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US-Saudi Relations: A Comparative Study of Trump and Biden Administrations (2017-2024)

Abstract

This paper examines the US presidential decisions of Trump and Biden's Administrations towards Saudi Arabia, specifically from 2017 to 2024. The research aims to analyze the basic similarities and differences in the foreign policies of the Trump and Biden Administrations towards Saudi Arabia, influenced by its domestic politics, notably pressures from human rights organizations due to human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. Trump adopted a more business-like approach towards Saudi Arabia, balancing strategic ties traditionally, but Biden primarily asserted a stricter policy towards Saudi Arabia. However, MBS's decision to raise oil prices at the OPEC forum was alarming for Biden's national interests. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's new partners in global politics and tilt towards China and Russia immediately changed Biden's perspective towards Saudi Arabia. This study investigates how political discourse, economic choices, and worldwide collaboration contribute to and shape the US-Saudi relationship.

Keywords: Strained Relationships, Security Problems, Oil Politics, Priority Visit, Changing Dynamics, Middle Eastern Region, Cordial Relationship, Human Rights Issues

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Title

US-Saudi Relations: A Comparative Study of Trump and Biden Administrations (2017-2024)

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Abstract

Pakistan and Afghanistan are two neighboring states sharing both religious and cultural identities as well as multiple crossing points along their borders. Both countries have had ups and downs in their bilateral relations; however, the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the nexus between the Taliban and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), led to an intensifying security situation in Pakistan, which ultimately resulted in tightening bilateral relations between the two countries. This paper uses a secondary qualitative research design where data have been collected from already existing sources and analyzed with the help of the content analysis method. The nexus between the Taliban and TTP is a result of factors such as religion, common ethnicity, and ideological monolith. TTP allegedly used Afghanistan soil to engage in terrorist activities against Pakistan, which brought mistrust and uncertainty in bilateral relations between them.

Keywords:

[Strained Relationships](#), [Security Problems](#), [Oil Politics](#), [Priority Visit](#), [Changing Dynamics](#), [Middle Eastern Region](#), [Cordial Relationship](#), [Human Rights Issues](#)

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Introduction

The United States and Saudi Arabia are traditional allies, but over time, many problems have arisen that have strained relations between the two countries. Fluctuations in the external and internal affairs of these two countries have created a lot of trouble in recent times. This article will examine in detail all the issues that

took place during the presidencies of President Trump (2017-2020) and President Biden (2020-2024), as well as investigate what is the fundamental difference between the foreign policy of these two presidents towards Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, due to the changes in Saudi Arabia's politics, especially during President Trump's presidency, the new Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman put great



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emphasis on cordial relations with the United States, and thus the two countries started actively participating in cooperation in all sorts of defense, security, and economic matters.

However, sudden changes in American policies towards Saudi Arabia linked to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, especially American human rights organizations appealed to the US President to take strict action against Saudi Arabia and there was a lot of pressure on the presidency from America's domestic politics, but the Trump Administration convinced the American people that Iran has exerted excessive influence in the Middle East region. Moreover, focusing on economic, defense and military cooperation with Saudi Arabia is essential for US interests at international level, therefore good terms with Saudi Arabia are very important to reduce Iranian impact in the region.

As far as Biden's policy towards Saudi Arabia is concerned, initially, he contended a strict action against Saudi Arabia due to violations of human rights on Saudi Arabian territory. Conversely, Saudi Arabia's new leadership under the guidance of Muhammad bin Salman's bold decisions at the OPEC forum drove Biden to maintain bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, highlighted by Biden's top-priority visit to Saudi Arabia to restore mutual ties. Nevertheless, these changes in US foreign policy concerning Saudi Arabia are the result of Saudi Arabia's tilt towards China and Russia. Biden's Administration acknowledged the importance of Saudi Arabia in global politics. This article provided a comparison between the Trump and Biden Administrations (2017-2024) policies towards Saudi Arabia, keeping in view the changing regional and global dynamics.

Literature Review

Saudi Arabia and the US are traditional partners in the Middle East. President Roosevelt preferred Saudi friendship to enhance his regional and global interests through various mutual agreements, enhancing cooperation in defense, economy, and arms sales. However, the Saudi-US bilateral relationship faces many strains during the Trump and Biden administrations from 2017 to 2024 due to Saudi Arabia's tilt towards China and Russia. The researcher has constructed the literature into five categories.

The first category focused on the main theme of the study, the historical affiliation between Saudi Arabia and America. Relations between the United America and Saudi Arabia began at the start of the 20th century with the discovery of oil as an important substance. In 1933, California's Standard Oil, now known as Chevron, gained permission to explore oil on Saudi Arabian territory. The American authorities focused more on oil agreements

between the US and Saudi oil exploration companies (US-Saudi Business, 2025).

The second type included works that discuss the climax of the bilateral relationship between the Trump Administration and MBS from 2017 to 2020. In 2017, MBS appreciated all the developments by the US Administration towards Saudi Arabia in maintaining friendly relations with the Trump Administration, focusing more on the modernization of Saudi Arabian society through educational, cultural, security, and economic cooperation. Specifically, Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia proved very successful for the accomplishment of MBS's vision of 2030. Trump also values the democratic process of Saudi society and new policy initiatives of MBS towards the modernization of Saudi territory by allowing women to participate with men in all fields of life and promoting reforms in different fields of Saudi territory (The White House, 2017).

The third category aims to highlight the major shift in US foreign policy during the Biden Administration from 2020 to 2024. Nonetheless, the Biden administration initially adopts very strict actions towards Saudi Arabia, highlighting MBS's involvement in Jamal Khashoggi's murder and violation of human rights in Saudi territory, as well as targeting the Yemeni human population. However, MBS's bold decisions at the OPEC forum have changed the US perspective and Biden's priorities for a visit to Saudi Arabia to reevaluate the bilateral relationship for safeguarding the US interest in the region, as well as at the global level. Joe Biden has worked to expand relations with the country and address other challenges, including rising oil prices and regional problems (Khaleej Times, 2022).

The fourth category explains the comparative analysis of the Trump and Biden administrations from 2017 to 2024 towards Saudi Arabia. The Trump administration adopted a more pragmatized approach towards Saudi authorities, prioritizing economic cooperation and arms sales by overlooking the human rights issues of domestic politics. On the other hand, Biden took strict measures to highlight the human rights violations in Saudi territory, which resulted in MBS's proclivity towards China and Russia and tenacious behaviors of MBS during Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia (Qaid, 2022). Moreover, the last one discusses the importance of Saudi Arabian oil politics and shifting dynamics, enhancing global partnership with China and Russia, which alarms the situation in the United States to safeguard its interests in the region on top priority basis.

Research Methodology

This study focused on bilateral ties between America and the Saudi government by providing a comparative study of Trump and the Biden Administrations; moreover

researcher uses qualitative descriptive and exploratory research methods to review the available research material. Moreover, the secondary sources are used for data collection, and thematic analysis is applied for generating themes such as:

- A primitive affiliation between Saudi Arabia and the Americans.
- Security and economic partnership amongst Saudi-US US administrations.

Theoretical Framework

Neoclassical realism theory is used to explain the theoretical perspective of the study. Gideon Rose, in the field of international relations, published his exclusive article “Neoclassical Realism Theory of International Politics” in “World Politics Journal” in 1998 (Rose, 1998), which provided a new perspective on power politics. He provided evidence that domestic politics influences the foreign policies of the states. Furthermore, domestic pressures affect the external relations of countries, specifically world powers, which also mold their policies by receiving internal pressures. American foreign policy was also affected by domestic politics, especially public opinion focusing on human rights demands from both the Trump and Biden administrations for stern actions against the Saudi government due to human rights violations in Saudi Arabian territory, as well as at external levels, focusing on Yemen conflicts with the kingdom. However, Saudi Arabia’s tilt towards China and Russia has changed the US perspective by focusing on preserving its national interests globally and evaluating the stance of neoclassical realism.

Historical Background

Over the past 80 years, Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the US has developed into a multifaceted partnership that includes defence, trade, education, tourism, and so on, supporting connections at all levels, from government officials to private citizens. Additionally, numerous U.S. presidents have visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 1974, proving lasting influence as a stabilizing force in an unstable region. From the earliest defense energy cooperation to modern cooperation in education, technology, tourism, and art, bilateral relations have become deeper over time because of regional events, global changes, and common interests (Alhamawi, 2025).

The origins date back to the 1940s, when King Abdulaziz Al-Saud, then known as Ibn Saud, united the kingdom of the Najd and Hijaz tribes, forming Saudi Arabia in 1932. On 14 February 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt met Saudi head Abdulaziz at a meeting held in Egypt, after attending the Yalta Conference. The meeting marked a turning point in history. Roosevelt sought the counsel of King Abdulaziz on the issue of European

Jewish refugees and considered Saudi Arabia to be an important player in shaping the post-war order. The “Quincy Meeting” laid the foundations for a sustainable relationship (MOFA News, 2022). In 1953, the two countries established military relations through the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement. In 1974, economic relations deepened with the establishment of the Joint Economic Commission between the United States and the KSA, which focused on industrial development, education, technology, and agriculture.

During the Gulf War of 1990-91, the Saudi army joined the United States and Allied forces in the liberation of Kuwait, and military cooperation intensified. In 2002, a strategic dialogue between Saudi Arabia and the United States was launched during King Abdullah’s visit to the ranch of President George W. Bush in Crawford, Texas. The spirit of cooperation continued in 2005 with the introduction of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme to invest in Saudi Arabia’s human capital. High-level engagements continued during the visit of First Lady Laura Bush in 2007, and in 2009, President Obama visited Saudi Arabia for the first time. In 2012, the GCC-USA Strategic Forum was established, and then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the first ministerial meeting in Riyadh, increasing the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council in US regional strategy.

The partnership went on to be further enhanced in 2017 when President Trump visited Riyadh in his first term of office. The visit included three major summits: the Arab-Islamic American Summit, the United States-Saudi bilateral summit, and the United States-GCC Cooperation Council summit. The meetings focused on strengthening military and trade ties. On 15 July 2022, President Joe Biden visited King Salman bin Abdullah al Aziz and Prince Muhammad bin Salman at the Royal Palace of Jeddah. He also attended the Gulf Cooperation Council Summit (Shah, 2025). As the Kingdom restructures its economy and global engagement through Vision 2030, US partnerships continue to be a key element in areas such as energy transition, clean technology, and digital transformation.

US-Saudi Relations under the Trump Administration (2017-2020)

Trump was personally engaged with the Middle Eastern region during his initial time in office, particularly Saudi Arabia, where Trump decided to visit for his preliminary foreign trip in 2017. Even while out of power, Trump has been in touch with MBS because of numerous business ventures and family ties. Jared Kushner had been the prime mover in shaping Trump’s Middle East policy in his primary Administration, counseling him through the Abraham Accords. Nonetheless, upon his departure from Washington, Saudi Arabia committed \$2 billion to

Kushner's Miami-based Affinity Partner Fund. Moreover, the Trump group has purchased significant business interests in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Council Countries. Furthermore, some sources informed the news agencies that the Trump group would be participating in the development of a Trump Tower in Jeddah (Sabena, 2024).

US Domestic Policy Effects on Saudi-US Relations under Trump

For Saudi Arabia, the United States is still an essential strategic ally, independent of which political party the President sits in Whitehouse. Traditionally, the Saudi Arabian officials have been more comfortable with their Republican counterparts. However, Saudi officials are hopeful for improved relations with the US during Trump's presidency after the tense relationship of the Obama era. They see Trump's Administration as an ally because of its tough stance toward Iran and lack of interest in human rights. The climax of this era of good feeling was the historic meeting between Trump and Saudi leader MBS on March 14, 2017. MBS promised cooperation to combat ISIS and expressed his support for Trump's travel ban. Many question whether the Saudis are truly on board or are desperately trying to reverse course from Obama. Saudi Arabia has invested billions in the United States to shore up Trump's economic agenda. Yet success in improving relations depends on how well bilateral concerns, preeminently Iran's expansionist influence, are met and how far America can expect a more committed Saudi Arabia, recognizing America's role in regional stability (Diamond, 2017).

Challenges of Human Rights & War in Yemen

The Trump Administration continued its close relationship with Saudi Arabia, focusing on arms sales and a strategic coalition to combat Iran, despite increasing opposition in the US. The mixture of Saudi Arabia's internal repression and its actions in Yemen prompted the wider debate in the US over moral foreign policy. The Yemen War became a litmus test regarding congressional war powers and executive overreach. Human rights groups urged the US to make any arms sales to Riyadh conditional upon improvements in Saudi Arabia's human rights performance (Salem, 2017).

The United States' disapproval and rejection of the abuses of human rights in Saudi Arabia were muted. Meanwhile, as a participant in the Yemen conflict and dispute, the United States offered logistical concerns, technological and intelligence support to Saudi-led foreign soldiers and forces, which apparently involved military targeting intervention and assistance. The US approved a \$1.15 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia in

August, in spite of resistance from Congress due to concerns regarding Saudi involvement and interference in Yemen. Besides the personal relationships, there is an ideology and point of view in Saudi Arabia that Trump may significantly contribute to helping the kingdom's struggle and strategies to diversify its economy away from reliance on oil and attract American contributions in major projects concerning "Vision 2030". It is not expected that Trump will raise and highlight the human rights concerns and matters during his conversations and discussions with the Saudis. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's persistent desires for increased American involvement and participation in the region and trustworthy security guarantees align with its expected stronger position on Iran. However, recognizing Trump's isolationist approach and obvious intention to reduce the US role in the Middle East, at least when it comes to armed rivalry and disputes, this might solely be wishful thinking (Roth, 2017).

The experience of Trump's first term offers Saudi Arabia even more determination and encouragement. He developed a close relationship with bin Salman and made his first international journey as president to Riyadh, where he signed \$400 billion amount of agreement for cooperation, and he was welcomed warmly with great hospitality. His campaign and initiative of "maximum pressure" on Iran, which involved stepping out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear commitment, and his helpful and favorable attitude in the Khashoggi execution were highly valued by the Saudis. However, his inadequate response to the Iran-backed 2019 attack on Saudi oil refineries at Abqaiq had caused much dissatisfaction. Instead of adopting aggressive steps against Iran, he decided to threaten Iran verbally and abstain from taking any US military actions.

Saudi-US Economic Cooperation

Furthermore, Trump's economic strategy and approach are probably going to promote more US oil production, potentially at the expense of Saudi Arabia. In order to accomplish and achieve the objectives of the policy and project "Vision 2030", the kingdom must observe an increase in the cost of oil. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates and assumes that Saudi Arabia's net profit from oil prices will be \$96.20 per barrel for 2024. This rate is expected to rise as local expenditure and the project Vision 2030 will continue to develop and progress. Any increase in oil production from companies and organizations other than OPEC will undoubtedly influence the market price and make Saudi Arabia unable to effectively control it. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has not attained an adequate level of direct foreign investment, and there is no chance that the administration of Trump will favourably and beneficially impact the investment of America in significant projects and initiatives, particularly in the context of conflicts and

tensions in the region that make the investors extra cautious. Although Saudi Arabia is somewhat relieved by Trump's potential return to authority and power, this does not prevent future challenges and unfavourable events caused by his stance on a number of political and economic issues and concerns. However, a more sustainable relationship may be established for the Saudis to move forward in the future with a clearly defined and articulated collaboration strategy (Arab Centre Washington, [2024](#)).

Trump Transactional Approach: US-Saudi Economic, Security, & Military Cooperation

Conversely, the transactional approach of President Trump to US-Saudi relations spotlighted economic deals, arms sales, and strategic cooperation over human rights or democratic values.

Strategic Agreements signed by the US with Saudi Arabia:

Additionally, Trump announced and signed a large military weapon while collaborating with Saudi Arabia that includes cyber security technologies, tanks, battle ships, missile defense systems, and commercial agreements across the energy, technology, organization, and infrastructure; these actions strengthen and support the first strategy of business. US corporations such as GE and Lockheed Martin signed the agreements with Saudi companies and organizations in order to support Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reforms and transformations to expand and broaden its economy. The Global Centre for Combating Extremist Ideology was established in Riyadh in the context of the agreement between the two countries in order to improve intelligence sharing and to prevent the terrorists' support and activities. Iran is portrayed as a regional destabilizer by Trump and Saudi authorities, who took an extreme stance against it. Cooperation was strengthened and boosted between the military and intelligence by this collaboration (Khan M. , [2017](#)).

Trump's views regarding the Arab-Islamic-American Summit

Trump avoided criticizing the authoritarian Arab governments in the pursuit of emphasizing cooperation while fighting against terrorism in his conference speech. This corresponds with the transactional character of his methodology.

Trump Administration's stance on Operational Support in Yemen

Despite rising humanitarian issues and concerns US

continues to provide information and logistical assistance to the Saudi-led coalition and association in Yemen.

Trump's perspective on the Modernization of defense ties with Saudi Arabia

The goal of the US military agreement was to enhance and modernize Saudi Arabia's defensive strengths and to reduce its dependency on American military participation.

Trump Shifts from Value-Based Diplomacy to Deal-Making

A change and move from values-based diplomacy to deal-making was highlighted by Trump, and he publicly declared the support of Saudi rulers and his dismissal of human rights criticisms.

Trump's Approach Hallmark of quid pro quo diplomacy

In sharp contrast to the US's earlier administrations, this strategy and approach were based on short-term economic and military rewards rather than long-term democratic principles and concerns about human rights.

US-Saudi Relations under Biden Administration (2021-2024)

The Biden government has adopted a more severe stance towards Saudi Arabia than the previous government under President Trump, which has caused and generated difficulties and complications in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The Biden administration's choice and intention to publish a diplomatic and private assessment associating MBS with journalist Jamal Khashoggi's assassination has been an essential source of dispute. This strategy was viewed as a major shift from the Trump Administration's strategy and approach, which had avoided holding the Saudi government accountable and responsible for Khashoggi's assassination. Furthermore, the Saudi government has condemned and opposed the decisions of the Biden Administration to stop providing weapons to Saudi Arabia for use in the conflict in Yemen. Concerns and issues regarding the violation of human rights in Saudi Arabia, such as the suppression of dissidents and activists, have also been raised by the Administration.

Saudi Arabia and the United States continue to have a strong relationship despite these constraints and challenges, particularly in the case of combating terrorist activity and regional security. The relationship between the two countries is expected to remain tense and unstable while the Biden Administration forces and advocates for the reforms and improvements of human rights and increased responsibility and duty of the Saudi administration and rulers. The President of the US, Joe

Biden, has been more critical and skeptical of Saudi Arabia since joining the charge in 2012 (Schwartz, 2022).

Resetting Saudi-US Relations under the Biden Administration

Consequently, the US has tried to reset its relations with the world's biggest crude oil producer, Saudi Arabia, to deal with energy problems in the global market. US President Biden stated, "From the start, my aim was to reorient, but not rupture, relations with a country that has been a strategic partner for 80 years" (The Washington Post, 2022).

Biden decided to visit Saudi Arabian territory on July 13th, 2022. He expressed his views that his visit to Saudi Arabia will be focused on fostering relations with Saudi Arabia, specifically to enhance cooperation in the energy sector. Moreover, to diminish Russian influence in regional affairs as well as to outpace China. Martin Indyk, associated with the Council on Foreign Relations, provides his concerns about resetting US-Saudi relations: "Absent the war in Ukraine, the tightening of the oil market, and the spiking of oil prices, there would be no rapprochement with Saudi Arabia" (Indyk, 2020).

Biden's Visit to Saudi Arabia

Biden's visit started with Israel issuing the "Jerusalem Declaration" to preserve future ties between the US and Israel by following the new policy of assistance with Muslim countries and safeguarding Israeli interests. For the first time in history, the US President directly flew to Saudi Arabia after visiting Israel. As a good gesture, the Saudi government allowed Israeli Airlines on its territory. While discussing the Palestinian question, Saudi Arabian leadership MBS clarified his official stance of pursuing a two-state solution of the Israel-Palestine issue as the final decision of the Saudi Arabian government presented in 2002 by the Arab Peace Initiative (Madhani, 2022).

Biden's distrust regarding reducing oil production at the OPEC+ Forum Announcements

The worry of the Biden Administration following OPEC's announcement to reduce oil production was the true reason for the covert rapprochement with the Saudi kingdom. The problem appears to be interfering with US national security objectives in the area rather than being related to the conflict in Ukraine. According to Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, OPEC and its partners, including Russia, made an economic decision that was ratified by all the member states. He told the AL Arabiya television channel that the decision was quite appropriate and a responsible reaction from member states. Under the command of Saudi Arabia, OPEC members decided to cut oil production by

2 million barrels per day. Biden demanded that the OPEC member countries lower the oil prices; in response which they decided to cut oil production. US-Saudi relations suffered a deadlock constraint after harsh US statements by Senator Bob Menendez to cease weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. In response to these statements, OPEC member states, under the guidance of MBS, declared that they would not lower the oil prices demanded by the United States (Krishna, 2019).

Changing Regional Influences on the Saudi-US Partnership under Biden

The regional transformational order of the Middle East at its early phase, under the beacon of popular unrest labeled as the Arab Spring, had resulted in insecurity and instability in the region. However, in the hope of bringing peace and tranquility back to the area, the democratic political development of the region necessitates quick reforms. Particularly, the regional actors failed to minimize the border conflicts that have shaped the geostrategic structure of the region. Moreover, some major geopolitical transformations have been noticed recently, specifically the growing influence of the Gulf countries at the regional level, as well as the emerging interests of Russia and China at the global level in the region. Specifically, these new dynamics through Russian and Chinese involvement in political, social, and economic issues have changed the global scenario of pro-Western culture in the region. Russia's new foreign policy towards the domestic and global conflicts in the region is now focused mainly on the domestic international nexus. Furthermore, Russia has developed probable social, political, and economic ties with regional states based on trade and oil politics in the region (Kardas, 2021).

Geostrategic Axes in Middle Eastern Politics

Nonetheless, there are currently four geostrategic axes: intra-Arab rivalry, a full-fledged strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a competition between pro and anti-brotherhood factions, and the struggle between Iran and Turkey for supremacy in the Islamic world. China's regional policies are intimately linked to the principles that drive its foreign policy, which include its calls for a new kind of international relations and a global community with a shared destiny for all people.

China's Engagement in the Regional Affairs

China's involvement in the regional affairs is driven by six interrelated interests: strategic, political, energy, economic, security, and cultural. Moreover, to facilitate the development of a network of alliances with significant regional countries, China has also built up a few institutional avenues for collaboration. Within these parameters, China has launched new projects, including

the Belt and Road Initiative, bilateral partnerships with countries in the region, and the China Arab States Cooperation Forum, to strengthen ties with the states in the region (Wu, [2021](#)).

Some experts also suggest a pact to be signed between Iraq and the Gulf States in the power grid sector, with a vision to decrease Iraq's dependency on Iran to manage its energy requirements. Biden also hopes to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, specifically focusing on a pact signed with Saudi Arabia to boost regional defence systems through a new airspace project engaged to mitigate Iran's ballistic missile strikes. Furthermore, to finalize another agreement related to Israeli plane overflight rights for further improvement in future cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia over the accomplishment of the transmission of the Red Sea Island coming from Saudi Arabia to Egypt (England, [2022](#)).

Changing Global dynamics and its impact on the Saudi-US Relationship

Further significant aspects of the US-Saudi relationship date back to history with respect to Saudi Arabia's important role as a geopolitical ally. Saudi Arabia is among the most important oil producers in the world. In terms of crude oil imports, Saudi Arabia supplies 6% of the American supply of approximately five hundred thousand barrels of oil daily. Nonetheless, from 2015 to 2019, around 74% of Saudi Arabian arms imports were from the United States.

Saudi influence in the global Market

In 2023, the US state department imported arms sales to Saudi Arabia worth six hundred and fifty million dollars, and a deal valued at over three billion dollars of US sales of missiles to Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia has a huge influence in the global market, and the US depends on that. For example, when Saudi Arabia planned to release more oil into the market, gas prices went up. High gas prices are a legal and political issue in the US and in the global energy market (Sierra, [2022](#)).

Biden's Administration Resetting Relationship with Saudi Arabia

Nevertheless, the Biden Administration's misgivings about shifting geopolitical conditions are the reason behind its break with Saudi leaders. Given that Saudi Arabia is the primary oil exporter to China, the US is currently focusing its efforts on changing Saudi Arabia's stance towards both China and Russia, with the aim of reducing China's influence in Iran and Russia's influence in Syria. Furthermore, the Biden Administration considers the Saudi Arabian partnership an ideal one, posing large oil deposits and a powerful position among

other Muslim countries not dependent on US aid, unlike other Middle Eastern Muslim countries (Labott, [2021](#)).

Alarming Situation for US National Interests

However, MBS's proclivity towards China and Russia determined him to start a new chapter of cooperation with these states instead of the US. This seems to be alarming for US national interests that its main ally in the Middle East tilted towards Russia and China's influence, compelled it not to lower the oil prices as demanded by the US, escalating the situation even worse for European countries. Consequently, the winter season is a challenge for European countries due to their dependence on oil. Meanwhile, OPEC's announcement of an increase in oil prices created an alarming situation for the Western world, termed unbearable for them (Lawler, [2023](#)).

MBS Proclivity towards China & Russia

Nonetheless, MBS persuaded the OPEC member states to take such initiatives and concrete decisions against the will of the United States of America. Moreover, the tension between the US and Saudi leader MBS is the main reason behind the scenes. Russia and China are Prince MBS's new strategic and economic partners in the Asian region, which changes the entire politics of Middle Eastern countries towards the US. Some critics also expressed their concerns about Prince MBS that the US is instigating a lobby within Saudi royal family members against MBS to remove his authoritarian rule from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Kibe, [2023](#)).

US Policy towards the Middle East

The US policy towards Middle Eastern countries has changed significantly after the signing of the Abraham Accords in April 2020. Especially focusing on Israel in the region, some Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, and the UAE, made sure at the "Negev Forum" "to extend security in the region, leading to cooperation, prosperity, and integration among the member states. Another breakthrough was the formation of the "12U2" group, including Israel's PM, Indian leadership, and their counterpart from the UAE, elaborating economic and social interests of the member states. Consequently, the Abraham Accords and the "12U2" group enhanced multilateralism and presented the US's intention to reset its lens to face the new challenges of the 21st century through cooperation and to join hands together with new alliances in the region (Singer, [2021](#)).

Effects of Saudi-Israel Relations on Global Politics

The normalization process did appear to be progressing prior to October 7, 2023. Although there aren't many

formal relationships between the two countries, there are plenty of informal ones. Leaders from Saudi Arabia and Israel have previously expressed hope that their partnership will soon be formally established. For instance, Saudi Arabia allowed all airlines to use its airspace in the summer of 2022, allowing flights to and from Israel to pass over the nation. All of that changed on October 7, 2023. Like most of the area, Saudi Arabia views Israel's military campaign in Gaza with far greater suspicion than do most Western nations. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia demanded that arms sales to Israel cease during a meeting of the BRICS intergovernmental organization in November 2023. Some analysts even predicted that Saudi Arabia would become more like its longtime competitor in the region, Iran, because of the Gaza battle. Better diplomatic ties between the two nations were mediated by China last summer. Saudi Arabia has made its position known throughout the conflict (Gause, [2018](#)).

The same was stated in December 2023 in *Foreign Policy* magazine by Aziz Alghashian, a fellow at Lancaster University's Richardson Institute, a center for peace and conflict research, "Riyadh is leading a diplomatic effort designed to generate an international narrative that questions the legality of Israeli military aggression and the US diplomatic cover it is utilizing. Moreover, "Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan is leading a diplomatic committee mandated by the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation to tour various international capitals and argue for an immediate ceasefire". It was observed that Moscow and Beijing were the first locations the committee stopped for negotiations.

The researcher and fellow named Aziz Alghashian at Lancaster University's Richardson Institute, a center for the peace, tranquility, calm and conflict research in December 2023 in *Foreign Policy Magazine* stated that Riyadh is organizing and driving a diplomatic campaign created to establish an international discourse that arises the questions about legality of Israeli military violence and US diplomatic cover it is using" (Alghashian, [2023](#)).

Furthermore, some analysts stated that "Saudi Arabia does not want to allow itself to be politicized for Israeli political ends." After the Saudi disappointment about the lack of a US response to the Houthi shelling of Saudi facilities on 14th September 2019 (Deferios, [2019](#)). Saudi Arabia now expects a more solid and reliable security partnership with the USA, Kersten Knipp stated. "In addition, Riyadh is interested in US support for its nuclear programme as well as arms cooperation. Saudi Arabia's growing alliance with Israel was also a reflection of its self-interest." Furthermore, building stronger ties with the region's top economies is one of the Gulf Kingdom's many efforts to modernize its economy and wean itself off its reliance on oil. "Israel is leading the

pack on that front," particularly given its high-tech industry and, additionally, shared interests in infrastructure projects and trade (Knipp, [2023](#)).

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is currently shifting toward neutrality, particularly considering the unexpected decision by OPEC+ to reduce production in April 2023 in an effort to stabilize the energy market's falling oil prices. However, Russia is helped by the OPEC+ forum through their recent announcement to reduce output, which boldly boosts its economy by increasing oil income and gives it the assurance to go to war in Ukraine.

Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman of Saudi Arabia prepared a study predicting that oil prices might fall to \$50 per barrel, endangering large-scale projects like Neom and the Red Sea Progress linked to Vision 2030. As a result, MBS prioritizes Saudi Arabia when making decisions, adopting a "Saudi First" stance. Nevertheless, MBS is diverting his complete attention towards domestic affairs of his country, such as the accomplishment of his giga projects as well as the completion of his Vision 2030 started in April 2016. According to MBS, the mega projects need to go into the delivery and building phases in this subsequent phase to ensure noticeable outcomes by the end of the decade.

Nonetheless, this explains the other change in Saudi policy during the past year, including the detente with Iran, which has once again taught Washington lessons on how to assess and comprehend Saudi policy decisions. If the mega projects are to attract the 20 million additional inhabitants and visitors that MBS has planned to have by 2030, the Kingdom cannot afford to have missiles and rockets crashing into its cities and villages. Saudi Arabia may view China's March 2023 move to restore diplomatic ties with Iran as an effort to lessen regional unrest while focusing on carrying out Vision 2030 (Ulrichsen, [2023](#)). Nonetheless, the China-brokered Saudi-Iran deal announced in Beijing in 2023 utterly contradicts US interests in the region, and China's participation in the deal has changed the global scenario of US hegemony in Asia. The Biden Administration is now focusing on Saudi demands and normalization of Saudi relations with Israel in the form of a Saudi-Israel contract before the 2024 presidential elections in the US as a regional strategy priority (Gadzo, [2023](#)).

The US has found it challenging to form technocratic partnerships with governments that have normalized relations with Israel at the Negev Forum, which will take place in Abu Dhabi on January 9, 2023. However, in Saudi Arabia's case, it appears that the White House and the Saudi leadership have different opinions about this specific issue. MBS has only one move with the normalization card, and he will only use it if he thinks it will work best for both parties, especially considering the growing rumors in Riyadh about the 2024 election

(Berman, 2023). The Kingdom views Trump's return as a chance to strengthen ties and agree with US policies that benefit them, particularly in reference to Iran and regional security concerns (Mohammad, 2024). Trump is considerably more popular and well known in Saudi Arabia than his predecessor, Biden, which might result in a more friendly and pleasant relationship (Fields, 2021).

Saudi Arabia and the US actually value and adhere to their common and mutual interests, which include the ensuring the stability of the oil market, tackling terrorism, avoiding Iranian influence in the region by imposing US demands that the nation maintain the Islamic standards and principles, promoting peace between Palestinians and Israel and urging Iran to continue the nuclear discussions (Sierra, 2022).

Recent Developments as Trump's return to the US Presidency

However, Saudi Arabia considers the presidency of Trump as an essential opportunity to strengthen the regional strategy and improve US-Saudi interactions. Saudis are familiar with Trump; despite certain disagreements and disappointments, they found him beneficial and helpful during his first administration. One instance of how the two countries manage to communicate is the meeting of Trump with Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the chairman of the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia. These gatherings and meetings will probably encourage the discussions regarding investment possibilities and business agreements, and partnership, establishing and strengthening the relationship even more (Wehner, 2024). Consequently, Saudi Arabia harbors hopes that Trump's second term will yield productive cooperation across various sectors. Notably, relations with President Joe Biden's administration improved during the latter part of his presidency, which contributed to a more favorable environment for Saudi engagement after a period of heightened tension.

Summative Insights

This research on US-Saudi relations from 2017 to 2024 highlights and illustrates their intricate, complicated, and dynamic relationships as important and significant parties in the Middle East. The US-Saudi relationship has been greatly influenced and affected by several factors, such as economic, geopolitical, and strategic objectives, including oil desires, concerns regarding human rights, and transforming commitments. The research examines how transforming the regional power dynamics, US foreign policy objectives and agendas, and worldwide energy markets may affect the US-Saudi relationship. Both countries face challenges, obstacles, and barriers as they navigate the rapidly shifting and transforming geopolitical terrain. The research highlights the significant importance

of ongoing and persistent interactions, discussions, conversations, and strategic collaboration between Saudi Arabia and the US. It also sheds light on the factors that promote the transformation in these agreements. As the global and regional conditions change and transform, Saudi Arabia and the US must modify their policies and strategies to address and promote the new challenges and opportunities. Saudi Arabia is managing its strategic objectives and desires after the arrival of Donald Trump to White House. The Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) viewed the victory of Trump as an opportunity to strengthen and improve their regional power, dominance, and aggressively seek their goals.

Key Discoveries

- Muhammad Bin Salman's governance in Saudi Arabia is focused and concentrates on achieving and accomplishing his Vision 2030 while addressing and dealing with global energy transformation concerns and challenges in the mid-century to maintain and preserve the significant role of the country in international decision-making strategy.
- Muhammad Bin Salman is expected to attain and occupy this position and role until 2060, when the nation aims and seeks to achieve net-zero emissions.
- Saudi Arabia will remain dependent on oil exports and trade to maintain and preserve its international influence during the tenure of MBS.
- US-Saudi affiliations and collaborations are opportunistic and do not share and encompass the common aims, goals, and objectives, such as "oil for security." The participants and parties involved should collaborate, strive, and seek compromises in order to achieve and attain a solution that is acceptable, feasible, and practical for both nations.
- Saudi Arabia is moving away from the US and towards China as a long-term energy partner in order to achieve and accomplish its 2030 goal.
- Power struggles, efforts, and geopolitical disputes that affect international and regional political and security conditions create difficulties and challenges for the Biden Administration.
- However, the 2024 election victory of Trump provides and offers an opportunity and chance for stronger, more productive, and beneficial US-Saudi relations in the domains and field of international politics, security, and economic cooperation.

Recommendations

Overall, the study emphasizes how crucial and important it is to comprehend and understand the intricate and complex aspects of US-Saudi relationships in order to

manage effectively and navigate the complexity and ambiguity of the Middle East. The regional and global factors can aid and help both countries and nations to build an effective, stable, trustworthy, strong, and mutually profitable relationship as they confront the challenges, difficulties, and possibilities of a rapidly changing world. Understanding, recognizing, and

addressing the common and shared interests and concerns will help the US and Saudi Arabia to maintain an effective, strong, valuable, and productive collaboration in the future.

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