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## **FEATURES OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA AFTER THE GULF WAR**

### **Abstract**

This article examines Saudi Arabia's domestic political and socioeconomic development from the 1990–1991 Gulf War to 2025. It asks how wartime security pressures, institutional measures adopted in 1992, changing social relations, and economic diversification interacted over time. The research combines historical periodization, comparative reading of legal instruments, critical engagement with scholarship, and comparison of official economic and labor market data. Particular attention is paid to the fiscal deficit of 1991, the Basic Law of Governance, the Consultative Council, women's participation in public life, and the outcomes reported under Vision 2030. The findings identify the war as an important context for subsequent political adaptation rather than a sufficient explanation for every later reform. Growth in non-oil activity demonstrates a changing composition of output, but does not by itself establish that fiscal reliance on hydrocarbons has ended. Institutional change cannot automatically be equated with broader political participation, while social reform should be assessed through both legal provisions and their implementation. The article proposes three analytical phases: postwar adaptation, gradual reform, and accelerated transformation under Vision 2030. It thereby connects historical developments with measurable contemporary outcomes without treating the official reform agenda as evidence of its own success.

**Keywords:** Gulf War; Saudi Arabia; political institutions; Consultative Council; social reform; women's participation; economic diversification; Vision 2030

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## **САУД АРАБИЯСЫНЫҢ ПАРСЫ ШЫҒАНАҒЫ СОҒЫСЫНАН КЕЙІНГІ КЕЗЕҢДЕГІ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ САЯСИ ДАМУЫНЫҢ ЕРЕКШЕЛІКТЕРІ**

### **Аңдатпа**

Мақалада Сауд Арабиясының 1990–1991 жылдардағы Парсы шығанағы соғысынан кейінгі ішкі саяси және әлеуметтік экономикалық дамуы 2025 жылға дейінгі кезеңде зерттеледі. Негізгі мақсат – соғыс жағдайында күшейген қауіпсіздік мәселелері, 1992 жылғы институционалдық өзгерістер, әлеуметтік қатынастардың эволюциясы және экономиканы әртараптандыру арасындағы байланысты анықтау. Зерттеуде тарихи кезеңдеу, нормативтік құжаттарды салыстырмалы талдау, ғылыми әдебиеттерді сыни оқу және ресми статистикалық деректерді салыстыру әдістері қолданылды. 1991 жылғы

бюджет тапшылығы, Мемлекеттік басқарудың негізгі заңы, Шура кеңесінің қызметі, әйелдердің қоғамдық өмірге қатысуы және Vision 2030 бағдарламасының нәтижелері жеке талданады. Нәтижелер соғыстың кейінгі реформаларға ықпал еткен маңызды алғышарт екенін, бірақ олардың бірден бір себебі болмағанын көрсетеді. Экономиканың мұнайдан тыс бөлігінің өсуі елеулі болғанымен, мұнай кірістеріне қатысты фискалдық тәуелділік мәселесі сақталады. Саяси институттардағы өзгерістерді қоғамдық еркіндіктердің кеңеюімен теңестіруге болмайды; әлеуметтік реформалардың мазмұны да еңбек нарығы мен құқықтық тәжірибе арқылы бағалануы керек. Мақала дамуды үш кезеңде түсіндіреді: соғыстан кейінгі бейімделу, біртіндеп өзгеру және Vision 2030 шеңберіндегі жедел жаңару. Бұл қорытынды бірнеше дерек түрін өзара салыстыруға негізделген. Бұл тәсіл тарихи сабақтастықты нақтылайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** Парсы шығанағы соғысы; Сауд Арабиясы; саяси институттар; Шура кеңесі; әлеуметтік реформалар; әйелдер қатысуы; экономикалық әртараптандыру; Vision 2030

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## **ОСОБЕННОСТИ СОЦИАЛЬНО ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ САУДОВСКОЙ АРАВИИ ПОСЛЕ ВОЙНЫ В ПЕРСИДСКОМ ЗАЛИВЕ**

### **Аннотация**

В статье исследуется внутреннее политическое и социально-экономическое развитие Саудовской Аравии после войны в Персидском заливе 1990–1991 годов до 2025 года. Цель исследования состоит в выявлении связи между проблемами безопасности, институциональными изменениями 1992 года, эволюцией социальных отношений и диверсификацией экономики. Применяются историческая периодизация, сравнительный анализ нормативных актов, критическое изучение научной литературы и сопоставление официальной статистики. Отдельное внимание уделено дефициту бюджета 1991 года, Основному закону о правлении, Консультативному совету, участию женщин в общественной жизни и результатам программы Vision 2030. Установлено, что война стала существенным контекстом последующих преобразований, но не была их единственной причиной. Рост ненефтяного сектора свидетельствует об изменении структуры производства, однако сам по себе не подтверждает устранение зависимости государственных доходов от нефти. Институциональные перемены также не следует автоматически отождествлять с расширением политических свобод. Социальные реформы целесообразно оценивать с учетом различий между изменением законодательства и практикой его применения. Предложена трехэтапная интерпретация: послевоенная адаптация, постепенные преобразования и ускоренная модернизация в рамках Vision 2030. Такой подход позволяет точнее разграничить официальные цели и достигнутые результаты.

**Ключевые слова:** война в Персидском заливе; Саудовская Аравия; политические институты; Консультативный совет; социальные реформы; участие женщин; экономическая диверсификация; Vision 2030

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## **KÖRFEZ SAVAŞI SONRASI SUUDİ ARABİSTAN'IN SOSYOEKONOMİK VE SİYASİ GELİŞİMİNİN ÖZELLİKLERİ**

### **Özet**

Bu makale, Suudi Arabistan'ın 1990–1991 Körfez Savaşı sonrasındaki iç siyasi ve sosyoekonomik gelişimini 2025 yılına kadar incelemektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, savaş döneminde belirginleşen güvenlik baskıları, 1992 yılında kabul edilen kurumsal düzenlemeler, toplumsal ilişkilerin değişimi ve ekonomik çeşitlendirme arasındaki bağlantıyı açıklamaktır. Araştırmada tarihsel dönemlendirme, hukuk belgelerinin karşılaştırmalı incelenmesi, akademik çalışmaların eleştirel değerlendirilmesi ve resmî istatistiklerin karşılaştırılması yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. 1991 yılı bütçe açığı, Yönetimin Temel Kanunu, Şura Meclisi, kadınların kamusal yaşama katılımı ve Vision 2030 sonuçları ayrı ayrı ele alınmıştır. Bulgular, savaşın sonraki dönüşümlerin önemli bir bağlamı olduğunu, ancak bütün reformların tek nedeni sayılamayacağını göstermektedir. Petrol dışı üretimdeki büyüme ekonomik yapının değiştiğine işaret etmekle birlikte kamu gelirlerinin petrolden bağımsızlaştığını tek başına kanıtlamaz. Kurumsal değişim ile siyasi katılımın genişlemesi de aynı olgu değildir. Toplumsal reformların etkisi hukuki değişiklikler ve uygulama sonuçları birlikte incelenerek değerlendirilmelidir. Makale, savaş sonrası uyum, kademeli reform ve Vision 2030 çerçevesinde hızlanan dönüşüm olmak üzere üç analitik dönem önermektedir. Bu sonuç farklı kaynak türlerinin karşılaştırılmasına dayanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım tarihsel sürekliliği belirginleştirir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Körfez Savaşı; Suudi Arabistan; siyasi kurumlar; Şura Meclisi; sosyal reformlar; kadınların katılımı; ekonomik çeşitlendirme; Vision 2030

### **Introduction**

The Gulf War marked a turning point at which the connection between external security and domestic governance became particularly visible in Saudi Arabia. Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 created an immediate threat near the kingdom's borders. The decision to host foreign forces helped defend the country, while prompting debate about political decisions, religious authority, and the state's responsibilities to its population. This article examines Saudi Arabia's domestic development after the war, rather than the military operations or diplomatic history of the conflict [1].

The purpose of the article is to identify changes in the political system, social relations, and economic policy between 1991 and 2025, and to explain how these areas interacted. Its central question is how postwar security and fiscal pressures affected institutional adaptation and how subsequent reforms differed from that initial response. The working hypothesis is that the war did not cause every later reform. Instead, it sharpened existing problems of legitimacy, economic dependence, and population growth, making their management more urgent.

The analysis distinguishes three phases: security-driven political adaptation in 1991–2000; gradual institutional and social change in 2001–2015; and accelerated transformation associated with Vision 2030 in 2016–2025. These divisions do not imply that a historical process began on the first day of a period. Economic diversification was discussed long before 2016, and women's roles in public life had been contested and changing before the adoption of Vision 2030 [2]. The phases serve as analytical tools for comparing the objectives, instruments, and measurable outcomes of reform.

This approach also addresses a problem in the scholarship. Studies of the war commonly concentrate on security and opposition; studies of political institutions assess legal structures; and analyses of Vision 2030 often focus on macroeconomic targets. Considering these areas together makes it possible to ask whether institutional adjustment, social change, and economic growth followed the same pattern. The article argues that they did not necessarily do so and that evidence about one dimension should not be presented as proof of progress in another.

### **Materials and Methods**

The primary materials are the Basic Law of Governance and the Shura Council Law adopted in 1992; the International Monetary Fund's assessment of postwar fiscal developments; the original Vision 2030 text and its 2024 and 2025 annual reports; and the IMF's 2025 Article IV assessment. Published research on the Sahwa movement, political reform, women's participation, and diversification provides interpretation and historical context. These materials answer different questions: legislation establishes formal powers, a national strategy states intended goals, and statistical reports describe measured outcomes.

Historical periodization is used to reconstruct the sequence of decisions and debates after 1990–1991. Comparative document analysis distinguishes changes in formal powers from changes in participation. A critical reading of scholarship separates authors' interpretations from the provisions of legal documents and the contents of official statistical reports. For economic outcomes, the study compares non-oil real GDP growth, the non-oil share of total output, fiscal indicators, and female labor-force participation without treating them as interchangeable measures.

The article does not claim to present newly discovered archival records, original interviews, or an independently compiled longitudinal dataset. Government reports may emphasize progress toward their own targets, so their figures are read alongside IMF assessments and critical academic studies. Where direct causation cannot be established, the analysis describes a plausible historical relationship rather than asserting that one event inevitably produced another. This qualification is particularly relevant to attributing all 1992 decisions to the war and to interpreting non-oil output growth as complete independence from oil.

### **Analysis and Results**

#### **Security and Fiscal Consequences of the Gulf War**

The occupation of Kuwait tested established assumptions about Saudi security. The advance of a heavily armed neighboring state created a need for rapid external military assistance. Clive Jones describes the ensuing situation as a dilemma between internal and external security: the means chosen to counter a threat from outside also generated questions inside the kingdom [1]. The presence of foreign forces was therefore more than a military matter. It became a subject of discussion about authority, the relationship between the state and religious scholars, and the legitimacy of government decisions.

The war imposed an economic burden as well. An IMF assessment estimates that Saudi Arabia's budget deficit reached 17 percent of GDP in 1991 [3]. This is a figure for that particular year and must not be generalized to the entire decade. Exceptional security spending, regional instability, and oil-market uncertainty highlighted the difficulty of financing defense, public services, and longer-term investment from a revenue base strongly affected by hydrocarbons. One can trace a long-term connection between this experience and later concern with fiscal resilience, but it would be unsound to call every diversification measure a direct consequence of the 1991 deficit.

The debate over the military decision intensified discussions within religious and intellectual circles. Figures associated with the Sahwa movement articulated demands relating to accountability, consultation, and religious principles. The Letter of Demands of 1991 and the Memorandum of Advice of 1992 are important documents in histories of this movement [4]. Yet the Sahwa did not speak for every Saudi citizen or represent the sole form of opposition. Other

intellectual groups put forward different demands. The political environment after the war is better understood as an intersection of varied concerns than as a dispute involving only two uniform camps [5].

Religious authority itself was not monolithic. Some scholars supported the state's response to the security threat; others criticized elements of its political or moral implications. Accordingly, treating the government and the religious establishment as two permanently opposed actors would obscure differences within each. The wartime controversy made questions of consultation and public responsibility more prominent, but the formal reforms of 1992 also emerged within a longer history of Saudi state-building [4, 5].

The fiscal experience showed that an oil-dependent budget could confront two simultaneous pressures: exceptional security expenditure and uncertain revenue. Nevertheless, later policy must also be understood in relation to population change, shifting oil prices, administrative priorities, and the world economy. Chronological proximity between the deficit, petitions, and legal decisions is significant historical evidence; it is not, by itself, a complete demonstration of causality [3]. The Gulf War is therefore treated here as a catalyst that sharpened a political agenda, rather than as the single origin of all subsequent reforms.

### **Political Institutions after 1992**

The Basic Law of Governance, promulgated on 1 March 1992, formally articulated the principles of Saudi monarchical government. It set out the state's religious and legal foundations, principles of rule, the functions of governing bodies, and aspects of the relationship between the authorities and citizens [6]. Its adoption was an important act of legal institutionalization, but it did not replace the kingdom's fundamental distribution of political power. It is more precise to examine it as a document organizing governance within a monarchy than to assume that it created the powers of an elected parliamentary constitution.

The Shura Council Law was also adopted in 1992. The Council considers draft regulations, development plans, and other governmental matters and submits views and recommendations [7]. This provides an institutional channel for consultation. Consultation, the procedure for appointing members, and the authority exercised by an elected legislature, however, are different political arrangements. The distinctions matter when assessing whether a formal institution increased participation, administrative coordination, or both.

Michel Nehme interpreted the measures of the early 1990s as reforms from above with limited implications for political liberty [8]. This is a critical scholarly interpretation of the political context in which he wrote, rather than an unchanging verdict on every subsequent decade. His argument is nonetheless useful because it draws attention to the distance that can exist between institutional form and practical participation. The Saudi state specified bodies and procedures more explicitly while retaining major features of centralized decision-making.

Municipal elections in 2005 expanded a limited form of local participation. In the 2015 municipal elections, Saudi women participated as voters and candidates for the first time [9]. These developments deserve recognition in their own right, but the powers of municipal bodies should not be equated with authority over the national political system. Neither the creation of a consultative body nor participation in local elections alone settles questions of accountability, appointment, and the distribution of decision-making powers.

These examples identify two dimensions of institutional change. The first concerns the legal definition of government functions; the second concerns channels through which citizens may contribute to decisions. More formalized procedures may support administrative stability. Yet their effects on representation require separate examination of the applicable powers and of institutional practice [6, 7]. Since 2016, centrally coordinated programs, target-setting, and the direction of public resources have also become prominent features of governance. Greater capacity to implement economic projects cannot in itself establish a wider distribution of political authority. Administrative modernization and centralized political control have coexisted in the Saudi case.

The term reform must therefore be used with precision. Improving public services, clarifying the legal status of an institution, permitting a local vote, and transferring national decision-making authority are four different changes. Treating each as the same movement toward political liberalization would conceal the particular character of Saudi institutional development. The evidence supports a history of selective adjustment to new pressures within a continuing monarchical framework.

### **Changing Social Relations**

The social history of postwar Saudi Arabia did not begin with Vision 2030. Education, urban growth, the needs of a relatively young population, and women's roles in paid employment had been under discussion for decades. Research on women's participation in public spaces connects debates in the 1990s with security events in the following decade and later policy decisions [10]. Legal reform thus took place against an existing background of social change, rather than generating all change from a standing start.

In June 2018, the prohibition on women driving was lifted. Legal amendments in 2019 expanded the ability of adult women to obtain passports and travel abroad independently. They also changed certain rules for registering births, marriages, and divorces and for obtaining family documents [11]. These measures removed specific legal barriers. They do not, however, demonstrate that services, employment opportunities, and household decisions changed at the same rate in all parts of the country. Legal provisions and the outcomes of their implementation must be assessed separately.

The labor market shows why economic and social objectives overlap. Increasing employment among educated women can expand the available workforce, create household income, and support private-sector activity. Topal argues that the policy language of women's empowerment also relates to the state's competitiveness and economic integration objectives [12]. This interpretation does not negate gains in women's opportunities; it draws attention to the economic purposes of reform. A rise in participation should therefore not be presented as proof that every issue concerning women's autonomy has been resolved.

Legal access is a necessary but insufficient condition for equal access to employment. Transport, qualifications, childcare provision, suitable vacancies, wages, and employers' demand can all influence the outcome. The lifting of a driving prohibition describes a legal and practical mobility change; revised passport rules concern individual movement; labor statistics describe economic participation. These developments are connected, but each provides evidence for a different claim [11, 12].

The Vision 2030 report records Saudi women's labor-force participation at 35 percent in 2023 and 36 percent in 2024 [13]. These percentages refer to Saudi women rather than to all women resident in the country. Furthermore, labor-force participation includes people who are employed and those actively seeking work; it is not identical to the employment rate. The distinction is essential when evaluating the social and economic effect of reform. A national average also cannot establish that employment opportunities are distributed evenly between major cities and other areas or between different age groups.

Social development extends beyond employment to housing, health care, education, culture, and access to public services. Vision 2030 includes goals for improving several such areas [14]. A stated initiative is a policy commitment, not conclusive evidence of a delivered result. A study published in 2026 on social equity identifies expanded opportunities alongside persistent disparities in access and implementation [15]. Its publication date lies beyond the article's historical endpoint, but its analysis may be used to evaluate developments through 2025. More detailed regional and household-level evidence would be needed to measure distributional effects reliably.

### **The Continuing Problem of Economic Diversification**

Oil exports have long supplied Saudi Arabia with substantial revenue, leaving public finances and external trade sensitive to market fluctuations. Proposals to expand the private

sector, industry, education, and domestic employment therefore predate Vision 2030. IMF commentary from the 1990s identifies diversification and adjustment to lower oil income as major concerns across the Gulf [16]. Treating diversification as an idea invented in 2016 would overlook this earlier policy history.

Diversification itself has several meanings. It can refer to growth in non-oil output, a wider range of export products, a larger share of non-oil budget revenue, or durable private-sector employment. These outcomes need not advance at the same speed. A study of Saudi and Gulf trends stresses investment in education, a knowledge-based economy, and non-oil activities such as tourism while observing that oil continues to play an important role [2]. Analytical clarity requires specifying which of these dimensions a particular policy or statistic measures.

In the 2000s, Saudi policy pursued deeper participation in global trade, private investment, and the development of a national workforce. The fall in oil prices from 2014 renewed the urgency of widening revenue sources. This later situation cannot be reduced to a delayed result of the Gulf War, although both episodes exposed the limits of a growth model dependent on hydrocarbons. Long-term demographic needs and changes in international markets were also relevant. The sequence illustrates continuity in the problem being addressed, together with considerable variation in the instruments selected to address it.

The relationship between state investment and independently sustained private growth deserves particular attention. Large public contracts can quickly raise construction and services output, but this does not establish how much activity would continue without the same level of government spending. A credible assessment must examine productivity, financing, the durability of jobs, and the degree to which new firms can operate beyond domestic public contracts. For the same reason, output diversification should not automatically be equated with diversification of exports or of the fiscal revenue base.

#### **Vision 2030: Objectives and Observed Outcomes**

Vision 2030, announced on 25 April 2016, brought together economic diversification, changes in public administration, and expanded social opportunities in a broad national program [14]. The strategy presents the country's role in the Islamic world, investment capacity, and geographical position as key assets. The Public Investment Fund acquired a prominent role in financing new sectors. The strategy describes intended objectives; the extent of implementation must be established by evidence distinct from the original policy document.

Compared with earlier diversification proposals, the program gives greater emphasis to the coordination of initiatives and the monitoring of quantified targets. Tourism, logistics, industrial activities, digital services, and culture are among the proposed sources of non-oil growth. Listing these sectors does not show that each achieved the same return or the same degree of independence from public finance. Major construction projects, service businesses, and internationally competitive producers have different investment horizons and different implications for productivity. The historical importance of Vision 2030 consists partly in its scale and its coordinated approach, not in the claim that diversification had never been considered before [14, 16].

According to the IMF's 2025 Article IV assessment, non-oil real GDP expanded by 4.5 percent in 2024. Oil real GDP contracted by 4.4 percent that year, while total real GDP growth was 2.0 percent [17]. These figures demonstrate that sectors of a single economy can move in different directions. Non-oil growth indicates a change in productive activity, but fluctuations in oil production still influence the total growth rate. The distinction between the composition of activity and the drivers of annual aggregate growth is important to any assessment of economic transformation.

The official Vision 2030 report gives the non-oil economy a share of approximately 55 percent of GDP in 2025 and reports non-oil growth of 4.9 percent [18]. The reported GDP share is not the same as the non-oil share of government revenue, nor does it describe the composition of exports. The IMF also emphasizes continued structural reform for sustained non-oil growth

and diversification [17]. Both observations can be true: the productive structure may change substantially while fiscal dependence and exposure to external oil shocks remain significant.

Moreau and Aligishiev analyze the potential macroeconomic effects of investment and diversification through a modeling approach [19]. Models are valuable for comparing plausible scenarios but their projections must not be treated as outcomes already achieved. This article accordingly distinguishes three types of evidence: announced policy objectives, observed historical indicators, and conditional estimates of future effects. Confusing them would make the assessment of Vision 2030 appear more certain than the evidence permits.

Social and economic policies interact within this program. A larger female labor force can increase available skills, while emerging services create additional demand for labor. Yet growth supported by public investment leaves questions about the sources of finance, regional distribution, the quality of jobs, and the durability of private-sector demand. A one-year growth figure cannot answer those questions. Longer series on non-oil exports, productivity, private employment, and the fiscal response to oil-price changes are necessary for a more complete judgment.

Care is also needed with the units and populations behind headline figures. Real growth is different from an increase in current-price output. A share of GDP describes production rather than the origin of budget funds. The value of an announced investment program differs from the value of completed projects. Similarly, participation in the labor force is different from employment. Maintaining these distinctions allows the article to identify meaningful gains without turning one indicator into a general verdict on all dimensions of reform [18, 13, 17].

### **Discussion**

The evidence points to three related, but distinct, mechanisms of postwar development. First, security pressure encouraged political adaptation: the 1990–1991 threat and subsequent public demands sharpened the need to articulate governing powers and channels of consultation. Second, social and demographic pressures required responses in education, public participation, and employment. Third, persistent exposure to oil-market shifts made diversification and fiscal resilience long-term priorities. These mechanisms intersected, but their timing and outcomes varied.

Each type of evidence speaks to a particular mechanism. The Shura Council Law is primarily evidence of institutional organization, not a measure of economic growth. The changes affecting women's mobility in 2018–2019 document legal reform; their economic implications require labor-market evidence. Non-oil GDP growth, for its part, does not demonstrate a corresponding redistribution of political power. Keeping those claims separate is an important methodological result of this study.

The three-phase periodization follows these differences. The 1990s were not a period without change: the state formalized legal arrangements and adjusted to exceptional fiscal pressures. The years 2001–2015 should not be described solely as preparation for Vision 2030: local political participation and social debate had significance of their own. The period after 2016 brought a change in the scale and pace of coordinated reform, but did not eliminate previously identified problems. This combination of continuity and change helps characterize Saudi Arabia's particular trajectory.

The first substantive finding is therefore conditional causation. The war intensified security and fiscal problems, but population change, education, government choices, and global economic conditions also shaped later policy. The second finding concerns the diversity of political change: establishing an institution, allowing a municipal vote, and distributing national authority are different acts. The third concerns the multiple dimensions of diversification. Together they caution against reducing Saudi history either to an uninterrupted account of progress or to an equally simple account of failure.

Official documents make it possible to identify stated priorities and monitor the indicators selected by the state. Scholarship provides alternative interpretations and calls attention to limits

in those indicators. Reading both types of sources together avoids turning the response to the Gulf War into an inevitable path toward the reforms of the 2010s. It also avoids treating a national strategy as evidence of its own success. This source-sensitive reading is especially important for research that spans more than three decades.

### **Conclusion**

The 1990–1991 Gulf War intensified questions of security and legitimacy in Saudi Arabia, placed exceptional pressure on public finances, and encouraged public political demands. It does not adequately explain all legal, social, and economic developments over the following decades. The political system combined more explicit formal institutions with continued centralized rule. Its institutional history is consequently best evaluated through specific powers and practices rather than through a general label of reform.

Social change is visible in new opportunities for participation in municipal elections, the legal measures concerning women's mobility and civil documentation, and changing labor-force figures. Each indicates a different dimension of development. The implementation and distribution of those changes remain subjects for further research. It would be inaccurate to infer identical outcomes across the whole society from a legal change or a national average alone.

In the economy, Vision 2030 accelerated non-oil activity and organized older diversification ambitions within a more extensive policy framework. The 2024–2025 figures provide evidence of growth outside the oil sector, but they do not establish that oil no longer matters to public finance or external trade. Saudi Arabia's distinctive postwar path is the interaction of security adaptation, selective political institutionalization, gradual social change, and state-led diversification. Future research should use longer and more disaggregated series on regional employment, non-oil exports, fiscal dependence, and private-sector productivity to test the durability of these outcomes.

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