

A critical look at MBS' reign from an accomplishment and failure points of view.

MBS at the Throne.

LONDON, ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN, July 9, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Two Years as the Real Power Behind the Throne: A critical look at MBS' reign from an accomplishment and failure points of view.

An article by Patriotic and Loyal Saudi Citizens.

The 21st of June 2019, marked the two-year anniversary of the appointment of Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (also known as MBS) as the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. MBS' appointment, marked a significant break with the longstanding norms of Saudi succession, as it supplanted his cousin Mohammad bin Nayef, who was better known in the West and well-regarded for being highly experienced in diplomatic and intelligence matters. Bucking the principle of agnatic seniority dictating that all power transfers went from the Monarch to his next younger Brother or that Brother's family, King Salman appointed his own son MBS as Crown Prince. In this short time, the young Prince has succeeded in radically transforming Saudi Arabia in ways that were completely unexpected.

Immediately after his appointment, MBS was heralded as the icon of the next generation of Saudi leadership. He was lauded for his political savvy, his deep understanding of the economic imperatives needed to move the Kingdom away from oil dependence, and his willingness to provide greater freedom to women. Even before he was named Crown Prince, MBS was the leader of Vision 2030, a strategic plan for Saudi Arabia, that embraces a commitment to a more diverse, sustainable and private sector led economy. He promised to list shares in the State oil company Aramco, build a \$500 billion multi-facility economic zone, develop tourism, launch a high-speed rail between Mecca and Medina, and invest in alternative sources of energy, including a wind farm and a nuclear power plant.

But it was perhaps his plans for Saudi society at large that sparked the most hopeful enthusiasm for what many saw as a great leap of modernization. Public life would flourish, especially for women. Most substantively, MBS sought to constrain the most radical elements of Wahhabism in the Kingdom, constraining the Mutawa, the heretofore all-powerful religious police, and reigning in extremism. MBS' supporters heralded these developments as an indication of a truly modern Saudi Arabia. Some went so far as to see MBS as the man who would be a champion of human rights and perhaps, who would bring peace to the Middle East. In the spring of 2018, MBS went on a Public Relations tour to Europe and North America, in a bid to bring foreign investments to Saudi Arabia and bolster his image as a great reformer.

But these ambitious hopes have been at best delayed and in all likely reality, superseded by the real impact of what MBS has achieved: transforming Saudi Arabia from a relatively stable, if socially antediluvian, state of patronage to a highly volatile, reckless and blood-thirsty autocracy.

The World could not help but take note of the gruesome and meticulously executed murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last year. While this horrid affair demonstrated MBS' lethal disdain for dissent and his impulsive disregard to international norms of basic propriety, it

also drew greater scrutiny to his other actions that have helped to define his careless and despotic reign.

Abroad, MBS' principal policy initiative has been a ruthless and unending campaign in Yemen, sparking a humanitarian crisis of unrivaled proportions. Among his other accomplishments, he has aggressively pursued a diplomatic blockade of Qatar, sought to disrupt the first stable government in Lebanon in years by arresting and detaining its Prime Minister (who is also a Saudi national), sparked a diplomatic row with Canada, designated Turkey as part of a "triangle of evil" along with extremist groups like ISIS and Iran, with whom many believe MBS is itching to induce the U.S. to go to war.

While MBS is often viewed as a one man show, perhaps what should concern Saudis at home the most, is whether MBS is acting in Saudi Arabia's best interests or doing the bidding of his mentor and guide Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, or MBZ, the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Indeed, Saudi and Emirate foreign policies, have been virtually indistinguishable, especially as they have both relentlessly pursued an international confrontation with Iran.

Domestically too, his feats have been potent. Within months of his appointment, MBS orchestrated a power coup, wherein he arrested and detained at the Ritz Hotel, more than 200 of the most influential men in Saudi Arabia, including some members of the Royal Family. Touted as a corruption crackdown, the real motivation was to dispossess any alternative centers of power within Saudi Arabia of any means or money. Unintentionally, he also dispossessed Saudi Arabia of its entire commercial class capable of facilitating the economic transformation of the Kingdom. Having successfully consolidated all of the Saudi security services under his aegis, MBS now has an excess of private cash and a free reign for action. MBS has also taken aim at dissidents – including Shia and women's rights activists -- and religious clerics. In a defining moment for him, on April 23rd of this year, MBS ordered the public executions of 37 people.

Though MBS seems untethered by a permissive U.S. administration, within a year of his debut tour to the West, he has transformed from a symbol of hope, into a figure emblematic of opportunities lost. His war in Yemen has no end in sight. Saudi Arabia's internal institutions and economic prospects have been upended by the "corruption probe." Dissent both domestically and internationally is growing, even prompting some of the Kingdom's longest supporters in the U.S. Senate to reconsider their support. MBS, who seems either unaware of the fallout or galvanized to prove the World wrong, has made Saudi Arabia weaker and less stable than before. Given this state of affairs, one can't help but wonder where things might have stood had King Salman allowed former Crown Prince Mohammad bin Nayef to remain in place.

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