IN BACKGROUND

In May WAC learned about the current state of the Saudi Arabian throne and its history starting in 1932, most of the central Arabian Peninsula was united under a certain chieftain, known to many as Ibn Saud. His name lives on in the country he founded, Saudi Arabia, a Muslim absolute monarchy which since his death has been ruled by his sons. Today, that son is Salman, King of Saudi Arabia since 2015, whose reign has seen a number of sweeping reforms and initiatives; both those aimed at modernization—like Saudi Vision 2030, the restructuring of Aramco, and the lift on the ban on women drivers—and those aimed at establishing Saudi Arabia’s hegemony over the Middle East—such as the Qatar crisis, intervention in Yemen, and the Lebanese Prime Minister’s resignation. But these initiatives, despite being undertaken in his rule, are credited to his son Mohammed bin Salman, the charismatic and ambitious thirty-two year old heir-to-the-throne.

Previously an obscure member of the royal family, he ascended the political ladder quickly, becoming formal advisor to his father, then Minister of Defense before replacing his cousin as Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. His quick ascension has many
questioning the stability of his position, yet he has managed to assert his power through these previously mentioned actions; most recently, the 2017 Saudi Arabian anticorruption purge\textsuperscript{13}.

International observers ask themselves whether the primary motivator behind the 2017 Saudi Arabian purge was Mohammed bin Salman’s desire to solidify his position as Crown Prince, or to seize the assets of political enemies for the state, or whether indeed his is a genuine purge of corruption.

Nonetheless, Mohammad has reportedly detained over 500 individuals on different charges, mostly of laundering, bribery, and extortion. Most notably among these accused are powerful Saudi officials, princes and businessmen like former defense minister Fahd bin Abdullah, influential Saudi billionaire Al-Waleed bin Talal, and leader of the National Guard, Mutaib bin Abdullah\textsuperscript{14}.

To the younger generation of Saudis, those among which the Crown Prince enjoys popularity as a twenty-first century reformer, the purge seems to be a legitimate attempt at removing corrupted officials and businessmen from interfering with the modernization projects that have recently seen setbacks\textsuperscript{15} due to the non-cooperation of more aged elites like rogue governors and meddling businessmen.

To the skeptics and the more veteran of the political class, this action seems like an assault on their long-held privileges and an attempt to remove political rivals from the scene in preparation for his ascension as king, given his father’s illness. Despite his motives, his actions have given him power unseen in decades\textsuperscript{16}, and opened up room for more reforms which only time will tell what kind of Arabia there will be in the future.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibn Saud (1875 –1953), or Abdulaziz as he is known in the Arab world, was an Arab chieftain in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century who united the central Arabian tribes and became the first King of Saudi Arabia.
2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest state on the Arabian Peninsula, an absolute monarchy, it's most noted for its ultraconservative religious Wahhabi culture and for its oil reserves, the largest in the world.

3 King Salman bin Abdulaziz (born 1935) is the current absolute monarch of Saudi Arabia. He was born as the 25th son of Ibn Saud, and is the sixth of his sons to reign, which he has since 2015. He is known as a conservative, but has deliberated much of ruling to his son and heir Mohammed bin Salman.

4 Saudi Vision 2030 is an economic initiative taken by the Saudi Arabian government to lessen the kingdom’s dependence on oil and modernize its economy to more services-oriented fields.

5 The Saudi Arabian Oil Company, known as Saudi Aramco, is the nationally-owned oil and gas company of Saudi Arabia; valued $2 trillion, it is the most valuable company in the world.

6 In September 2017, King Salman issued a royal decree which stated women would be allowed to be given driver’s licenses, lifting the ban on female drivers. This was seen positively young people and women in Saudi Arabia, and as a first step to gender equality in the nation.

7 The Saudi-Qatari diplomatic crisis stems from the alleged Qatari support for the Arab Spring and its friendliness with Saudi rival Iran. In 2017, Saudi Arabia, joined by allies including major players like the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, cut diplomatic ties with Qatar.

8 Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has, with the aid of regional and international allies like the US, led a coalition to back the government of Yemen in its civil war. The war has received criticism for causing humanitarian crises, like those found in bombing campaigns and prolonged sieges.

9 In 2017, the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, while in Saudi Arabia, delivered a televised address announcing his resignation. This was seen as forced by the Saudi government, who speculators believe were holding Hariri accountable for not doing enough against Hezbollah and other Iran-influenced groups in Lebanon.

10 Mohammed bin Salman (born 1985) is the current Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, also holding many other Saudi government offices. He is the eldest son of the current king Salman by his third wife and current heir to the throne. He is seen as a modernizer and reformer, and enjoys wide popularity among the youth of Saudi Arabia.
The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia is a position designating the heir to the throne; they are appointed by the King.

The Saudi government has many ministries and agencies, with King acting as the Prime Minister. The First Deputy Prime Minister is the second most senior of all other offices and holds wide administrative powers over the country.

The 2017 Saudi Arabian anti-corruption purge was a government crackdown led personally by Mohammad bin Salman to remove those suspected of abusing their position for personal gain.

Mutaib bin Abdullah (born 1952) is the son of former King Abdullah and previously the chief of the National Guard, he was widely considered the most powerful man in Saudi Arabia until his arrest. He was released on a $1 billion bail.

The business and traditional interests of older princes and magnates have often collided with the Crown Prince’s vision, who see them as displacing their position. Though these projects have the potential to lower unemployment and put the younger generation to work.

While the king rules as absolute monarch, most of the running of government is done by his ministers on his behalf; the power wielded by Mohammad bin Salman is true executive power unseen since the days of his grandfather Ibn Saud, a king who both reigned and ruled.

LET’S THINK ABOUT IT

Your SWAC leader will prompt you with questions revolving around the same idea: what are the benefits and downsides you see arising from the current political shakeup under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman? Express your thoughts and contribute to discussion with your fellow peers!

MY THOUGHTS ON MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN AND THE SAUDI SITUATION:

(room to write your thoughts)
This lesson plan is meant as an aid for the Faculty Sponsor, President or Vice-President to lead their respective SWAC chapter in the discussion of this two weeks’ focus: the Saudi Arabian political shakeup under Mohammed bin Salman.

Kahoot! Introductory Quiz
Kahoot! is an online Quiz platform. This small ten-question quiz is to test the student’s prior knowledge of Saudi Arabia and introduce them to the discussion to come. The quiz does not require the proctor to have a Kahoot account in order to start. Students will use an electronic device in order to answer. The link is below; click START NOW and select Classic mode. After the Game PIN is generated, students will be able to join the session by accessing kahoot.it on their computer or mobile device. Begin the quiz once all students have joined! This activity shouldn’t take more than 15 minutes.
LINK: https://goo.gl/rAEz16

Lesson Handout
Now is when the handouts should be passed out to students. It is split into two sections, one which covers the history of the Saudi royal family and another that covers Mohammed bin Salman and his leadership. It is recommended that the handout be read aloud as a group instead of individually. Take some time after the document has been read to cover the material with the students and make sure that its been generally understood. Ask questions to students; get them to summarize what they’ve read and make sure that the students are engaged and understanding. The reading shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes.

Video Resources
We have two video resources below that will go over in more detail the current event portion of the handout and expand upon it. Following each link we’ve included a description of the video and possible questions that you can ask students to see what they’ve taken away from watching
the clips. The videos are both around 3 minutes; coupled with questions, this segment shouldn’t take much more than 10 minutes.

FIVE THINGS ABOUT SAUDI CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN
LINK: https://goo.gl/V3sjrL

This video published by BBC News features a security correspondent summarizing the Crown Prince.

›From hearing this analysis, does it sound like Prince Mohammed is biting more than he can chew?

EXCLUSIVE: INSIDE SAUDI ARABIA’S GILDED PRISON AT RIYADH RITZ-CARLTON
LINK:https://goo.gl/b5X9r5

In this video, also by the BBC, we take an exclusive look inside the hotel at which the people targeted by the Crown Prince’s anti-corruption purge are being held.

›Do you think the Prince is in the right by detaining all these people, despite the progress he wants to achieve by it?

›Does letting them out for a fee seem hypocritical to you?

DISCUSSION

What are the benefits and downsides you see arising from the current political shakeup under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman? Do you think that his proposed reforms merit his crackdown? Do you see this purge as more of a power play or will it actually have the effect of reducing corruption? Can you see the popular appeal that the Prince may have on the youth? Where do you see Mohammed in ten years? Do you think the making of long-term enemies was
worth the short-term progress, or do you see the enemies as short-term and the progress long-term? This shouldn’t take more than 15 minutes – total estimated meeting time: no more than 1 hour.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


