blackmail from some of the richest men in Saudi Arabia.

Both Iraq and Saudi Arabia had similarities in its early state building with golden years in the early 1970s that was following by drastic financial changes. In Iraq it was caused by Saddam Hussein's war with Iraq with expedited the financial woes. In Saudi Arabia, the issue was declining oil prices and overly generous, continuous government spending. With a warmongering ruler in MBS, there might be a chance that Saudi Arabia will follow the same tragic trajectory that Iraq followed decades ago.

Keywords: International relations, Failed states in the Middle East, Dictators, Warmongering

Table of Content

Abstract	2
Introduction	4
Research Question	5
Methodology	6
Relevance	6
Delimitations	6
Literature Review	7
Theory	8
<i>Political Regimes</i>	8
Totalitarianism	8
Authoritarianism	9
Sultanism	11
Failed states	12
Critique of the Theory	14
Historical	16
Modern history of Iraq	16
Analysis	37
Bibliography	45

Introduction

A large part of the instability and humanitarian disaster in the Middle East over the last couple of decades can be attributed to the ascension and removal of Saddam Hussein. This thesis looks into whether or not Saudi Arabia might suffer the same future with Mohammed bin Salman in power potentially for decades, as Iraq did with Saddam Hussein as a full blown dictator. The early signs from Mohammed bin Salman are eerily similar to the early years of Saddam Hussein. Additionally, the new Saudi Arabian crown prince, appointed in 2017, Mohammed bin Salman is the mastermind behind the Saudi Arabian intervention in the Yemeni civil war that has killed over 10,000 civilians and through blockades there are next to no access to medicine and food causing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world with millions either starving or close to starving. Furthermore, Mohammed bin Salman has orchestrated events over the last couple of years for better and worse including the Qatar-crisis, lifting the ban on female-drivers in Saudi Arabia, seemingly ordered the assassination of the Journalist Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Turkey. Mohammed bin Salman also made an unprecedented power grab in 2017, when he had hundreds of the wealthiest and most powerful Saudi princes detained, reportedly tortured and blackmailed in the name of a corruption purge. Mohammed bin Salman has still only been crown prince for a year and a half.

Research Question

The Middle East has had its share of dictators over the past couple of decades with Saddam Hussein being among the most prominent. Saddam Hussein was toppled primarily through intervention from the West, arguably with catastrophic consequences for the Iraqi population. Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) have consolidated his power significantly since becoming crown prince of Saudi Arabia in 2017. Saudi Arabia can be considered one of, if not the dominant force in the Middle East, but have been involved in a number of questionable actions following the rise of MBS.

Why has Mohammed bin Salman had such a meteoric rise in power and what are the stakes for Saudi Arabia?

Methodology

The methodology will consist of primarily qualitative data. The qualitative data will include, amongst other things, looking at/analysing interviews/statements and more.

This research of this thesis will look into when and how Saddam Hussein became a dictator, what regime type he enacted along with some of the consequences of his actions. Furthermore, the thesis will look into whether Mohammed bin Salman exhibits similar traits/decisions as Hussein during his reigns.

The thesis will also look into whether Iraq can be considered a failing- or failed state and whether Saudi Arabia might be following a similar path.

Relevance

This thesis is highly relevant as both the Middle East and Europe are somewhat still reeling from the aftermath of the Iraq war, removal of Saddam Hussein and consequent spill over into Syria that has displaced millions of people and given rise to one of the most notorious terrorist groups the world has ever seen in ISIL. The Saudi Arabian population might be at risk of experiencing some of the devastating issues that plagued the Iraqi population following the rise of Hussein and his warmongering in Iran and Kuwait.

Delimitations

Historical data - Starting with the events that lead to the creation of the modern states of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, there are a lot of events throughout the modern Iraqi and Saudi Arabian history that have not been included in this thesis, because even if they are important to the Iraqi and Saudi Arabian history, they are less relevant for the purpose of the thesis.

The thesis focuses mainly on Saddam Hussein, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Mohammed bin Salman rather than the outside forces that hindered/enabled them. This, is particularly the case for Saudi Arabia and their reliance on the U.S. over the past couple of decades. It can be argued that it is a dual dependency due to U.S. reliance on Saudi Arabian oil as well, but with the U.S.' status as the world's only superpower, and being significantly

more powerful than Saudi Arabia, the U.S. likely possesses the stronger claim. However, this thesis will not delve into the relationship in too much detail.

Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 as an absolute monarchy and remains an absolute monarchy. However, it has always had traits that did not quite fit a usual absolute monarchy and over the past couple of years, significant changes have occurred in Saudi Arabia that warrants deliberation of whether or not Saudi Arabia is now taking on traits from other regime types, rather than stating that it is simply two different versions of the same absolute monarchy. Hence, absolute monarchy will not be featured in the theory section.

Literature Review

While Al Jazeera can generally be considered as only slightly biased from a western point of view, when it comes to Saudi Arabia, due to the blockade of Qatar, Al Jazeera has to be considered rather biased due to it being based in and funded by Qatar. However, the content included is considered legitimate.

The remaining sources are considered rather objective in regards to Saudi Arabia.

In regards to Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi regime, both books by Eppel and Mackey are rather biased against him, but they are both considered factually accurate.

Theory

The theory will include Brooker's non-democratic regimes and Linz/Chehabi's sultanistic regimes, as well as failed states by Ezrow and Frantz.

Political Regimes

Totalitarianism

The term totalitarianism began in the 1920s-30s as part of the Fascist Italy, but in the 1950s it was changed by Western political science to not only include fascist regimes, but also communist regimes. Hannah Arendt, one of the most influential totalitarian political scientists, argued that totalitarianism was a new form of dictatorship that sought to control/organize all aspects of life of its subjects, which was an important purpose of the totalitarian ideology. Furthermore, Arendt posed that dominating every aspect of life was only a cog in the bigger goal of total domination of the entire world, hence taking control of a nation is only the first step that can also function as a testing ground for various ways of dominating the population. This can be done through multiple stages, where the first is the usage of secret police to remove all resistance. The second stage begins with declaring a class or ideology enemies of the state. The third stage features a complete totalitarian state where everyone is an informant, people disappear completely and the regime utilizes work camps and concentration camps to terrorize and torture people to reduce them to less than humans and more like domesticated animals. The leader of a totalitarian regime is so important that should he be removed, then the regime will likely fall, which means that they often rule till they die (Brooker, Non-democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics, 2000), pp. 7-11.)

While Arendt introduced one of the two most influential early theories on totalitarianism, the second was presented later in the 1950s by Friedrich and Brzezinski. They shared many of the same views as Arendt, but posed that:

...the 'character' of totalitarian dictatorship was to be found in a syndrome of six interrelated and mutually supporting features or traits (1961 [1956]: 9):

- 1. An ideology;*
- 2. A single party, typically (that is, not always) led by one person;*
- 3. A terroristic police;*
- 4. A communications monopoly;*
- 5. A weapons monopoly; and*
- 6. A centrally-directed economy (Brooker, Non-democratic Regimes, 2000, p. 11.)*

Friedrich and Brzezinski acknowledged that there have been variations to the six-point syndrome, particularly the sixth point about a centrally-directed economy, where the totalitarian regime might instead turn towards a private-ownership economy (Brooker, Non-democratic Regimes, 2000, pp. 11,14.)

According to Friedrich and Brzezinski, terroristic police might eventually decline in a totalitarian regime as future generations become indoctrinated to support the leader/ideology through the usage of terror and propaganda. The propaganda is spread through various means such as mass-member organizations, national radio and newspapers.

Authoritarianism

There are many different theories of authoritarianism that include different types of non-democratic regime types along with different views on the fundamental workings of authoritarianism in general. However, one of the key early theories was developed by Juan Linz, a prominent 20th century political scientist, in the 1960s that included military dictatorship as a major part, which then excluded totalitarianism as the military ordinarily plays a minor part in totalitarian regimes. Linz argued that in most authoritarian regimes, the military holds a strong position that only increases if the regime ruling has been created through a military coup. Furthermore, Linz added party

dictatorships to his definition of authoritarianism. In order to include both military and party dictatorship to authoritarianism while keeping it separate from totalitarianism, Linz posed four distinctive elements that define an authoritarian regime:

- 1. Presence of 'limited, not responsible, political pluralism'.*
- 2. Absence of 'elaborate and guiding ideology' and instead 'distinctive mentalities'.*
- 3. Absence of intensive or extensive 'political mobilization' throughout most of a regime's history.*
- 4. A leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones (Brooker, Non-democratic Regimes, 2000, pp. 22,23,26.)*

One of the primary points of the first elements is that there are groups which have political influence that are independent from the regime. Furthermore, the limited pluralism is the main feature of authoritarianism for Linz.

In the second element Linz notes that due to the focus on a mentality rather than an ideology the authoritarian regime is less focused on the future compared to e.g. a totalitarian regime that relies heavily on an ideology. However, Linz does acknowledge that there can be authoritarian regimes where an ideology is important, it just is not as frequent.

The third element states that most authoritarian regimes have very limited political mobilization. The regimes that do have political mobilization tend to have it in the early stage of their authoritarian regime.

The main point of the fourth element is that the leader or leaders of the regime act within predictable limits even when he or they seem to be absolutist (Brooker, Non-democratic Regimes, p. 26.)

Sultanism

One of the main characteristics of sultanism is that there is a lot of corruption in all levels of society. This is in large part due to the leader ruling supreme, which means that he can undermine the bureaucratic administration as he sees fit without having to justify himself. Furthermore, the sultanistic leader appoints the leading staff himself, often based on familial relations rather than actual qualifications. The leader rules through a combination of fear and rewards to his collaborators rather than charismatic qualities or following a specific ideology. (H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. "Sultanistic Regimes.", 1998: p. 7.)

"The public and private sectors are fused, there is a strong tendency toward familial power and there is no distinction between a state career and personal service to the ruler. There is a lack of rationalized impersonal ideology. Economic success depends on a personal relationship with the ruler. The ruler acts only according to his own unchecked discretion, with no larger personal goals.

*Authoritarian regimes may or may not have a rule of law and there are normally extensive social and economic activities, that function within a secure framework of relative autonomy. There is no rule of law in sultanism and economic and social activities are subject to the will of the ruler. The essence of sultanism is **unrestrained personal rulership**. In authoritarianism leadership is exercised "with formally ill-defined but actually quite predictable" norms. In most authoritarian regimes some bureaucracy plays an important part (Linz, "Sultanistic Regimes.", 1998 p. 2-3). There tend to be no institutions in a sultanistic regime, which is very important for a democratic process". (Nicholai Bøgeskov, 48-hour exam: Political and Economic Development, Aalborg University, p. 5, 2017.)*

Main points of regime type:

<i>Totalitarianism</i>	<i>Authoritarianism</i>	<i>Sultanism</i>
<i>Military plays small/no role</i> <i>Ideology important factor</i> <i>Seeks to control all facets of life for the citizens</i> <i>Usage of terroristic police declines over time as future citizens become indoctrinated</i>	<i>Military plays important role</i> <i>Generally limited focus on ideology</i> <i>Limited political pluralism</i> <i>Can be either military or party dictatorship</i>	<i>High level of corruption in all levels of society</i> <i>Public and private sectors are fused</i> <i>Leader rules through a combination of fear and rewards for collaborators</i> <i>There is no rule of law</i> <i>Unrestrained personal rulership</i>

(Bøgeskov, 7th semester project, 2017)

Failed states

The concept of state failure and failed states are interrelated. State failure is a state that is in the process of becoming a failed state, whereas a failed state is a state that has already failed. There are very few states that have become failed states, but there are many states that are in danger of state failure. What both concepts share is that it involves a state are experiencing or have undergone state failure (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 15). Furthermore, states can be divided into strong states and weak states, where weak states are the ones in danger of state failure. Weak states can be defined as unstable, barely able to fulfill its end of the bargain in its relationship with citizens. As per political scientist Joel Migdal, a state's strength can also be defined as: state strength is weighed in terms of a state's capacity to penetrate society, regulate relationships, extract resources and appropriate or use resources in determined ways. Weakness is a syndrome characterized by corruption, the collapse of a state's coercive power, the rise of strongmen and the segmentation of the political community (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 17). Additionally, an important note is that regime type does not directly correlate to whether or not a state is failing. Other scholars list a number of things a state can provide that constitutes a strong state such as: institutions to regulate and adjudicate conflicts and enforce rule of law, security, political participation, property

rights, social service delivery and more (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 18).

In general definitions of state failure emphasizes one or more of the following dimensions as important functions of the state:

- Administrative services and infrastructure
- Monopoly over violence
- Economic performance
- Social services
- Judicial services

(Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, pp. 19-20).

Administrative services

A dimension of state failure is the state's inability to develop its infrastructure and handle its administrative duties. Strong states provide multiple administrative services for citizens that are important for the state's ability to function and extract resources. When states fail to offer these services, either due to lack of ability or unwillingness, it creates an environment, where laws are not implemented, taxes are not collected, mail is not brought out and state employees are not paid. The use of bribes dominates the functioning of whatever bureaucracy exists (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, pp. 21-22).

Monopoly over violence

Another dimension of state failure is the loss of control over the use of force. States that lack the capacity to control the use of force within their borders implicitly are incapable of providing security for their citizens, one of the key components of the state-citizen relationship. Furthermore, in most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more warring factions. Violence against the government breaks out because the state is powerless to stop the threats it faces, potentially leading non-state actors like secessionists group or ethnic militias to take part of the governments territory. Even though all states are subject to violence, the period of violence is extended in a failed state. A state may briefly lose control during a revolution, but revolutions lead to a new order, whereas failed states lead to disorder (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, pp. 20-21).

Economic performance

A third dimension of state failure is poor economic performance. A state is failing, when it is a low-income country, where economic policies, governance and institutions are so poor that growth is highly unlikely even in times of peace. Furthermore, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continually drops from year to year (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 23).

Social services

A fourth dimension of state failure is the state's failure to provide basic social services to its citizens. Specifically, this mean that states have no safety net and thereby no way to ensure a minimal standard of living. Schools and hospitals are neglected, leading to high infant mortality rates and low literacy rates. There will be no middle class and high-income disparity, which polarizes citizens and can trigger violent confrontations (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 22).

Judicial services

The fifth dimension of state failure is the absence of adequate judicial services. For a state to function, it is important that it provides some judicial services such as; effective and independent courts and rule of law. Corruption becomes rampant without working judicial services. This corruption can take the form of using state resources to fund extravagant, personal purchases, wasteful construction projects that enable rent-seeking, currency speculation, kickbacks or extortion. The lack of judicial services enables leaders to behave as they like, irrespective of the law (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013, p. 22).

Critique of the Theory

An important issue with determining regime types is that states can often exhibit traits from multiple regime types rather than adhering to the specific points of a single regime type.

An issue with the theory of failed states is that some states may exhibit some traits of a strong state along with traits of a weak/failing state, which makes it hard to categorize. Another issue relates to determining, which of the traits of a failing state directly leads

to a state failing and which simply causes temporary issues for the state. A third issue with the failing states theory is that most failed/failing states do not follow the same pattern, again making it harder to determine, which factors are the primary contributors.

Historical

Modern history of Iraq

History

Modern history of Iraq

In essence, most of the current Iraq was a part of the Ottoman Empire up until the first World War, where it was conquered by the British. The British forces came from India, British colony at the time with heavy emphasis on colonial rule, so they employed an approach that was based on strong connections with tribal leaders and tribal notables rather than educated urban activists (Eppel, 2004, p. 11). In 1921, following a number of insurrections that were put down, the British decided to create a local government primarily lead by prominent tribal leaders. At the same time, the British installed a Hashemite Monarch, Faysal ibn Husayn, who had previously ruled Syria, but was deposed by the French. Over the next couple of years, the British decided on the borders of Iraq, which ended up not including present day Kuwait, but instead the Mosul area that Turkey also laid claim to. Following British pressure, the Mosul area was annexed by Iraq and Turkey agreed to renounce its claim in 1926 (Eppel, 2004, pp. 13-14).

Following the British moves in the early 20th century, Iraq ended up being ruled by Sunni Arabs, despite them being a minority in Iraq compared to the Shia Arab majority. However, during the 1920s, elections were held for a Constituent Assembly that ratified the Iraqi Constitution in 1925. The Hashemite monarchy, the Iraqi Constitution and Parliament constituted the basis for a regime that relied on primarily Sunni backers, but also on major Shia landowners. The British, through advisors, maintained control over most of the Iraqi government ministries with the exception of the Ministry of Education that became a focal point for the foundation of a common Iraqi identity in the following years. Furthermore, the British retained control of the Iraqi army and kept it to a limited scope of about 7,500 troops through limiting conscription until 1932, where Iraq gained independence (Eppel, 2004, p. 16).

Faysal died in 1933 and was succeeded by his son Ghazi, who ruled until his death in 1939 and was followed by his son, Faysal the 2nd. 'Abd al-illah ruled as regent on behalf of Faysal the 2nd as he was underage at the time of his father's death. There were quite a number of different governments throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Iraq, where some were chosen through elections while others gained power through coup d'états.

In 1940, Rashid Ali al-Gaylani became prime minister through the aide of four generals

known as the “Golden Square”. Following unsuccessful attempts to depose Ali in 1941, the regent al-Ilah attempted to break Ali’s power by ordering the “Golden Square” generals out of Baghdad. However, they instead took control of key points in Baghdad and forced the regent to flee to Kuwait with American and British aid. Meanwhile Faysal the 2nd and his mother were put under “house arrest”. Later in 1941, the British invaded Iraq again and reinstated the regent, while a number of the leaders of Ali’s coup were executed including the “Golden Square” generals over the next years (Mackey, 2002, pp. 145-146).

The British troops withdrew again from Iraq during the 1940s, which had various governments led by the regent. The ruling elite did not allow political parties to be established until 1945, but they did not choose to do so themselves (Eppel, 2004, p. 64). In 1953, Faysal the 2nd came of age and was crowned king, while stating that he would be a constitutional monarch that would safeguard democratic principles (Mackey, 2002, p. 150). Due to Faysal the 2nd spending most of his upbringing in the UK, his monarchy was closely aligned with the British, which proved fatal for him in 1958. The Iraqi government, on behalf of the British, ordered General Abd al-Karim Qasim and his troops to Jordan in order to assist Western powers against Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, who threatened to invade Lebanon. However, Qasim’s refused to act against fellow Arabs, so he instead turned on Baghdad and on July 25th 1958 soldiers loyal to Qasim executed king Faysal the 2nd, the regent al-Ilah and 15-20 others thereby ending the Iraqi Hashemite monarchy (Mackey, 2002, p. 154).

Over the next decade Iraq had military rule under first Qasim and later Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif. However, there was a lot of internal turmoil during the decade, which saw the rise of the Baath party, though the Baath ideology was originally from Syria and less centred on party politics (Mackey, 2002, p. 186). In 1959, the Baath party in Iraq wanted to increase its appeal to particularly pan-Arab nationalist army officers that were increasingly against Qasim, so a Baathist hit squad attempted to assassinate Qasim, but only managed to wound him. One of the members of the Baathist hit squad was a young man named Saddam Hussein (Mackey, 2002, p. 188). More and more factions turned against Qasim and in order to stay in power, he relied on a still loyal segment of the army along with a secret police force as he relied less on ideology. In early 1963, pan-Arab nationalist segments of the army joined up with the Baath party and toppled Qasim’s rule. Qasim was tried and executed shortly after. The ruling power

was split between the pan-Arab nationalists in the army led by Arif, who had now been promoted to general, and the Baath party in the newly made National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC). The Baath party only had a thousand members, so in order to avoid a revolt against them approximately two thousand Baath party sympathizers organized themselves in a unit called the National Guard. The National Guard members were identified by their green arm band and quickly took to eliminating perceived ideological enemies and within a week of the coup, they had killed between five hundred and three thousand people (Mackey, 2002, pp. 190-192). Within a few months, the relationship between Arif and his pan-Arab nationalists and the Baath party deteriorated rapidly and Arif was deposed. However, the unity within the Baath party was also split into multiple factions. Another important factor in the deteriorating relations was the National Guard that increased their actions, having increased their membership by thousands, starting to arrest perceived enemies in the middle of the night, employing torture some of them and generally harassing civilians. By late 1963, a number of army officers along with some Baathist secured strategic points in Baghdad, specifically targeting the Baath party and its leadership. The Baath party was purged from the government, the National Guard shut down and even though some Baath party leaders managed to flee the country, Arif was reinstated. However, the turmoil in Iraq continued and Arif's rule had to defend itself both from army rivals and renewed coup attempts from the Baath party. Arif succeeded in defending his rule, but died in a helicopter crash in 1966 and was followed by his brother, General Abd al-Rahman Arif. The rule of the second Arif was rather short as the Baath party finally managed to successfully complete a coup in 1968 that saw Arif deported and ended a decade of military rule (Mackey, 2002, pp. 196-197).

The Baath party had allied with a younger faction of the army against Arif, but as soon as they had successfully toppled Arif, the Baath party led by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr turned on the army faction. They purged the non-Baath officers of the army and al-Bakr installed his own men in key positions. The leader of the non-Baath members of the coup, Abd al-Razzaq al-Nayif was invited to meet with al-Bakr, where Saddam Hussein pulled a gun on him and forcibly had al-Nayif exiled. Within weeks, the Baath party had taken control of both the army and the government and reinstated its security apparatus, that had evolved from the collapse of the first Baath government, to terrorize and control the population (Mackey, 2002, pp. 200-201). In the following years, the

Baath party ruthlessly cut down their enemies in Iraq and both foiled coups and prevented more through assassinations and executions of leaders of rival factions. Leading the Baath party was al-Bakr and a handful of senior Baath officials loyal to him. However, standing behind them were Saddam Hussein, who controlled the security services and a new paramilitary Popular Army (Mackey, 2002, pp. 202-203).

Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein was al-Bakr's cousin and the main power supporting the Baath leadership after the coup in 1968. Hussein was a Sunni from Tikrit, al-Bejat clan from his missing/deceased father, where he grew up in a poor family with his mother and stepfather. At the age of 10, he moved to Baghdad to live with his uncle, where he was introduced to pan-Arab nationalism that would lead him to enter the Baath party. He was part of the botched assassination attempt on Qasim in 1959, where after Hussein fled to Cairo via Damascus. He moved back to Iraq in 1963 to marry his first cousin and reclaim his place in the Baath party. He developed the Baath party's feared security apparatus and rose to power along his cousin al-Bakr, who was also of the al-Bejat clan of the Albu Nasir tribe of Tikrit, who was a senior military official that had the military credentials that Hussein lacked. Hussein acted like a tribal leader and many of the leading members of his security forces were fellow Sunnis from Tikrit that owed their position and power to Hussein, so they revered him as their Sheikh (Mackey, 2002, pp. 208-210).

Over the next decade from 1968, the Baath party struggled to quell dissidents and coup attempt from numerous factions in Iraq, where particularly the Kurds in the north of Iraq were supported by a large number of foreign forces. The main assistance was provided by the Shah of Iran, who saw the Kurds as a way to weaken the Baath party and Iraq as a whole, but the Kurds were also supported by the U.S. and Israel to a minor degree. Meanwhile, Iraq was, for a while at least, support by the Soviet Union, which lead to a drawn-out war that ultimately came to an end in 1975 with Iraq barely winning out before running out of arms and ammunition, after the Soviet Union stopped its arms support of Iraq. However, it had also been a large financial drain for Iraq as well as Iran, so the two countries made peace, which also stopped Iran's support of the Iraqi Kurds (Mackey, 2002, pp. 223-225).

Between 1973 and 1978, with the aid of a nationalized Iraq Petroleum Company and soaring oil prices, the Baath party utilized the increased income to transform Iraq from a primarily agricultural country into a developing industrial country. The government continued to use the oil revenue to increase the Iraqi society and provided free healthcare, schools and literacy programs for all (Mackey, 2002, pp. 228-229). However, the Baath party had also experienced changes over the past decade from the 1968 coup. Over time Hussein took over more and more control of the party from al-Bakr, who was suffering from ailing health and the loss of his wife and eldest son. By the late 1970s, Hussein had become vice-president and practically handled all decisions of the presidency. Furthermore, all of the security apparatus members, as well as the ministers of state reported to Hussein, hence the Regional Command Council (RCC), the controlling body of the Baath party and the Iraqi state, deferred their decisions to him (Mackey, 2002, p. 232). Hussein continued to employ his Tikrit tribal relations and manoeuvred family and tribe members into key positions in both the government, security forces and the army. The family and tribe members in key positions massively outnumbered the percentages of their numbers in the population. Hussein's main security apparatus, the Mukhabarat, controlled all potential enemies in Iraq that had not already been quelled, which was mainly the Shia by late 1978. However, Hussein still feared outside forces and in particular Syria's leader al-Assad that controlled another strain of the Baath ideology in Syria. In 1979 al-Assad travelled to Iraq in order to discuss a union between Syria and Iraq in the likeness of the pan-Arab union of Egypt and Syria years earlier. Hussein was loath to part with his power, particularly to al-Assad, so in July 1979, he was announced that a plot to seize the Iraqi government by colluding with Syria had been discovered. Next, twenty-one leading members of the RCC were arrested, tried and executed for treason. The members included the deputy prime minister, multiple ministers and the chief of Hussein's own office. In the meantime, President al-Bakr was forced to resign and Hussein took full control of the Baath party and government as president, as well as holding the positions of premier, chairman of the RCC and leader of the Baath party. (Mackey, 2002, pp. 232-234). In 1980, Hussein and the Baath party allowed election to a new National Assembly, but all of the candidates were vetted by the Baath party, hence none of them proved any threat whatsoever (Mackey, 2002, p. 237).

Following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Hussein decided to use the opportunity

of a seemingly weak old enemy to invade Iran in 1980. 50,000 Iraqi troops hit four strategic points along the Iraq-Iran border, while infantry troops moved into Iran. Hussein envisioned a relatively quick victory, but the war ended up lasting eight years and had catastrophic consequences for both sides. The war was split up into four stages: The Iraqi advances of 1980-81, the Iranian counterattacks of 1982-84, the entrenchment of 1985; and the grand offensives of 1986-87 (Mackey, 2002, pp. 251-252).

Shortly after the war started, the Iraqi troops advance deep into Iran taking strategic positions along the way. However, the Iranian army proved not to be as fractured as Hussein had envisioned, which lead the war to a stalemate, where the Iraqi forces could no longer advance. While the first two years of the war went relatively well for Hussein and his Sunnis, the primarily Shia troops on the frontline were dying in ever greater numbers. In 1982, Hussein managed to survive two assassination attempts, but the unrest was growing. (Mackey, 2002, pp. 252-253).

In 1982, the second stage of the war started when conscripted Iranian boys as young as twelve led the way through minefields for the advancing Iranian army. The Iraqi army was pushed out of Iran, which caused Hussein to sue for peace with the terms being a cease-fire and a return to the status quo ante bellum (Mackey, 2002, pp. 253-254). However, Ayatollah Khomeini, the theocratic leader of Iran following the Islamic revolution in 1979, refused Hussein and instead appealed to Iraq's Shias. The war continued on, but now Iranian troops also rained down destruction upon Iraqi territory. By 1984, Iraq suffered heavily economically as most of its oil export had dropped significantly, in large part by having export options cut off by Iran, leading to more than 35 billion dollars in foreign reserves being nearly gone. Hence, even though the Shias were hit the hardest due to being on the front line of the fighting, most Iraqis were feeling the effects of the war. With all of their revenue and standing money essentially gone, Iraq started to rely on funding from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both of whom feared the Iranian revolution themselves (Mackey, 2002, pp. 256-257).

The third stage of the war began and continued in 1985 with neither side being able to prevail, but also refusing to surrender. The two sides continuously fired at the other side with artillery and missiles. In 1986, the war finally entered the fourth stage, where Iraq took the war from land to the sea, where Hussein tried to strangle the Iranian

economy by utilizing superior airplanes and missiles to shut down Iranian oil export via sea. Iran retaliated by hitting the ships of Iraq's allies, which forced Kuwait to request assistance from the U.S. which led to a U.S. flotilla in the Gulf keeping the seas open. However, the Iraqi failed to break Iran and the war continued (Mackey, 2002, pp. 257-258).

Throughout the war with Iran, Hussein had also struggled on the side with Kurdish insurrections blowing up from time to time and during quieter times in the Iranian war, the Kurds were harshly dealt with. The main reason Hussein was able to deal with the Kurds was that the Kurds were split into factions themselves that rarely saw eye to eye. However, in 1987, the Kurds entered an alliance that also included Iran pushing into Iraqi territory again. Hussein assigned his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid to the post of secretary-general of the Northern Bureau of the Baath party and told him to deal with the Kurds. Ali decided the best way to deal with the Kurds was to supply options and safe havens, so he ordered planes loaded with chemical weapons to target Kurdish villages. Over the next couple of months over a thousand Kurdish villages were hit and thousands died horrible deaths from the deadly gas. Tens of thousands of surviving Kurdish civilians were forced to evacuate their cities. Hussein also employed chemical weapons in the war with Iran to regain territory along with a large number of missiles targeting key Iranian cities. Eventually in 1988, Khomeini felt resigned to sign UN Security Council Resolution 598 that ensured peace between Iraq and Iran. Following the peace agreement with Iran, Ali continued to hit the Kurds with chemical weapons and forced them to stop their rebellion (Mackey, 2002, pp. 259-264).

By the end of the eight-year war with Iran, the once prosperous Iraq was devastated economically with approximately 70 to 80 billion dollars in debt. Hussein realised, he would need help in order to get the Iraqi economy going again and demanded 10 billion dollars from each of the Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The OPEC members refused Hussein, so in 1990 he accused Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil from the Rumaila oilfield and demanded 2.4 billion dollars in compensation (Mackey, 2002, pp. 277-278). Furthermore, Hussein accused the Arab OPEC countries of lowering oil prices by producing more than their OPEC designated quotas all the while moving more and more troops to the Kuwaiti border. Kuwait agreed to lower its production of oil in order to increase the price to 18 dollars per barrel, but the following day Kuwait announced that it would only be for a limited time,

which caused Hussein to move even more troops to the Kuwaiti border. By late July 1990, Iraq had 100,000 troops and 300 tanks stationed at the Kuwaiti border, but everyone, including the U.S. and the Soviet ambassadors, believe that it was simply an Iraqi bluff. The leaders of the surrounding Arab countries believed that Hussein would not do the unthinkable and attack another Arab state, particularly Kuwait which had financially supported the Iraqi war with Iran (Mackey, 2002, pp.278-279).

However, in early August 1990, Hussein did the unthinkable and invaded Kuwait. Under the leadership of Hussein's cousin Ali, Kuwait was completely looted and occupied. Days later, Iraq had economic sanctions imposed by the U.N. and Hussein was threatened with consequences by the U.S. if he did not withdraw from Kuwait. Despite the pressure, Hussein refused to lift the occupation of Kuwait, which led Saudi Arabia to break precedence and invite U.S. troops onto Saudi soil (Mackey, 2002, pp. 280-281).

Over the next six months Hussein repeatedly refused to back down and withdraw from Kuwait, which led to the coalition forces lead by the U.S. invading Iraq in January 1991. The Iraqi suffered through over a month of air attacks before ground troops arrived in Kuwait in late February. Hussein believed that he could win the war if his forces could sustain through the air attacks and then repel the ground forces. However, his conscripted soldiers that was still occupying Kuwait was largely composed of Shias and Kurds, who fled to the Iraqi border rather than conducting an all-out war. The few remaining Sunni officers pulled out of Kuwait fighting, but could only cause limited destruction due to their lack of numbers. A large number of Iraq's Shia troops at the front line surrendered as soon as the allied army moved in Iraq, while the Sunni elites in the Republican Guard retreated to Baghdad. However, the allied forces decided not to proceed to Baghdad, destroy the Iraqi army or remove Hussein, as there was none one who could fill the power vacuum, he would leave behind. Hence, in early March 1991, the leader of the allied forces, General Schwarzkopf, met with Iraqi army officers and a cease-fire was achieved, where Hussein gave up on his invasion of Kuwait, but managed to retain his elite members of the army and security apparatus (Mackey, 2002, pp. 283-285).

Just after the war against the allied forces ended, Hussein had to deal with two large rebellions from the Shias in the south and the Kurds in the north. Luckily, for Hussein he had retained his elite fighting forces and largely ignoring the Kurds in the north, he sent

his remaining troops south to quell the Shia rebellion. The Shia rebels were supported by Iran, which meant that the U.S. and allies refused to shield them, as they feared Iraq becoming another Islamic state like Iran. With Hussein's elite forces attacking the Shia dissidents, the Shia rebellion was quelled within a month (Mackey, 2002, pp. 289-291). While Hussein's troops were busy fighting in the south, the Kurdish rebellion took most of the major cities in Iraqi Kurdistan before liberating Kirkuk, thereby holding the entire northern Iraq. The Kurds had achieved their long-time dream of a united Iraqi Kurdistan, but only a week after liberating Kirkuk, Hussein sent his Republican Guard north to deal with the Kurds. Hussein's troops were limited by a no-fly zone enforced following the Kuwait war, but was still allowed to employ helicopter gunships. Despite heavy resistance from about 60,000 Kurdish forces, Hussein's forces numbered over 150,000 with far better equipment, so they swiftly swept through the Kurdish resistance. Millions of civilians feared new rounds of chemical attacks and chose to flee (Mackey, 2002, pp. 289-294).

Following the unsuccessful rebellions, Hussein added some Shia and Kurd elements to his government, but still retained full control of the Baath Party and the government. In the following years Iraq continued to be sanctioned due to fears that Hussein would rebuild/upgrade his weapon arsenals. The majority of the infrastructure destroyed during the allied invasion of Iraq was quickly rebuilt, but inflation was becoming an ever greater issue for the poorer part of the population and even the previous generous payments to civil servants was declining rapidly. Due to the deteriorating state of the population, the U.N. dispatched a mission to ascertain the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi population and allowed Iraq to increase its oil production to alleviate the suffering people. However, Hussein refused to increase the oil production on the grounds of encroachment on Iraq's sovereignty. Hussein instead reinstated a system used during the Iraq-Iran war that allowed certain shops to sell to families, but many people were still unable to afford sustainable life (Mackey, 2002, pp. 301-304).

The goal of the U.N. sanctions against Iraq was to get Hussein to give up his weapons, but Hussein consistently refused to do so despite Iraq becoming poorer and poorer. In 1995, the U.N. again proposed to let Iraq increase its oil production to buy food and medicine, but again Hussein refused the offer. Furthermore, Hussein kept moving his weapon stashes back and forth in order to cheat the U.N. weapon inspectors that

wanted to confirm whether Hussein had given up his deadly arsenal (Mackey, 2002, p. 304).

Throughout the 1990s, Hussein managed to quell multiple minor tribal uprisings using his security forces and elite army units. The tribal conflicts even reached Hussein's only family with his sons fighting against other members of his tribe that had previously been close to Hussein. Regardless, Hussein remained in absolute control of Iraq.

Hussein's back and forth actions with the U.N. continued throughout the 1990s despite U.S. threats of consequences if Iraq failed to comply with the weapon inspections. The U.S. attempted to get the U.N. Security Council on board with military actions, but was repeatedly vetoed. Under the Clinton administration in 1998, the U.S. finally put action behind its threats and bombed multiple Republican Guard targets in major Iraqi cities. In 1999, the U.S. was joined by the British in daily bombings run in Iraq, but they still failed to force Hussein to comply to the weapons inspections. At the same time Hussein refused to allow aid to be delivered to his impoverished population as long as the sanctions remained in place. In 1996, Hussein realised that a starving population with no access to medicine could lead to a revolt, so he agreed to the U.N.s oil-for-food programme, where Iraq was allowed to sell extra oil, which would be exchanged for food delivered to the Iraqi people by the U.N. However, Hussein managed to divert part of the food deliveries to his regime, which kept it from reaching some starving people (Mackey, 2002, pp. 361-364). In the late 1990s, Hussein started to employ the same tactics, he had used to hassle to weapons inspections to the oil-for-food programme making the humanitarian efforts more and more difficult. In 2000, it went a step further, when the U.N. was forced to pull its employees out of southern Iraq after a gunman opened fire on the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization office (Mackey, 2002, pp. 364-365).

Hussein had eroded most of the civil society in Iraq with his vice grip on Iraq and the decade of harsh sanctions further eroded the last bit left intact by Hussein. The severity of the sanctions also manifested as a festering hatred for the U.S. among most of the ordinary Iraqi population, particularly among the younger generation that grew up under the sanctions (Mackey, 2002, pp. 372-374).

Following the 9/11 terrorist attack on U.S. soil in 2001, the U.S. declared war on

terrorism, specifically targeting Al-Qaeda and invading Afghanistan. Due to early success in the Afghan war, many people in the Bush administration advised the President to also launch an invasion of Iraq in order to depose Hussein. While others advocated against an Iraqi war and the terrible cost the sanctions had had on the Iraqi population, the war hawks eventually managed to convince the President and in early 2003, U.S. and Britain invaded Iraq. Both President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, claimed that Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, which was why he continuously foiled U.N. weapons inspectors, along with a claim that Hussein supported Al-Qaeda. Bush gave Hussein 48-hours to leave Iraq and when he failed to do so, the U.S. and Britain invaded Iraq (Britannica, 2019).

Just over a month after the invasion began, Bush declared the fighting over. The U.S. and British forces had completely occupied Iraq and Hussein and other leaders had fled Baghdad. Hussein was captured in late 2003, handed over to the new Iraqi authorities in 2004 before he was tried and executed in 2006. However, despite only losing about 150 troops during the invasion, they faced an insurrection that cost thousands of American lives over the next years. Meanwhile, estimates had the Iraqi casualty numbers at hundreds of thousands (Britannica, 2019).

The U.S. occupation of Iraq officially ended in 2011, but it turned out that Hussein did not have any weapons of mass destruction nor were Al-Qaeda operating in Iraq. Hussein considered Al-Qaeda a threat to his regime, so he ruthlessly kept it out of Iraq. However, after the fall of Hussein Al-Qaeda moved practically unhindered into U.S. occupied Iraq. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian former prisoner born into poverty and with a low level of education and shallow theological knowledge of the Quran, moved into Iraq to setup a new branch of Al-Qaeda along with others like him (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Following the removal of Hussein, the remaining Baath party members were removed from the government and the Iraqi army was disbanded. It is estimated that as many as 100,000 Baath members were removed. Thus, a power vacuum was created that allowed al-Zarqawi to recruit a lot of the now disenfranchised Sunnis that he turned against not only the Americans, but also against the Shias that were now rising to power. Al-Zarqawi got the blessings of Osama bin Laden, leader of Al-Qaeda, to start a sectarian war against Shia Muslims that could at the same time draw even more Sunnis to his side (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Despite al-Zarqawi being killed in 2006, Al-Qaeda in Iraq continued to grow. Towards the end of 2006, after Abu Ayyub al-Masri, who took over from al-Zarqawi, announced that Al-Qaeda in Iraq joined with other groups and changed name to the Islamic State in Iraq and at the same time starting to break their connection to Al-Qaeda. The divide between Sunnis and Shias continued and the new Iraqi governments under Nouri al-Maliki failed to bring about a new era of prosperity and inclusivity in Iraq. In 2011, ISIL spread to Syria as well continued to grow in power, though it had stayed in the shadows for year, it continued to prey on the local populations (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Despite ISIL growing in power in Iraq, it seemed as if the government and its American trained/supplied army along with local tribal forces were able to keep Iraqi civilians relatively safe. However, that quickly changed in 2014, when ISIL took control over Mosul with minimal resistance from the Iraqi army and special forces, as they were ordered to retreat, when ISIL advanced. Following the capture of Mosul, the ISIL forces continued on and also captured Tikrit without any meaningful resistance (Foreign Policy, 2014).

ISIL continued to increase its territory and commit atrocities against the local populations, but starting in 2015 local forces combined with anti-ISIL coalition forces started to fight back and retake territory. However, it is estimated that over 10,000 civilians lost their lives during the liberation, with a large number being killed by the Iraqi and allied forces meant to liberate them (The Atlantic, 2018).

By February 2018, ISIL was largely removed from Iraq, but the total number of casualties following the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its aftermath is listed at 202,757 dead Iraqi civilians. More than 2.7 million have been displaced internally (2.42 million, down from a peak of 6 million) and externally (280,014). American troop casualties rest at 4,540 (Think Progress, 2018).

Modern history of Saudi Arabia

The Saud family had previously ruled much of Arabia in the 18th and 19th century, but was driven into exile in Kuwait in the 1890s. In 1901, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdul-Rahman al Faisal al Saud (Ibn Saud) set out from Kuwait a limited number of men in order to reclaim the territory his family had previously held. The inner Arabia was held by the

Rashidi emirs that had deposed and driven out the Saudis. The area held by the Rashidi emirs included Ha'il in the north, Qasim in the centre and Riyadh in the south. In 1901, the Rashid emirate was ruled by Abdulaziz bin Mithab bin Rashid (Ibn Rashid) through the use of local chiefs and representatives. In 1902, Ibn Saud captured Riyadh, when he and his men caught the Rashidi garrison by surprise during a night attack and killed Ibn Rashid's representative (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 39-40).

After capturing Riyadh, Ibn Saud's family returned from Kuwait and set up in Riyadh, from where Ibn Saud set out on a series of campaigns in southern and eastern Najd, where he captured a number of smaller towns, while Ibn Rashid's troop pulled back north to Qasim. After conquering southern and eastern Najd, Ibn Saud moved north to Qasim, where he fought Ibn Rashid's troops from 1902-1906. Ibn Rashid was backed by the Ottoman Empire, so Ibn Saud secured an alliance with Kuwait that was backed by the British, who viewed the Ottoman support of Ibn Rashid as a threat to their interests in Kuwait. Ibn Saud conquered most of Qasim in 1906 in the battle of Rawdat Muhanna, where Ibn Rashid was killed. The new emir of Rashid pulled back north to Ha'il, while the remaining Ottoman soldiers pulled back to Medina and Basra. The Ottomans then confirmed Ibn Saud as the ruler of Qasim and southern Najd (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 40).

In 1913, Ibn Saud moved the battlefield to Hasa, where he attacked Hafuf that had an Ottoman garrison of 1,200. Ibn Saud managed to drive the Ottomans out and installed a governor of his own, while nominally acknowledging the Ottoman sultan. Afterwards, Ibn Saud signed a treaty with the Ottomans that led to an Imperial Firman declaring his choice the governor of Najd. During the First World War, Ibn Saud entered alliances with both the Ottomans, in 1914, and the British, in 1915, despite declaring to both that he would not engage with other foreign powers. Furthermore, in exchange for a promise not to attack other British protectorates, namely Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar, Ibn Saud received 1,000 rifles, 20,000 pounds and a monthly subsidy of 5,000 pounds. Meanwhile, the Rashidi emir, also named Ibn Rashid, received additional aid from the Ottomans, who named him 'Commander of the whole of Najd' (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 41-42).

Fighting continued between Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid during the war with Ibn Saud gaining minor advantages. The British urged Ibn Saud to attack Ibn Rashid's capital, Ha'il, and offered him more guns and ammunition, but Ibn Saud failed to conquer Ha'il during the war. After the war the fighting continued, but following the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire, Ibn Rashid no longer had a backer, while Ibn Saud continued to be backed by the British. After years of fighting, Ibn Saud laid siege to Ha'il in 1921 and captured it shortly after (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 42-44).

After his conquest of Ha'il, Ibn Saud focused his attention on Hijaz to the west and in 1924, he pillaged Ta'if, a mountain resort near Mecca. Hijaz was ruled by Hussein bin Ali, who was pressured into abdicating and then forced into exile, leaving the throne to his son Ali. In late 1924, Ibn Saud took Mecca and declared that Ali had to go into exile as well in order to gain peace. After capturing Mecca, Ibn Saud laid siege to Jeddah for a year before mediation forced Ali into exile and Jeddah surrendering to Ibn Saud along with Medina already having done so. Having conquered the notable towns in Hijaz, Ibn Saud declared himself king of Hijaz in late 1925 and within three months he was recognized as king Great Britain, USSR, France and the Netherlands (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 45-46).

Rather than conquering Asir to the south, Ibn Saud signed an agreement with Hassan bin Ali al-Idrisi in 1926 that allowed al-Idrisi semi-autonomous rule while acknowledging Ibn Saud's suzerainty as the king of Hijaz (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 47-48).

There were two major factors contributing to Ibn Saud successfully conquering the majority of the Arabian Peninsula. The first factor was the mutawa'a, religious volunteers who enforced obedience to Islam and performance of its rituals (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 49).

After Ibn Saud captured Riyadh in 1902, it was the mutawa'a, who were essential in domesticating the Arabian population through a regime of 'discipline and punishment' after having declared Ibn Saud their imam (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 50). The Wahhabi practiced by the mutawa'a became the religious foundation for Ibn Saud and later Saudi Arabia. Under the guise of religious education, guardian public morality and enforcing Sharia, the mutawa'a ensured the submission of most of the population that came under Ibn Saud's rule from 1902-1932 (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 58).

The second factor was the Ikhwan, a semi-permanent fighting force drawn from among the tribal confederations (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 59). The Ikhwan became Ibn Saud's main force for his conquests. Ikhwan settlements had mutawa'a living there teaching Wahhabi Islam, while also handing out materials benefits on behalf on Ibn Saud, as the allegiance of the Ikhwan depended on a continuous flow of subsidies from Ibn Saud's

treasure as well as part of the loot gained from raids and military conquests. The Ikhwan were Ibn Sauds physical enforcers, while the mutawa'a were the religious. The Ikhwan terrorized people under the guise of enforcing Sharia, reforming religious practices and Islamising Arabia (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 61).

The Ikhwan regarded anyone not practising Wahhabi Islam as corrupt or heathen and their uncompromising attitude and ability to inflict severe punishment made them widely feared, as they moved with impunity while being loyal to Ibn Saud. However, in 1927, there was an Ikhwan rebellion that Ibn Saud initially tried to quell through diplomacy. Diplomacy failed, so in 1929 Ibn Saud set out to destroy the rebellion with British assistance, as the British feared the Ikhwan would cause trouble in Kuwait. In 1930, the Ikhwan leaders surrendered to the British and was extradited to Ibn Saud after he promised to spare them and also promised that there would be no more raids into Kuwait and Iraq. Ibn Saud imprisoned the Ikhwan, where the most prominent Ikhwan leader died a year later. Having dealt with the Ikhwan rebellion there were few places left for Ibn Saud to expand, so he annexed the semi-autonomous Asir that was ruled by al-Idrisi (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 69-70).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was officially formed in 1932 by Ibn Saud, when he formally unified all his territories. Having declared his official kingdom, Ibn Saud set out to pacify potential rivals to the throne. Ibn Saud married off two of his sisters to two of his paternal cousins in order to gain their allegiance. Furthermore, Ibn Saud assigned prominent branch family members as governors in conquered districts, which continued after establishing Saudi Arabia, thereby rewarding them for their service, while also keeping them from having thoughts on the throne. In 1933, Ibn Saud announced that his son Saud would be crown prince and that only his sons could succeed him, which particularly infuriated his half-brother Muhammad, who had also played a large part in Ibn Saud's conquests. Additionally, Muhammad sympathized with the Ikhwan rebels, as one of its leaders was his father-in-law. Muhammad attempted to manoeuvre his son Khalid as a potential rival to the crown prince Saud (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 73-74).

It was rumoured that in 1927, Khalid tried to have Saud, who would later become crown prince, assassinated, but failed. During a hunting trip in 1938, Khalid died himself under mysterious circumstances and may very well have been assassinated himself.

Muhammad died in 1943, thereby eliminating the last rival from Ibn Saud's own generation. Ibn Saud wanted to ensure that his throne was consolidated by many heirs, which meant that by 1953, he had forty-three sons and over fifty daughters. (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 74-75).

Shortly after establishing his kingdom, Ibn Saud proceeded to have some state institutions built that were founded on existing practices, where 400 officials, slaves and guards became the Ministry of Finance. Prominent merchant families became the Foreign Ministry and a Political Committee of eight people, mainly foreigners that had already proved their skills in their home countries. Military matters were dealt with by an agency that included the Saudi forces, which at the time consisted of the Hijazi army and police force that became the Ministry of Defence in 1944. Saudi Arabia did not have a normal standing army for most of the 1930s and 1940s. The remaining members of the Ikhwan became the National Guard, a paramilitary unit that often dealt with internal security. (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 87-90).

In 1933 Ibn Saud's finance minister signed an agreement with the American company Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) to start exploring for oil, because Saudi Arabia had significant debt following the Ikhwan rebellion and a lavish style. Later in 1933, SOCAL placed the oil concessions of Saudi Arabia under a wholly owned company California Arab Standard Oil Company (CASOC) that was a pre-cursor for the joint American/Saudi Arabian company Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) that was established in 1944. While Ibn Saud's immediate financial issues were contained, the first batch of oil was not shipped until 1939, but the outbreak of World War 2 limited the oil extraction (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 91-93). With the addition of payments from oil extraction, Ibn Saud started to spend the new wealth and build new palaces. Ibn Saud and Saudi Arabia struggled financially during World War 2 and relied in part on subsidies from U.S. and Britain after declaring war on Germany in 1943. Following the end of World War 2, the extraction of oil exploded and reached 308.3 million barrels (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 93-94).

In the early 1950s, Ibn Saud met with a number of foreign leaders and noticed Saudi Arabia's limited government, so he created five more ministries: Health (1951), Interior (1951), Agriculture and Water (1953), Education (1953) and Communication (1953).

Furthermore, Ibn Saud agreed to establish a Council of Ministers in 1953, a month before his death. In 1950, there were 4,653 ministry employees, but systematic records were not kept and they did not receive regular salaries either. An important reason for the underdevelopment of the state institutions was a lack of funding that in was largely caused by palace building and royal lineage spending. Before his death, Ibn Saud delegated some responsibilities to his sons, crown prince Saud and prince Faysal, but he remained an absolute monarch despite the creation of state institutions (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 95).

Following the death of Ibn Saud, his two oldest sons engaged in a fierce power struggle that threatened to collapse the Saudi state multiple times during the 1950s. Crown prince Saud was declared king shortly after Ibn Saud died, but struggled to get Saudi Arabia's economy going. Despite large earnings from oil, the 200,000-million-dollar debt, he inherited from his father in 1953 was doubled by 1958 and the Saudi riyal lost half its value against the dollar. In order to fix the economy, Saud halted spending on government projects, but continued building palaces. Furthermore, Saud fixed the annual spending for royal princes at 32,000 dollars (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 106-107).

Presumably, the main reason for now crown prince Faysal to oppose his brother and limiting his powers as king, was because of the poor Saudi Arabian economy and King Saud's excessive spending habits. However, another important point of the internal struggle was how to divide powers of absolute monarch Ibn Saud had held between his sons. King Saud abolished the position of Prime Minister in the newly established Council of Minister because he considered himself both King and Prime Minister, whereas crown prince Faysal wanted more powers in his own hand as crown prince and deputy prime minister. King Saud began to promote his own sons as Ibn Saud had done, rather than rely on seniority and escalated the power struggle in 1957, when he promoted his son Musa'id in the Royal Guard, His son Fahd in the Ministry of Defence, his son Khalid in the National Guard and his son Sa'ad in the Special Guard (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 108-109).

Following King Saud's decision to promote his over his brothers, three factions of power emerged. The first group was King Saud and his sons. The second was King Faysal, his half-brothers and paternal uncles. The third group consisted of primarily younger sons of Ibn Saud, who was born after 1930, with the most notable being Talal bin Abdulaziz

Al Saud, who was well liked by Ibn Saud in his final years. The three groups each struggled against each other with the third group being removed from government in the early 1960s for wanting to create a constitutional monarchy rather than the current absolute monarchy (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 109).

With the third faction outside of Saudi Arabia, crown prince Faysal formed a cabinet in 1962, when King Saud was out of the country for medical treatment. Faysal's new government included his half-brothers, but excluded King Saud's sons. Faysal promised a 10-point reform that included the abolition of slavery, the drafting of a basic law and the establishment of a judiciary council. When King Saud returned to Saudi Arabia, he rejected Faysal's proposal and threatened to send the Royal Guard against his brother, which led to crown prince Faysal mobilizing the National Guard against the King. Ultimately, King Saud ended up abdicating in 1964 following pressure from senior members of the royal family and prominent religious leaders and moved out of Saudi Arabia. Crown prince Faysal was crowned King shortly after King Saud abdicated (Al-Rasheed, 2002, p. 114).

The reign of King Faysal from 1964 till his death in 1975 was associated with a steady increase in oil revenue that solved Saudi Arabia's financial issues. King Faysal named his half-brother Khalid crown prince and Sultan minister of defence and aviation. From 1975, Saudi Arabia began utilizing five-year plans to improve defence, education, transport and utilities. With oil revenue increasing, state budgets also continue to climb. The first five-year plan was meant to improve material infrastructure, social services, hospitals and medical centres in order to reach a wider section of the population. King Faysal also promoted girl's education, which had been practically non-existent along with his general promotion of education, King Faysal became synonymous with modernization. Faysal remerged the two responsibilities of King and prime minister, just like his brother King Saud had done previously. Furthermore, Faysal placed secured the two most important ministries, the Interior and Defence, by appointing them to his loyal half-brothers Nayef and Sultan, thus consolidating the Saudi state by dividing important state functions and merging them with important branches of the royal lineage (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 120-123).

However, King Faysal was assassinated in 1975 by a prince also called Faysal, whose brother had been killed while being part of demonstrations in 1965. Crown prince

Khalid was named king within three days of Faysal dying. King Khalid named his half-brother Fahd crown prince. King Khalid's reign from 1975-1982 experienced some internal struggles with the notable ones being the siege of Mecca in 1979 that was put down within two weeks and Shia rebellions in 1979 and 1980, following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, that was put down by the National Guard. (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 144-147).

Saudi Arabia managed to largely stay clear of the Iraq/Iran war, but endured another internal power struggle, albeit on a smaller scale with King Khalid and half-brothers on one side, mainly Abdullah, commander of the National Guard. On the other side was crown prince Fadh, who started taking over more and more of the decision making from King Khalid, and six of his brothers from the same mother, who each held important functions: Sultan (second deputy prime minister and minister of defence and aviation), Nayef (minister of the interior), Salman (governor of Riyadh), Abd al-Rahman (vice-minister of defence and aviation) and Turki (vice-minister of defence until 1978). When King Khalid died in 1982, crown prince Fadh smoothly took over as King, as he had already assumed great powers before King Khalid's death (Al-Rasheed, 2002, pp. 148-149).

King Fadh struggled with falling oil prices, which continued to be Saudi Arabia's main source of income, which led to a quick decline in funds as generous subsidies were still handed out to royal family members, students along with generous social services and free education and hospitals.

In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia was faced with Saddam Hussein invading Kuwait, which was also considered a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, so it allowed access to U.S. troops, who used Saudi Arabia as a staging point in the Gulf War. Another issue in the 1990s was the increasingly disgruntled religious scholars, who opposed the West and the reforms regarding women put forth by King Faysal, but the issues were largely resolved by the turn of the century.

King Fahd ruled until his death in 2005, where crown prince Abdullah was crowned king. King Abdullah named his brother Sultan as crown prince along with his position as defence minister, but when Sultan died in 2011, Nayef was named crown prince instead with prince Salman being named the important minister of defence. When crown prince

Nayef died in 2012, prince Salman was named crown prince, while Muqrin bin Abdulaziz was named deputy crown prince.

When King Abdullah died in January 2015, crown prince Salman was crowned King and Muqrin became crown prince. However, three months later King Salman made a major change, when he removed Muqrin as crown prince and instead promoted his nephew Nayef bin Abdulaziz to crown prince, as it was the first time that a grandson, rather than a son of Ibn Saud was in direct line to the throne. At the same time, King Salman also promoted his son Mohammed bin Salman to the important position of defence minister, as well as deputy crown prince, second deputy prime minister and president of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs (BBC, 2018).

Mohammed bin Salman

Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) was born on 31 August, 1985 as the eldest son of then-prince Salman's third wife. MBS got a bachelor's degree in law at King Saud University and finished in the top ten. In 2009, MBS was appointed special adviser to his father. One of the first actions of MBS, when he was appointed defence minister in 2015, was to intervene in the Yemeni civil war on behalf of the Hadi's government against the Houthi rebels. Since 2015, the Saudi/UAE alliance have launched more than 16,000 raids on Houthi-held areas with civilians regularly getting hit. More than 10,000 civilians have died, tens of thousands are starving and unable to get medicine as well in what has for year been the world's worst humanitarian crisis and millions have been displaced. The war has reportedly already cost Saudi Arabia more than 100 billion dollars and it is still ongoing (Al Jazeera, 2018). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia was about to be put on a blacklist by the U.N. in both 2016 and 2017 due to the number of children that have been killed directly by Saudi airstrikes, but both times Saudi Arabia blackmailed its way out of the list, by threatening to remove funding to other U.N. programmes that it is currently funding (Reuters, 2017).

In June 2017, MBS orchestrated a blockade of Qatar along with UAE, Bahrain and Egypt. The coalition cut off all trade and diplomacy with Qatar. The blockade is still ongoing today and has cost UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabian billions of dollars. The U.S. as well as other Gulf leaders have tried to mediate multiple times over the years with no luck.

In November 2017, Lebanon's prime minister Saad Hariri was summoned to Saudi Arabia, where he was stripped of his cell phones and retained by Saudi Arabian authorities before he forced to read a prewritten resignation speech on Saudi television. Hariri was visibly nervous during his speech and it came as a complete shock to his aides back in Lebanon. Afterwards, Saudi Arabia declared that Hariri had resigned due to an Iranian plot to assassinate him, which was denied by both Iran and Lebanon. After a couple of weeks Hariri was allowed to return to Lebanon, where he suddenly regained his position as prime minister. Everything was a failed plot from MBS (NY Times, 2017).

At the same time as Saad Hariri was put in house arrest in Saudi Arabia, MBS ordered another three waves of arrests in the name of anti-corruption that shocked Saudi Arabia. The first wave targeted eleven princes, including Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah, the head of Saudi Arabia's National Guard, his half-brother Turki and Al-Waleed bin Talal, once of the wealthiest businessmen in Saudi Arabia. Prince Mansour bin Muqrin, the former crown prince also died in a suspicious helicopter crash. The second wave of arrests targeted technocrats and non-royal officials including for ministers. The third wave included wealthy businessmen and corporate leaders. Furthermore, there were reports of torture being used as well. The prisoners were informed that they could give 70 % of their fortunes to the government and they would be set free. However, Prince Mutaib bin Abdullah had still been relieved of his duty as head of Saudi Arabia's National Guard. The arrests are considered an unprecedented power grab by MBS, as he now effectively controls the three pillars of Saudi Arabia's security apparatus — the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Guard (Brookings, 2017)

Despite the anti-corruption campaign launched by MBS, he managed to spend over a billion dollars himself on three luxury items in 2016 and 2017. He bought a yacht from a Russian billionaire for 500 million dollars, a Da Vinci painting for 450 million dollars and a French chateau for 300 million dollars (Newsweek, 2018)

In 2016 and 2017, MBS announced a number of reforms and a mammoth two trillion-dollar 2030 project aimed at decreasing Saudi Arabia's dependency on oil revenues. The main reform was allowing women to drive by summer 2018. However, at the same time he had the leading female activists promoting women's right to drive jailed and tortured in the months leading up to the reform taking place (The Guardian, 2018).

Executions in Saudi Arabia has gone up by a lot since MBS came to power. Nearly twice as many were executed between June 2017 and March 2018 compared to the eight months before he came to power (Middle East Monitor, 2018).

On October 2 2018, Jamal Khashoggi, a former Saudi Arabian journalist that was now living in the U.S., went into the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul to have divorce papers finalized. His fiancée was waiting for him outside and had been given a number to contact in case, he did not come out again. After waiting for hours with no sign of Khashoggi, his fiancée contacted the number, which was Yasin Aktay, a close aide to Turkish President Recep Erdogan. The Saudi Arabian consulate informed Khashoggi's fiancée that he had already left the consulate, which they repeated the following days. Days later the Turkish government announced that it believed Khashoggi was murdered inside the consulate despite Saudi Arabia's denials. A week after Khashoggi's disappearance, U.S. intelligence informed the Washington Post that it had obtained communications that indicated that Saudi Arabian officials wanted to kidnap Khashoggi back to Saudi Arabia. It turned out that a Saudi hit squad of 15 people had arrived in Turkey one day ahead of the murder. The 15-member team was headed by an official, Maher Mutreb, who is close to Mohammed bin Salman and at least four other operatives connected to MBS' personal security detail. Furthermore, Mutreb called Saud al-Qahtani, MBS' closest associate, from the consulate and told him to "tell your boss" that Khashoggi was dead. According to the Wall Street Journal, a CIA assessment said that it was highly unlikely that this team of operators... carried out the operation without MBS' authorization. Saudi Arabia denied MBS has anything to do with the Khashoggi case, but arrested other members of the 15-member team (Al Jazeera, October 17) and (Washington Post, 2018).

Analysis

Iraq exhibited signs of being an authoritarian regime in the 1930s and 1940s with shifting governments primarily through coups with the aid of the military. However, Iraq was still rather closely monitored by the British, who had set up the Hashemite monarchy. During World War 2, the British invaded Iraq again and reinstated Faysal the 2nd's regent, as he was still underage. In 1953, Faysal the 2nd came of age and was

crowned king. He promised that Iraq would be turned into a constitutional monarchy that would safeguard democratic principles. However, he was assassinated in 1958 by General Abd al-Karim Qasim and his troops, which started a true authoritarian regime with a military dictatorship that had no visible ideology and no political pluralism. In 1959, a Baathist party hit squad attempted to assassinate Qasim, but failed to do so. However, in 1963 the pan-Arab nationalist Baathist party joined up with pan-Arab nationalists segments of the Iraqi army and toppled Qasim's regime. Qasim was tried and executed shortly after.

What followed was primarily an authoritarian regime as there was still limited political pluralism, the leadership was a combination of military leaders lead by General Arif and Baath party members, but at least on the surface the two sides shared totalitarian traits in the pan-Arab nationalistic ideology and the Baath party starting to use a terroristic force against the civilian population. Furthermore, the ruling power was split between two sides, which pulled back on the authoritarian traits. However, the ideological bond did not last long and within a few months the Baath party deposed General Arif and his army supporters, which turned Iraq into more of an authoritarian regime again, this time with a party dictatorship with less focus on ideology.

By the end of 1963, the Baath party was toppled again by a coup from Arif and other fragments of Baath party supporters turning Iraq back into an authoritarian military dictatorship, as one of the main targets was the ruling Baath party's National Guard that was its terroristic arm.

In 1968, the Baath party successfully managed to reclaim control of Iraq after another coup that finally ended the authoritarian military regime, but replaced it with an authoritarian regime with stronger totalitarian traits. Saddam Hussein increased and improved the Baath party's security apparatus that became increasingly terroristic and ruthlessly cut down all internal enemies in Iraq. In 1978, the situation in Iraq changed again, when Saddam Hussein took power. Rather than having an authoritarian regime with totalitarian traits, he shifted the Baath party's power over to himself and the following decades, he gained increasingly sultanistic traits. Hussein ruled through a combination of fear, using his massive security apparatus to terrorize the population, and rewards for his collaborators, which were mainly Tikrit Sunnis that were related to him either directly or his tribal connections. Furthermore, there was no rule of law and

Hussein wielded unrestrained personal rulership, which was showcased during the eight year Iraq/Iran war that pushed an affluent Iraq into severe poverty along with a large number of casualties. After the war ended, Hussein continued to focus on obtaining arms rather than feed his population. Subsequently, Hussein decided to invade Kuwait in 1990 and was thoroughly beaten back in 1991, which added U.N. sanctions on top of an already broken economy. Again it was the population that suffered as all dissident continued to be quelled ruthlessly and corruption naturally kept increasing with the ever worsening economy. Hussein continued to rule with complete sultanistic traits until he was toppled in 2003, when the U.S. and Britain invaded again.

Iraq showed signs of a failing state all the way from the 1920s up until the 1970s, when the sudden massive increase in oil revenue allowed the Baath party and Hussein to start improving the Iraqi infrastructure, massively increase GDP and provide social services to its citizens, thereby alleviating the economic performance dimension of failed states, the administrative services and the social services. However, Iraq consistently had issues with monopoly over violence and coup attempts all throughout the 20th century. Iraq was for the most part able to protect its citizens from outside forces though. Furthermore, the judicial was also lacking throughout the 20th century as there was never a proper independent judicial system and under Hussein there was no rule of law.

Following the Iraq/Iran war, Iraq started to showcase more signs of a failing state again as the war effort claimed all the money to infrastructure and social services. Additionally, Iraq's oil extraction was severely limited, which exacerbated the previous issues as well as drastically lowering the GDP, which lead Iraq back to the pre-oil poor economic performance. Following the 1990s sanctions, Iraq was increasingly failing on most dimensions of a failed state except for the monopoly of violence that was fairly static as Hussein ruled Iraq with an iron hand using his security forces. Prior to the U.S. invasion in 2003, Iraq was almost continuously a failing state on most parameters except for a brief period in the 1970s, but it never descended into a full on failed state. However, in more than the decade that followed the U.S. invasion became a failed state with no real control and total disorder. The administrative, social and judicial services was basically non-existent despite allied attempts to set up a new government that

would finally also include independent courts and rule of law. However, it was futile with the loss of the tiny bit of monopoly of violence that existed under Hussein due to the rising insurrections and terrorist groups that targeted the civilian population as much, if not more than they targeted the allied forces. While the economic performance should have increased, it was in large part lost due to the war and corrupt officials. Millions of Iraqi civilians continued struggle feeding themselves and other millions were displaced. The low point of the Iraqi state and population occurred, when Islamic State of Iraq rose to prominence and captured large parts of Iraqi territory and villages while slaughtering civilians at will. In 2019, ISIL is mainly gone and Iraq is arguably no longer a failed state, but again a failing state, but the golden days of the 1970s with elements of a strong state are far away.

When Ibn Saud established his Saudi Arabia kingdom in 1932, it was as an absolute monarchy, but it did contain some strong totalitarian traits early on that originated in his decades long conquest of the Arabian Peninsula. Right from the time Ibn Saud conquered Riyadh in 1902, Wahhabism became an important ideology enabled him to gather his mutawa'a troops as well as the Ikhwan that featured as his terroristic police before and after conquests. Furthermore, through Wahhabism, Ibn Saud attempted to control all facets of life for his citizens again through the usage of mutawa'a and Ikhwan troops. In later years Saudi Arabia gained some sultanistic traits as well, as high levels of corruption in all levels of society happened due to oil revenue and the important public and private sectors mainly fused together under King Faysal.

With the rise of Muhammed bin Salman (MBS), Saudi Arabia has already started to edge away from some of its totalitarian traits towards more sultanistic traits. MBS had introduced multiple reforms and promised to return to a more moderate version of Wahhabism, which both would limit the ideological factor of the regime, as well as regulate less facets of citizens lives, which can be seen in women now being able to drive. However, despite his very recent rise to power, he has already showcased that there is no rule of law for himself or his father, King Salman, which was very clear in the anti-corruption campaign that netted the government more than 100 billion dollars from prominent Saudi Arabian, but failed to look his own recent luxury purchases of more than a billion dollars. Furthermore, MBS has also already show signs of

unrestrained personal rulership, both when he summoned Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri, put him into house-arrest and forced him to resign. And when he seemingly ordered a death-squad to assassinate a former Saudi Arabian journalist and dissident in Jamal Khashoggi that had moved into exile in the U.S., but was targeted, tortured and killed in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey.

Since the creation of Saudi Arabia, it has showed signs of a failing state. Due to Sharia law under the Wahhabism ideology, there has been some semblance of judicial services even if there were not effective and independent courts and there has never truly been rule of law. The rulers have always been exempt from the rule of law, which is generally a clear sign of a failing state. Monopoly over violence has generally always been reasonably high throughout Saudi Arabian history, though there have been episodes of rebellions that decreased the dimension, albeit temporarily. Saudi Arabia struggled for decades with economic performance and had massive debt up until King Faysal gained power in the 1960s and increased the oil revenue significantly. King Faysal was also responsible for providing administrative and social services due to large investments from the improved oil revenue. However, after King Faysal's death and with the addition of decreasing oil prices, Saudi Arabia have started to struggle financially due to its continuously large spending and almost total reliance on oil revenue. This continues to be an issue today, which is why Muhammed bin Salman (MBS) has proposed his 2 trillion dollar 2030 investment project that is meant to increase income from tourism and thereby decrease the reliance on oil revenue. It is also likely the real reason, why MBS allowed women to drive in 2018, as it is not financially smart to have half your working force being unable to drive to work and employing approximately 800,000 foreign drivers for the women that were not allowed to drive themselves (Expatvine, 2018).

The current judicial services ought to have improved in Saudi Arabia, but MBS showcased in 2017 that it not the case, when he used an anti-corruption campaign to jail potential rivals and basically blackmailed the rest into giving away large parts of their fortunes, while keeping his own and spending over a billion dollars on three luxury items.

Social services have also been decreasing over the last couple decades as the government can no longer afford to provide the same generous subsidies as it did in the 1960s and 1970s with oil revenue steadily increasing.

Administrative services have certainly increased and can no longer be said to be failing.

The monopoly over violence have also increased significantly, but Houthi's hitting Saudi Arabian with missiles from Yemen is a clear detractor even if the majority of the Saudi Arabian population does not face any danger.

Neither Iraq nor Saudi Arabia has at any point in their histories been strong states, but have instead been dealing with various stages of failing states. The early decades were generally better for Saudi Arabia than it was for Iraq, as it had a relatively stable continuous regime, whereas both the regime type and rulers constantly switched in Iraq up until Saddam Hussein gained power in 1978. Both regimes had their best years in the early to mid-1970s, when oil revenues increased significantly and boosted most of the failing state dimensions for both states. However, particularly Iraq rapidly declined again following the Iraq/Iran war in the 1980s and it only got worse until it completely collapsed following the U.S. invasion in 2003 that deposed Hussein. Saudi Arabia also dealt with lower oil revenue due to lower oil prices, but it was not involved in any wars that limited their oil extraction and added increased financial strain. That is not until Mohammed bin Salman joined the Yemeni civil war and Saudi Arabia has already spent over 100 billion dollars in a war that seems to go on. Furthermore, Mohammed bin Salman has orchestrated events over the last couple of years for better and worse including the Qatar-crisis, lifting the ban on female-drivers in Saudi Arabia, seemingly ordered the assassination of the Journalist Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Turkey. All of which has certainly increased his notoriety internationally, but he has a tighter grab on the power than ever before after his unprecedented move in 2017, where he used an anti-corruption campaign to rid himself of his rivals, while also bringing in more than a hundred billion dollars in blackmail from some of the richest men in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to find out how Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) of Saudi Arabia had such a rapid rise to power as well as how it will impact Saudi Arabia's future by looking. The thesis will look into how and why Saddam Hussein and Iraq ended up in a total disaster with a dictator hawking weapons, while his population got increasingly poorer and were starving and whether or not MBS and Saudi Arabia are showcasing any of the same signs.

Why has Mohammed bin Salman had such a meteoric rise in power and what are the stakes for Saudi Arabia?

There can be no doubt that Iraq and Saudi Arabia share some similarities regarding dimensions of failed states, with both states having a minor golden period in the early to mid-1970s due to a massive increase in oil revenue. However, due to the warmongering decisions of Saddam Hussein, Iraq was ruined financially and it only became worse over time until it culminated with the total collapse and state failure following the U.S. invasion in 2003 that removed Hussein. Saudi Arabia also had a drastic decline financially due to lower oil prices and overly generous, continues spending. However, with Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) decision to join the Yemeni civil war and the Qatar-blockade, Saudi Arabia is bleeding money like never before and have already spent over a hundred billion dollars in Yemen in a war that seems never ending, much like the Iraq/Iran war.

Saudi Arabia was lucky in the sense that they had a rule like King Faysal that significantly boosted both their economy, infrastructure and social services, which Iraq did not have. However, MBS has already showcased sultanistic signs such as an unprecedented power grab by using an anti-corruption campaign to eliminate potential rivals. Furthermore, he has increased the number of executions and Saudi Arabia are now employing torture to a wider degree, which is another scare similarity to Hussein. Hussein started a war two years after fully coming into power, whereas MBS started a war within months of coming to power as defence minister, which is also eerily similar. Saudi Arabia is already facing massive issues financially in the future with their oil dependency and low employment rate, which will only be exacerbated by a new future

warmongering King Salman that MBS seems destined to become.

A major part of MBS' meteoric rise in power has been his ruthlessness in regards to rivals and enemies, which again are traits that he shares with Hussein. MBS is still young, so there is hope that he will change in the future, but currently Saudi Arabia's future looks almost as bleak with MBS' coming sultanistic rule as Iraq ended up becoming with Saddam.

It counts in Saudi Arabia's favour that the U.S. are far more likely to stick by Saudi Arabia, than they were Iraq even though the main common enemy is still Iran.

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