

Globalization and Development Trajectories of Bedrock of Islam: The Success Story of Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia's Kingdom has come a long way in terms of development. The Saudi nation first appeared in Central Arabia in 1727. Thereafter, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's vast history, Vision 2030 and general development shows that the country has gained international recognition. Thanks to the embraced globalization and development trajectories of the Islamic religion that shaped the country to its many success stories. These can be emulated, adopted and replicated in other countries to turn around the economy in general. This study was founded on a paradigm shift theoretical framework. Using a qualitative content analysis of various sources of information including key informant interviews, the data was thematically analyzed and presented through narrative and verbatim. The findings show that Saudi Arabia has numerous success stories in different areas including economy, education, health, infrastructure and foreign aid. These can be guidelines to other third world countries including Kenya to put growth on the similar trajectory. The article recommends that the governments of struggling economies make use of the embarked international relations by Saudi Arabia to partner in development projects.

Keywords: Development, Globalization, Islam, Success Story, Saudi Arabia, Villagization

INTRODUCTION

There are development issues associated with developing countries; from the perceived concept of being poor to the state of being described as third world. A nation with a developing economy is one in which the economic well-being of its citizens is continuously improving through time. However, just because a nation is developing does not indicate that it is without promise. These nations have the capacity to expand and build wealthy economies by making use of the numerous opportunities they possess, particularly, those centered on their abundant natural resources. In Africa, most countries are classified as developing economies characterized by a number of undesirable development issues including high population growth, skyrocketing of unemployment rates, single or raw form export and import dependency, political instability, low gross domestic product among others. However, to date, the basis, meanings and division of nations into such classification is ambiguous and never conclusive among socioeconomic professionals.

In the post-20th century, the description of the developing countries is being twisted when several of the economies categorized as third world keep changing with an upward trend in strategic development. Such an example is Saudi Arabia which has grown its development trajectory over the last few decades. This amazing rate happens in the context of globalization that has taken the world by storm. The Kingdom developed with speed that changed the worldview towards its upward trajectory in relation to other countries. This great stride is engineered by enabling factors of paradigmatic shift in development issues, creativity, peaceful environment, shared insights of its professionals, social amelioration and wise leadership.

The concept of “globalization” is defined as the process through which businesses or other organisation come to have an international presence or start operating on a global scale. The unrestricted interchange of information, goods, and technologies between countries and their inhabitants is simply globalization. The connections between business, geopolitics, technology, tourism, culture, and the media all support this

openness. Since the world is already so interconnected, the majority of people don't notice globalization is in process on a daily basis. The world is indeed becoming smaller as a result of "villagization," and businesses need to understand what this means for conducting business in the future. Companies who fight against villagization and globalization run the risk of losing their competitive edge, allowing rivals to exploit untapped opportunities in the global market (Velocity Global, 2020).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through its Vision 2030, wise leadership and competent workforce enabled its access to the developmental trajectory. This also accelerated its rate towards modernization. The context of global development stems from the industrialized nations including the United States and the new frontiers like China and Russia which have emerged a development bench maker. Others are Saudi Arabia, India, Turkey, Malaysia, Japan and Indonesia.

Prior to COVID 19, trade agreements pushed businesses to globalize their output. Globalization is the resilient common factor of successful international firm, given the current state of affairs. So how do we continue to have such success? The damage brought on by the corona virus pandemic is beyond dispute and economies decreased. American unemployment reached highest-record level. The oil industry collapsed, and international tourism was (and still is) largely unwelcome (Starman, 2021).

The United States is still the biggest and most prosperous nation in the world today and is one of the developed nations. Politically, economically, and socially, nations develop over time. When one considers a country from its inception to its demise, one might see something that resembles a branching tree. Any civilization's foundation is its laws, which begin in a more fundamental way. As jurisprudence develops over time, laws will be continuously interpreted, resulting in the formation of concrete law for progress and peace.

The most reasonable conclusion is that a country's government, which is built on laws anchored in religion, is the key to its ultimate success since law and culture are products of belief. Even if the United States recently abandoned some of the traditional values that had contributed to its wealth, it is still the richest and most successful country in the world. As such, other countries including the religious ones like Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have built themselves through the rule of law that originates from the Islamic religion, rich jurisprudence, and maxims.

Moreover, the development of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has led to expansion of many cities and locations that have development skewed around religion and modernization. Its legal system is founded on Islam which guides its healthy values: For instance, the holiest Muslim cities are in western Saudi Arabia, in the Ḥirʿt Mountains, inland from the Red Sea coast, is Mecca, Arabic for Makkah, also known as ancient Bakkah, and Madinah. Muslims face Mecca, the city where Muhammad, the messenger of Islam, was born, five times each day during prayer (see Qiblah). Every pious and capable Muslim does the hajj, also known as the pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in their lifetime. Due to the purity and holiness of the city, only Muslims are allowed to enter. It is well known that Jews and Christians each have their own unique sacred sites.

Mecca had significant renovations throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The space surrounding the places of worship was cleared, the mosque was expanded, housing and hygienic conditions were improved, and transportation options were increased. Mecca can therefore accommodate the growing number of pilgrims, or hajjis. 10 square miles (26 square km) in size; 1,534,731 (2010); 2,790,000 (2021) inhabitants. 2,115,000 and 2,150,000, respectively (2022 and 2023; Worldometer UN data). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia continues to give great importance to ensuring the viability of its oil sector and other domestic resources, despite the fact that government-run charity programs and financial systems like Zakat have in the past aided the country's development.

Fortunately, under the leadership of the crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing a fresh wave of revolutionary and socioeconomic development. New measures adopted by the crown prince usher-in a period where traditional culture and modernization are gradually merged. The relatively young and working-age population of Saudi Arabia gives the economy tremendous potential and capacity (Ekannath, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study entailed a qualitative content analysis of 36 information sources on social and economic topical issues around development of Saudi Arabia. The sources were guided by three major themes, namely; History, Vision 2030 and general development. The sources were mostly in the digital space for easier access and to ensure that it was the most current. The sources included journal articles, official communications from various press houses, public speeches, social media posts and other related communication platforms. The reliability and validity of the results reported herein was assessed verbatim, triangulation and through multiple sources. Similarly, the researcher ensured consistency of the information through comparisons with existing theoretical frameworks and specifically the theory of change and the paradigm shift. However, the textbook printouts and secondary information through documentations at the royal embassy of Saudi Arabia, Kenya complemented the study results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. History of Saudi Arabia

The Al Saud dynasty's rule began in central Arabia in 1727. This is the time they established the Emirate of Diriyah which was the beginning of Saudi Arabia as a state. Some human remains and earlier traces of inhabitation have been found in this region. Several old-age societies and civilization of pre-Islamic era lived in same region. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is in Western Asia. It occupies the majority of the Arabian Peninsula and has a surface size of 2.15 million km² and a population of 36,394,230 as of 2023 (Worldometer UN figures, 2023). Its northern borders are shared by Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait. The Red Sea is on the west, Oman and Yemen are on the south, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are on the east, and the Arabian Gulf is on the north. Three major periods can be distinguished in the history of the Saudi Arabian kingdom: the period of nation-building and consolidation of the monarchy (1765–1823); the period of unification of power, stabilization of the system, and formulation of policies (1824–1901); and the period of institutional reforms, setting the stage for sectoral development and modernization (1902–the present).

There are signs of Human habitation in Saudi Arabia dating back to 63,000 years ago. In addition, stone stools of Paleolithic and fossils of animals were also discovered at Ti's Al-ghayhadh. Further, archaeological remains indicate Dilmun, Thamud, Kinda and Magar are old-aged civilization settlements. A 35-meter-long triangular megalithic structure from the seventh millennium BC was found in Dumat al-Jandal in 2020.

The second largest religion in the world was born in Saudi Arabia. The revelation of the Quran (the source of Islamic religion) was revealed upon prophet Mohammed in the modern-day Saudi Arabia, specifically Hejaz, that is, the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The first king, Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman established the current Saudi Arabia in 1927 by uniting four regions – Hejaz, Najid, Al-Ahsa and Asir.

From 1902 to date, Saudi Arabia is ruled through a monarchy system with an Islamic rule of law. The laws and jurisprudence governing the people of Saudi Arabia was sourced from the Holy Quran and the Hadith of his messenger (SAW). This is so because Islam began, matured and spread from Al-Masjid al-Haram in

Mecca and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina, the two holiest mosques in Islam, are generally referred to as “the Two Holy Mosques” and “the Land of the Two Holy Mosques,” respectively. That has earned Saudi Arabia the leadership popularity and the love of Muslims towards it. Further, it is the point where pilgrims congregate which signifies love and highly spiritual attachment by Muslims to these two cities.

From 1902 until his death in 1953, Abdulaziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, was the ruler of the Emirate of Riyadh (1902–1913), the Emirate of Nejd and Hasa (1913–21), the Sultanate of Nejd (1921–26), the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd (1926–1922), and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1932–1953). Following that, six of his sons in turn ruled the kingdom: Saud was eventually replaced by Faisal from 1964 to 1975. Faisal oversaw a time of development and modernization propelled by the income from oil. The nation’s political and social standing, as well as its economic development, were considerably bolstered by Saudi Arabia’s significance in the 1973 oil crisis and the subsequent rise in oil prices. The Grand Mosque in Mecca was briefly invaded by the reneged terrorists in 1979, but they were eventually driven out by the powerful Saudi mighty security forces. Khalid, Faisal’s successor, was in power throughout this time.

In 1982, Fahd was crowned king. Saudi Arabia became the world’s top oil producer under his rule, and he expanded development initiatives started by his predecessor while also starting new ones. Fahd was succeeded by Abdullah in 2005. In addition to modernizing numerous national institutions, he also encouraged political involvement to some extent. At the age of 30, Salman ascended to the throne in 2015. He led the restructuring of the Saudi government, and under his rule, the Kingdom underwent a significant change in its development priorities and modernization strategies. Salman had complete power over the government. He oversaw a number of legislative and social reforms in the country in addition to aiming to diversify the economy through Saudi Vision 2030.

Vision 2030

The collective desire for a better society and country by the year 2030 is the driving force behind Saudi Arabia’s long-term development strategy, Vision 2030. The goal of the strategy is to develop a highly developed, prosperous, and globally competitive nation. The Vision is generally based on the four pillars of;

- Reshaping the sociocultural environment through inclusive opportunities for the citizens of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Intensifying growth factors by means of strategic investment, escalating industries and world class leadership.
- Revamping and publicizing the vast rich heritage, sociocultural values and better competitive hospitality.
- Deliverance on climate change and sustainability goals nationally and globally.

The vision was praised by the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, who described it as an ambitious and all-encompassing path towards a better and brighter future for the country and its people. One of Saudi Arabia’s most challenging economic issues in recent memory resulted from the summer 2014 oil price fall. The ambitious Saudi Vision 2030 plan for economic and social development was created in response to the accession to the throne of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud the following year. By fostering the growth of a robust private sector and the adoption of a sustainable and diversified economic strategy, the plan, which was unveiled in 2016, seeks to reduce the country’s dependency on oil.

Saudi Arabia first made the decision to review the first four years of its economic transition with benchmark goals in 2020. Unfortunately, the 2020 global corona virus outbreak and sharp spike in oil prices severely hurt Saudi Arabia’s economy. The Saudi royals’ goal was never going to be straightforward due to the severe drop in oil prices, the volatility of global financial markets and trade, the suspension of some

industries like tourism, and the huge loss of productivity in both the public and private sectors. The Saudi plan, like the rest of the globe, faced an uncertain future as a result of the circumstances. Despite the problems that the Kingdom shared with other nations, it managed to overcome the odds of the universal phenomenon. It is obvious that Saudi Arabia continues to have a stake in the success of the economic transition. Four years after the Saudi reform program was launched, the goal of this study is to take a thorough look at the state of the Vision 2030 effort: What were its designers' intentions, what has happened thus far, how much have reforms contributed to the initial objectives the Saudi government set for itself, and what adjustments are necessary for reforms to be successful?

The Kingdom aspires to implement the Vision 2030 reform plan and put more of a focus on encouraging increased socio-political stability, sustainability, and transparency in its new era of socioeconomic reforms. In order to make future workers more skilled and competitive on the job market, Vision 2030 also places a strong emphasis on vital issues like raising the standard of life and reforming the educational system. Due to its emphasis on anti-corruption measures, gender equality, and the empowerment of women, King Salman's policies should also contribute to better social growth and development in Saudi Arabia (Ekkanath, 2018).

2. Development

• Education

Education is the primary foundation of social institutions and an optimal human development. It is also an enlightening route to protect and preserve cultural values and norms of a society. Education not only fosters academic development but builds social fabric economically, morally and spiritually. The Saudi Arabian Kingdom embarked on realization of the vital strategy to cater for education development. Currently, the Saudi Arabian Kingdom has 30 world class public universities, twelve (12) private ones, thirteen (13) colleges offering various diploma course, seven (7) military training colleges (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Kenya, 15 May 2023).

The crucial issues worth mentioning is that Saudi Arabia offers thousands of scholarships to students from all over the world on yearly basis. The students are spread in public and private universities of the Kingdom. Some of them managed to advance to doctoral level. For instance, there are almost 1500 Kenyan professionals of Saudi universities alumni. Among them are over 30 PhD graduates (Key Informant; Madinah University alumnus, Kenya, 10 May 2023). Some of them are high ranking officers of various government institutions. Further, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offers scholarship to between 100-200 students from Kenya on yearly basis to its universities. The unique aspects of the Saudi scholarships are offering full sponsorship, free textbooks, generous monthly stipend, clothing allowance and yearly return ticket for all foreign students during the holidays.

In support of the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) five-year strategic plan, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman gave \$3 million in August 2021. The declaration was delivered on Thursday during a summit on global education co-hosted by Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in London. "Saudi Arabia will always be a leader in providing support to everything that would achieve development, prosperity and peace for the people of the world," Hamad Al-Asheikh, the minister of education in Saudi Arabia, spoke on the crown prince's behalf.

He claims that the Kingdom has consistently given education a high priority on a local, regional, and international scale. He emphasized that evidence for this can be seen in the fact that education is a top priority on the Kingdom's G20 presidential agenda for 2020 and that it is important to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 (Glubb, 2021).

"Moreover, Saudi Arabia is the biggest donor to regional financial organizations such as the Islamic

Development Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development, and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa,” and this, according to him, benefit numerous nations worldwide by funding a range of programs as well as inventiveness.

In view of the consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic on education, Al-Asheikh recommended international cooperation in attempts to aid low-income countries by sponsoring projects and programs aimed at improving educational systems and the economics of education in recipient nations. According to him, the GPE aspires to increase access to inclusive, equitable education, close digital and educational inequalities, as well as handle all types of inequalities in education, particularly in developing nations. This is consistent with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal set forth by the UN for the year 2030. “Together we can continue to stand in solidarity to ensure that education and learning are at the center of human development and investment, for a sustainable, dignified and prosperous future for all,” he said.

• Poetry

The Arabic literary movement known as “the Arabic renaissance” or “al-Nahda” that started in the 19th century still places a high value on poetry (Athamneh, Waed 2017). Both in pre-Islam and Islam, the Arabs were known for eloquence, classic literal standards, pure Arabic accents through the ages. Nevertheless, among the highly steamed literal values are the seven odes; (Sab’a al- Muallaqat) which were hanged on the walls of the holy kaabah in Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These poems were composed and recited by the renown classic poets, namely; imr al-Qais, Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulman, Labid, Anthra, Amr Ibn kuithum. Al-harith and al-Ashaa Qais. This indicates that the major popular poets of the pre-Islamic age resided in the current Saudi Arabian Kingdom.

The Saudi Arabian Kingdom has also produced major poets in modern era among them, Ibrahim al askoubi, sulaiman Ibn Sahman, Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Mashrif, ali al Jashi, ghazi Abdul Rahman Al Gosaibi, Hamza Shehati, Mutlag hamid al Otaibi, mohammed Suroor Sabban, Abdullah Muhsin bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Husain Sirhan, Abdullah Thabit, abu Abd al Rahman Ibn Aqil al Zahiri and Rashid Al Zlami also known as bedouin poet. He was honored by the Saudi committee for popular poetry as the most popular poet in Saudi Arabia (on 15th March 2008).

There are still poetry competitions on reality television in Saudi Arabia to promote Nabati and classical Arabic poetry. This is carried out by the Saudi community to honor and award the most popular poet on yearly basis. In the past, notable competitors in these contests have included Hissa Hilal, Hisham al Gakh, and Tamim al-Barghouti. The majority of Arabic poetry used the ghazal, or love poem, to pay homage to the poet’s country of origin. Additionally, it took on political forms for the region’s newly formed nation states or, in a broader sense, took the form of an Arab nationalism that emphasized the solidarity of all Arabs. Generally speaking, the poetry has themes like asceticism (zuhud), the satire, and adulation (madih).

• Health

Health is one of the foundations of social institution. Any nation whose people are ailing will be devoid of progression and development. Just like all the nations who have interest of their people at heart, Saudi Arabia impact on transformation of its health sector as displayed under its Vision 2030. This has brought about radical paradigm shift in Saudi Arabia’s health sector. Therefore, it has created effective sustainable and comprehensive health system which will cater for the citizens for the residents and visitors equally. The healthcare is, therefore, a value-based based care ensuring financial sustainability and transparency. The Vision also envisions at promoting public health cure and disease prevention. The health pillar of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 has a focus of putting a new health care concept to avoid disease. The program also aims at promotion of access to health services through optimal coverage and equitable geographical distribution. Interestingly, there is availability of digital health services for all; raising the bar for health

care. In addition, it focuses on optimizing the health interests of all the beneficiaries while adhering to the practice and international standards for constructing an integrated healthcare system that covers the whole Kingdom.

The program will put into action promotion of efficient services, procurement, and increase of public awareness on issues pertaining to traffic and

By promoting efficient service procurement and increasing public awareness of traffic and safety, these will be put into action. The Health Sector Transformation Program strives to harmonize and coordinate with all significant government agencies, Vision Realization Programs (VRPs) of the healthcare sector has the insight of aligning and connecting the national goals in all transformation processes in relation to harmonization and coordination in all government agencies.

Rahman and Alsharqi (2019) discovered that the Kingdom reformed its health sector in a protective manner. The social values that direct government actions, particularly how much weight the government gives to maintaining the status quo in the social and economic fabric relative to economic growth and development, have had a significant impact on whether the KSA chooses a pro-government or pro-market strategy. This blend will indeed create a multifaceted approach to creativity and innovation in problem solving in the health sector.

Al Khashan and Abogazalah et al. (2021) claim that the Saudi Arabian PHC reform process has demonstrated the feasibility of positive transformation. This has been aided by building on past triumphs and the wealth of knowledge gained over the PHC experience in Saudi Arabia. Although the quality of services has improved, ongoing development is still necessary to fulfil the population's increased expectations.

Alyaemni (2021) claims that Saudi Arabia is the first country to openly implement reforms to both the payment system and the way healthcare is delivered. The Saudi National Health Insurance Scheme employs a value-based healthcare delivery approach that includes both hospitals and doctor's offices and pays benefits in line with the patients' health outcomes. Reforms to providers and funding are part of the new paradigm of care. The development of the commercial healthcare sector in Saudi Arabia is given priority, while public providers are being transformed into responsible care organizations. In many ways, the government provides free medical care to its people through public hospitals.

The Saudi Arabian Kingdom is on track to increase aid to other nations, including Kenya, as part of its Vision 2030 health care initiatives. In May 2023, the Saudi Ambassador to Kenya His Excellency Khalid bin Abdullah Al- Salman narrated how the Saudi government intends to use the bilateral relationship engagement to improve health care in both countries. He spoke at Kenyatta National Hospital on 26th May 2023 where a team of cardiologists from Saudi Arabia joined the Kenyan counterparts to offer surgery to over 25 patients with heart complications (Owili, 2023). The Saudi Development Bank (SDB) and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre provided funding for the medical camp. The ambassador mentioned that the relationship in the health sector between the two countries was neither the first nor the last and will steadily grow. There are also plans on the way to support the infant section and Kisii hospital in order to provide joint health services. The Kenyan doctors acknowledged learning some additional skills in the surgery process. Further, His Excellency the ambassador in a disclosure said: "Saudi government will soon be ready to hire 200 nurses from Kenya to work in Saudi Arabia health facilities".

• **Economy**

Five years ago, the ambitious Saudi Arabian Vision 2030 program was introduced. The Kingdom has already begun to undergo a significant shift in a number of areas, including women's empowerment,

tolerance, foreign relations, tourism, and cultural events, among many others. Saudi Arabia has made progress towards fulfilling these goals, according to a report by the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) that was released in 2021. The report said that the government has implemented the laws and reforms on a societal and economic level to fulfil the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, this included establishing a vibrant society, a booming economy, and a goal-oriented country.

Following a stronger-than-anticipated recovery in 2021, the Saudi Arabian economy is on a faster path to expansion in 2022, driven by increasing oil prices and non-oil activities, as oil output rises, and pandemic obstacles reduce. There is a small amount of direct trade between Saudi Arabia and Russia and Ukraine. The medium-term budgetary and international outlooks for Saudi Arabia have improved as a result of the economic impacts of the Ukrainian conflict on the oil market. Any additional COVID-19 revisions, tighter global economic conditions, and volatile oil prices are the biggest threats. Nevertheless, if Vision 2030 is executed with various revenue sources, these risks will be covered.

Near the end of 2021, an Omicron variant epidemic occurs, although Saudi Arabia is still able to control the pandemic's detrimental impacts. New cases began to fall in January 2022 thanks to a high vaccination rate that reached 68% of the population. Saudi Arabia has been cutting its monthly oil output by 0.4 mbpd since July 2021 as part of the OPEC+ agreement, and this reduction has been vital in redressing imbalances on the world oil market.

Saudi Arabia is predicted to have one of the fastest developing economies in the world by 2022 as a result of significant pro-business policies, a sharp rise in oil prices, and a recovery from a pandemic-induced recession in 2020 (Mati and Rehman, 2022). The fastest rise in over a decade, 7.6 percent, was predicted for the gross domestic product. Despite rising import costs in 2022, inflation remained under control at 2.8 percent as the central bank tightened measures in accordance with the US Federal Reserve. Both the external situation and the public finances significantly improved. This was mostly owing to rising non-oil revenue and higher oil export earnings. Additionally, we saw that the reserve buffers remained large.

On March 3rd, 1938, petroleum was discovered in Saudi Arabia, specifically the Eastern Province. Immediately, more and more fields were discovered making Saudi Arabia to become the second largest producer and exporter in the globe after the USA. The Kingdom boasts of the second largest reserves of petroleum in the world. Realizing Vision 2030 will depend on keeping control of governmental spending despite increased oil revenues. Spending on social programs may be more carefully aimed. Improvements in tax administration and policy, which would raise tax revenue from non-oil activities, would promote fiscal consolidation. Physical sustainability will be improved by managing oil earnings to avoid fluctuations of oil prices and return to previous boom-and-bust cycles. Similarly, it would be advantageous to use prudent budgeting and economic diversification strategies.

Reforms to energy prices that bring domestic fuel costs in line with international prices will result in financial savings and support for the government's climate goals, as stated in the Saudi Green Initiative. Ongoing attempts to create social safety nets through targeted programs would cushion the weak from growing energy bills. Under stringent central bank supervision, the financial sector continues to be resilient and systemic risks are minimal. Interest rate increases are anticipated to have a negligible impact on the Saudi economy in the current environment of high oil prices and abundant liquidity. The framework for overseeing the financial sector must be continually improved, and rising mortgage lending must be closely monitored to prevent threats from materializing.

3. Reform momentum

The continued implementation of the Vision 2030 initiatives by the government will help to liberalize and diversify the economy, opening the door for more consistent growth. By improving the business

environment, attracting foreign investment, and creating jobs in the private sector, Saudi Arabia is excelling in all three areas. These initiatives have also improved governance and labor market conditions, allowing for the three-minute registration of a company. Additionally, they increased the participation of women in the labor market and increased the number of industrial facilities. In addition to the elimination of statutory restrictions and legislation ensuring equality of employment, Saudi women's labor force participation has benefited from transit discounts of up to 80% for the cost of a cab journey, employer incentives for hiring Saudi women, and childcare assistance. As a result, the proportion of Saudi women who work has climbed by 50% over the past four years, reaching 33 percent, exceeding both the 2030 plan's aim of 30 percent and the region's average of 27 percent.

Growing digitalization has the potential to boost productivity due to the young, tech-savvy population. Digitization accelerated during the pandemic through online financing platforms for public procurement such as Etimad, virtual courts, remote learning, and online health services.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a growth economic outlook. The basis of the reform momentum of the Kingdom reveals that a long-term prosperity may be achieved. This is attributed to its consistency in implementation of the Vision 2030 plan. Oil production increased by 13% in 2022 following the OPEC+ production removal of the limitations. The rest of the economic sectors also steadily grew 2022 and expected to be sustained within 2023.

Stronger private consumption was anticipated coupled with higher domestic spending and rising religious tourism regardless of the obstacles of fiscal monetary policies. The anticipation was signaled by the growth in some state agencies as well as the increased Public Investment Fund (PIF). Inflation slowed down in 2022 and likely to stay at 3% because of tighter policy and strength of Saudi riyal in relation to the USD.

There is expansion of the exploration of mining areas in Saudi Arabia (Al-Farsy, 1990). There are estimated deposits of gold in 15 different sites; silver 3 sites; copper deposit 3 sites; Iron sites – 4; Ni opium and rare metals – 3 sites; and Zinc – 2 sites, among many others.

There are currently about 200,000 Kenyans working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, some long-term worker with different professions. They have 3 months working vacations (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Kenya, 15 May 2023). The remittances to Kenya from Saudi Arabia rank third globally (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023) after the UK (Kes 25.4B) and the US (Kes 188.8B). The bank put the first eight months of 2022 remittances at 22.65 billion (The Standard Newspaper, May 8, 2023).

There are various companies from Saudi Arabia in Kenya – ARAMCO, SABIC, Madain working on chemicals and petroleum products. These are part of the larger multinational companies in Kenya with origin in Saudi Arabia (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Kenya, 15 May 2023).

- **Infrastructure**

The Saudi Arabian government revealed plans for the city of Neom, which were first proposed a year and a half ago (Riba, 2022). Riyadh is preparing to build a gigantic megastructure known as the Line as part of the project. It will be two parallel skyscrapers that span 170 kilometers from the Red Sea shore to the desert and up into the highlands. These buildings will be 200 meters wide, 500 meters tall (higher than most towers in the globe) and encased in massive mirrors on all sides. All vehicles, watercraft, and other items that cause pollution will not be present in the city. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that the ambitious project would "challenge the traditional flat, horizontal cities and create a model for nature preservation and enhanced human livability." "The Line will address the issues that humanity is currently facing in urban life and will shed light on alternative lifestyles."

• Agriculture

In the past, the Arabian Peninsula's agriculture was primarily confined to date farming and small-scale vegetable production in dispersed oases, with the exception of a narrow coastal region in the southwest. The local populations received enough food from small plots, and any surplus was sold to passing caravans. In the 1970s, significant agricultural development started. Building out irrigation systems, roads in rural areas, and facilities for exporting and storing goods, as well as the encouragement of institutes for agricultural research and training were all part of the government's vast program to promote modern farming techniques. As a result, all fundamental food production has experienced amazing development. Meat, milk, and eggs are only a few of the foods in which Saudi Arabia is currently entirely self-sufficient. Over the past three decades, Saudi Arabia's agricultural development has been exceptional and remarkable. In a nation with one of the lowest rates of rainfall in the world, four inches on average per year, vast tracts of desert and barren mountains have been converted into agricultural land. Nowadays, markets around the world receive Saudi Arabian exports of wheat, dates, dairy products, eggs, fish, poultry, fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Dates, formerly a staple of Saudi cuisine, are now mostly grown for humanitarian help on a global scale.

The Kingdom's Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible for the formulation of agricultural policy. Other supporting government agencies include the Saudi Arabian Agricultural Bank (SAAB). The bank provides interest-free loans and disburses subsidies. The Flour Mills Organisation and Grain Silos constructs flour mills, purchases and stores wheat, and processes related grains to produce animal feed. In addition, the government sponsors research projects and provides land distribution and reclamation programs. The development of agriculture in the Kingdom has been significantly aided by the private sector. This is mostly due to government initiatives that offered long-term, interest-free funding, technical support, support services, and incentives including free fertilizer and seeds, cheap water, fuel, and power, and duty-free imports of machinery and raw materials.

Of course, Saudi Arabian agriculture depends on water. The massive water resources required to accomplish the agricultural sector's phenomenal development were effectively provided by the Kingdom through the implementation of a comprehensive program. To capture and make use of valuable seasonal floods, a network of dams has been constructed. Through deep wells, huge subsurface water stores have been reached. Desalination plants have been built to produce fresh water from the sea for use in towns and industries, freeing up other resources for agriculture. Additionally, infrastructure has been set up to manage urban and industrial runoff for irrigation of agriculture. All of these initiatives have contributed to converting large swaths of desert into productive farming. Millions of acres were under cultivation by the 21st century, up from less than 400,000 acres in 1976.

Saudi Arabia has a sizable camel population, which is what mostly drives the camel dairy business there. There are about 1.5 million camels living in Saudi Arabia, according to Puri-Mirza (2023). Additionally, the market is being driven by the developing export market, the rising diabetes population, and several new product launches. Since camel milk contains all necessary elements to keep a person alive throughout the day, it can be ingested as a complete meal. Furthermore, camel milk is a natural probiotic that encourages good bacterial development and helps with digestion. As a result, camel dairy products are selling better across the country, along with the presence of lactoprotein, which helps to protect the body from viruses. However, operations at the manufacturing facilities of a number of participants in the camel dairy market have been severely disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent application of lockdown restrictions. After lockdown limitations are loosened, it is projected that sales of camel dairy products will rise in Saudi Arabia (IMARC, 2023).

• Religion

The expansion of the holy mosques which started in 1955 (capacity of 500,000) by the royal family successively, was continuous (by 1980 had capacity of 820,000); current capacity is at 2.5 million. The pathway connecting al-Safa and al-Marwah has been widened and integrated into the mosque's design. With the emergence of Corona virus in 2019, lasting into 2021 and 2022, there were limits for hajj pilgrimage to maximum of 1 million (IMARC, 2023). In 2023, it is anticipated that there will be over 2million persons hosted in hajj. The share for Kenya is about 6000 persons. To ease movement during hajj, speed train – a high locomotive (bullet train) was launched in March 2021 that serves between Mecca and Medina; Mecca-Jeddah, then Jeddah to Medina. The major dominant achievements of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia toward service to Islam is the establishment of King Fahad complex for printing the Holy Quran. The complex is located at Madinah Al-Munawarah the root of Islam and home to the Messenger Muhammad (SAW). The printing production is between 18-20 million Quran copies on a yearly basis. Similar number of the book of Allah's translation and commentaries into 73 world languages is also printed. All the Arabic text and translations are distributed on a free basis. The caretaker of the two Holy Mosques paid for a significant number of Muslims to do the Hajj ritual every year. There are other organizations including the Rajih bank that also sponsor Kenyans for hajj pilgrimage (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Kenya 15th May 2023).

• Saudi Arabia Foreign Assistance

Saudi Arabia has helped numerous nations and organizations overseas since the 1980s. Saudi Arabia provided \$49.5 billion in development assistance between 1976 and 1987 (Chen, 2022). Although help was solely given to qualified nations, it was stated that the nation was the largest per capita giver in 2006. These donations cover both needy and poverty-stricken countries through the UN. They also supplement their budget regardless of region and religion.

In October 1974, the Saudi Fund was started through the royal proclamation decree. The purpose of the fund is to encourage economic growth in third world countries. The Saudi government gave \$3.1 billion to 51 countries with lowest per capita income globally. Nearly 60% of granted loans are intended for projects relating to transportation, energy, and water. In 1979, the fund constituted 30% of the foreign aid from Saudi Arabia.

In 2020, the OECD reported that Saudi Arabia's official development assistance had decreased by 25.3% to US\$1.5 billion. Iraq received \$1 billion in soft loans and export assurances from Saudi Arabia. It provided the Central Bank of Lebanon funding and deposits totaling \$1.59 billion for Lebanon in 2006 and an additional \$1.1 billion in early 2007. Reconstruction was the intended use for \$500 million of that money.

Saudi Arabia gave Afghanistan \$1.8 billion in only the three years from 1987 to 1989, it gave the PLO about twice as much as it did in the 14 years prior. The majority of help to the Palestinians comes from Saudi Arabia. Then, since 1994, it has contributed \$800 million. Saudi Arabia has provided the Palestinian Authority with more than \$480 million in financial aid since 2002. It has also aided refugees of Palestine by making donations to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Saudi Arabia promised to donate more than \$200,000 to the victims of the Bam earthquake that occurred in 2003 in southeast Iran. At the Donors Conference in December 2007, it gave the Palestinians more than \$250 million through the Arab League and then \$500 million in aid over the ensuing three years. The election of Hamas did not affect Saudi Arabia's aid to the Palestinians, in contrast to aid from other countries (OECD, 2020).

Historically, it is typical culture of Saudi Arabia in offering humanitarian relief in order to serve humanity globally. In realizing the importance of alleviating human problems and suffering in various socioeconomic spheres and institutions in the entire world, the Kingdom established and formed an international organization named "King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief centre (KSRELIEF)". In May 2015, King Salman Abdul Aziz, may Allah SWT grant him protection and support, who is the servant of the two sacred

mosques, oversaw its inauguration. The objectives of KSRELIEF include playing a leading role in being a world class organization that supports destitute, poverty-stricken communities and disaster befallen victims. The organization also offers rapid response to humanitarian crises effectively and efficiently (The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Kenya, 15 May 2023).

The impact of the organization was realized during the Rohingya refugees in Myanmar, the Somalia drought, the recent (early 2023) Turkey earthquake, Sudan civil war, Yemen civil wars, among others. In the Turkey earthquake, Saudi Arabia provided aid worth USD150 million accompanied with humanitarian aid (February 2023). An advisor to the Royal court, Abdullah Al-Rabeea, reported that the government organized for airlifting the Turkey earthquake victims as well as supporting rescue teams. The Saudi cabinet, chaired by King Salman bin Abdulaziz passed a commitment to assist both Turkey and Syria (Asmar, 2023). The organization has granted UNICEF more than USD 334 million in support of many countries like Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Pakistan, and many other West African countries. Currently (2023), Saudi Arabia is in Sudan as the mediator between the rebels and the army to resolve the conflict. Saudi is also providing humanitarian services accompanied by makeshift homes and foodstuffs.

In order to put an end to a confrontation with Houthi troops backed by Iran in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pledged \$3 billion in April 2022. In Yemen, the fighting has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. The victims of the tsunami and earthquake in the Indian Ocean in 2004 received \$30 million in aid from Saudi Arabia, in addition to King Fahd's \$5 million individual donation (about \$80 million was donated overall by Saudis, including residents).

Saudi Arabia contributed more than any other nation following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, more than \$3.3 million, and committed an additional \$573 million, the highest amount ever. In accordance with the Saudi Public Assistance for Pakistan Earthquake Victims (SPAPEV) program, Saudi Arabia also gave Pakistan 4000 prefabricated homes. The cost of the homes, which were to be furnished with all amenities, exceeded \$16.7 million. Additionally, the SPAPEV donated 100,000 meals, 100,000 stoves, 230,000 blankets, 150,000 comforters, 10,000 regular tents, and 2,500 special winterized weatherproof tents.

The Saudi Arabian kingdom pledged to give \$230 million towards the improvement of Afghanistan. It has also committed to giving Pakistan \$133 million in direct assistance, \$187 million in loans with concessions, and \$153 million in export credits to aid with the country's disaster recovery.

Saudi Arabia has provided more than US\$361.99 million for the relief effort in the wake of the Pakistan floods of 2010, leading all giving nations. Saudi civilians raised more than \$107 million in the first three days, compared to the \$20 million donated by the Saudi royal family on the first day. The biggest air relief bridge ever constructed was begun by Saudi Arabia, which also provided two hospitals with 100 beds.

The Joint Committee of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the Relief of Kosovo raised \$5 million to fund development programs, food aid, help supplies, religious and programs of education, orphan funding, wellness program, as well as rehabilitation. For instance, 400,000 liters of milk were transported to Pristina via freight from Jeddah, along with 900 boxes of attire. There were 1,000 duvets, 25 water tanks, pharmaceutical equipment such wheelchairs as well as operative preoperative supplies. The philanthropists and citizens of Saudi Arabia assisted Kosovo with cash donations of \$20 million. In addition to providing medical supplies and other sustenance through the government, other items were donated by the Saudi Red Crescent.

Kenya got \$2 million of the \$10 million in aid provided to the Horn of Africa by the Saudi government in 2006 through the World Food Program. One million dollars were donated by the Saudi prince Al-Walid bin Talal to assist feed 3.5 million Kenyans during the drought. The highest private donation to UNICEF ever

was made in 2017 by the Saudi Arabian philanthropic organisation Alwaleed Philanthropies, which gave \$50 million to the UN to aid in the measles eradication effort.

Mutual relationship between Kenya and Saudi Arabia like road projects, education, health and economy has been in existence for over 60 years. The government of Saudi Arabia is currently (May-June 2023) assessing the need for dams in Kenya and intend assist in provision of water in ASAL areas. They have loaned and supported the government to do roads in Isiolo, Garissa and Wajir to Mandera.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Leaders need to be visionary and ensure effectiveness in their work. This is an impetus for a country to grow. Other third world countries can learn from HRH King Salman's experience in efficiently directing the government through actions like Saudi engagement in the Yemeni Civil War and his leadership of the country's legislative and social reforms, including the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030.

Every nation can learn from Saudi Arabia's greatness, as the worldwide oil price drop in the summer of 2014 coincided with the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030. This is also listed as one of Saudi Arabia's most difficult economic difficulties. However, Saudi Vision 2030 is constructing a comprehensive economic and social reform strategy, and in 2020 it will meticulously and with benchmark targets analyze the first four years of its economic transition. The strategy's main goal is to foster increased sociopolitical stability, sustainability, and transparency that can be adopted by other nations.

From the education milestones, Saudi Arabia has shown to be open for literacy beyond its boundaries with offer of thousands of scholarships to students from all over the world on yearly basis. It is interesting to note that while some third world countries look down upon the private education sector, Saudi Arabia appreciates and acknowledges the importance of both private and public education sectors. In a similar vein, funding for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) shows that Saudi Arabia has always placed a high value on education at the local, regional, and global levels. These can be traces for learning to embrace education not only locally but also internationally. Saudi is also seen using specific disciplines like poetry to advance and campaign for talents as well as rewarding it. The poetry is further used to build and sensitize on patriotism.

Many third world countries have a lesson to learn from Saudi Arabia's health care and systems. It is believed that the Sector of Health Program of Transformation works to coordinate and harmonize between the entirety of the healthcare industry. By reforming both medical delivery and payment processes, the Kingdom demonstrated its determination to defend and protect social values for its citizens by adopting a protective approach to sector reform.

The economic innovations and lessons span from a thriving society to an aspirational country where the government has enacted rules and changes on both a sociological and economic level. Saudi Arabia's continued success in containing the COVID19 pandemic's negative effects serves as an example of workable pro-business policies that other nations might adopt. Inflation, which was kept under control at 2.8 percent in 2022 as federal reserve bank tightened policies in line with the central bank of the US, is another area of innovation on par with these. In weak countries, the Saudi government's ability to keep tabs on public spending amid increased oil revenues can be emulated. Reforms in the energy sector, fostering an atmosphere that is favorable for business, and luring foreign investment are other areas that should be imitated. In order to hasten the implementation of employment equality, particularly the involvement of, employment of women, the nation also removed statutory limitations and legislation.

Innovative infrastructure like "The Line" in Saudi Arabia will clear challenges facing many countries in housing in urban areas. It is also notable that adopting modern farming technology, establishing rural roads, and investing in agriculture infrastructure. The world's economies may see a turnaround if third-world

nations adopt a variety of subsidies, award interest-free loans, offer long-term loans with no interest, and offer technical and auxiliary services. Saudi Arabia is also seen using the religious angle to ensure that peace and harmony in the country is maintained. The country goes further to offer support to foreigners to attend the annual hajj. To show this commitment, the government also installed a speed train – a high locomotive that serves between Mecca and Medina; Mecca- Jeddah, then Jeddah to Medina; all targeting the connectivity during hajj.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article concludes that there are numerous areas of impact of economic growth that Saudi Arabia has gained as a country. Having visionary leadership from the onset formed the basis of the upward trajectory of the country. The professionalism used in planning using Saudi Vision 2030 are being evaluated to ascertain outcomes. The interest of Saudi Arabia in education for all aligns to international calls for literacy while the health program innovations show the commitment to provide first class services. The economic innovations including the ability of the government of Saudi Arabia to maintain control of public spending can be foundations for other third world countries to emulate and replicate for economic growth. The innovative infrastructure as well as matching support in agriculture and other areas may just be fortunes of success for other countries to adopt. The article recommends that;

- The Saudi Arabian government's sovereign wealth fund should keep emphasizing excellent returns and more private sector participation, particularly the execution of its anticipated "Giga projects". This will form basis of Saudi Arabia being moved a class higher to the developed country category. However, to achieve this, Saudi Arabia may need to keenly observe and protect its sovereignty against the neo-colonists. This can be achieved through partnering with other countries and forming a replica of European Union as a supranational political and economic union.
- For the governments of struggling economies, making use of the embarked international relations with Saudi Arabia to partner in development projects will be a plus. Kenya needs to partner with Saudi Arabia to leverage on its technological advancement in livestock farming that target pastoral communities to reverse the annual loss of livelihoods attributed to successive droughts.
- The article also recommends the easing of travel regulations and policies between Saudi Arabia and other third world countries to expedite benchmarking.

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