

Saudis on a Sword Edge

A Special Oxford Analytica Conference Call

Thursday, 9th November, 15:00 UK time



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Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has acted decisively and dramatically to consolidate his hold on power.

His palace purge of many of the kingdom's political and business leaders in the name of anti-corruption has left Saudis shocked -- and international businesses and investors unnerved about what this means for Vision 2030, the young Crown Prince's ambitious but challenging blueprint for diversifying the oil-dependent economy over which he will soon rule -- possibly for the next half-century.

Key pillars of Vision 2030 including privatisation, urban development and financial sector reforms may now be at risk of being watered down or delayed, even if some franchise projects will be harder to divert -- notably, the part-privatisation of state oil firm Aramco, set for 2018.

- Does Mohammed bin Salman know 'exactly what he is doing', as US President Donald Trump suggests?
- Will his anti-corruption campaign remove the obstacles to modernising the economy in line with Vision 2030 and lead to the increased transparency in business dealings that will be so essential for an economic and social transformation?
- How are the risks and opportunities for foreign businesses and investors changing if the emergence of an independent private sector that can compete across the spectrum of industries in which the state is the dominant player is made more unlikely?
- Will Mohammed bin Salman's doubling down on his ill-starred Yemen adventure, provocation of a political crisis in Lebanon and surprisingly intractable dispute with Qatar exacerbate the feud with Iran and lead to potentially greater destabilisation of the region?
- When, if ever, will conservatives forces in the kingdom launch their counter-attack? And where will that leave foreign business?

Share your thoughts and put your questions on all of the above and anything else that concerns or excites you about the future of Saudi Arabia to three of Oxford Analytica's expert senior advisors in our special client conference call on Thursday, November 9th at 15:00 UK / 10:00 EDT.

Chair

Paul Maidment, Director of Analysis and Managing Editor, Oxford Analytica

Paul Maidment joined Oxford Analytica in December 2014 as the Director of Analysis and Managing Editor of the Oxford Analytica Daily Brief.

He is an award-winning journalist who founded the New York-based digital editorial consultancy Bystander Media in 2010. A pioneer in combining digital and print journalism, he was previously Editor of Forbes.com and Executive Editor of Forbes, transforming a magazine website into the leading online destination for business, finance and up-scale lifestyle. Before joining Forbes in 2001, Paul was the founding Editor of the Financial Times' award-winning web site FT.com and Assistant Editor of the newspaper. His early career as an editor and foreign correspondent encompassed The Economist, the Asian Wall Street Journal and the BBC in the U.K. the U.S. and Asia — a depth of journalistic experience and breadth of media that gives him a unique perspective on the changes transforming publishing and the world economy. Paul was inducted into the Digital Hall of Fame in New York in 2010.

Panellists

David Butter, Associate Fellow, Middle East & North Africa Programme, Chatham House

Analyst of politics, economics and business in the MENA region, David has been an associate fellow at Chatham House since August 2012. He was previously regional director for the Middle East at the Economist Intelligence Unit, and prior to that worked for MEED magazine, where he was editor between 2000 and 2002. Chatham House has published his two briefing papers on the Syrian economy, in 2015 and 2016.

Rory Macleod, Region Head (Markets), Oxford Analytica

Former head of the Global Fixed Income and Currency team at Baring Asset Management in London, Rory worked in the financial area as a fund manager until 2003. Since then he has been an independent consultant specialising in advising central banks in emerging markets and since 2003, Managing Director of Objective Analysis. From 1985 to 1989, worked in Saudi Arabia as an advisor to the Saudi government, and from 1989 to date has travelled regularly on business to Saudi Arabia. Rory has an MA and a PhD from the University of Oxford.

Jane Kinninmont, Deputy Head and Senior Research Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

Jane Kinninmont is a senior research fellow and deputy head of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House.

Her previous positions include associate director for the Middle East and Africa at the Economist Group, Middle East and North Africa editor and economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit from 2006 to 2010 and managing editor for Middle East and Africa at Business Monitor International from 2003 to 2006, and she contributes regularly to the media, including The Economist, the Guardian and Foreign Policy.

Her research interests include the international relations of the Middle East; deconstructing the politics of sectarianism in the Gulf and Levant; the development of opposition movements and new actors; and the challenges that political economy structures pose to transitions in the region.

She has a BA from The University of Oxford and an MSc from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.