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Centre for Middle Eastern Studies

Saudi Arabian State Modernization Policies versus Traditional Values

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts
in Middle Eastern Studies

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Date: 15/11/18

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge significant people in my life who have supported and aided me during hardships when conducting my research. I begin by mentioning my mother, Inas Fathi Moussa who has always supported me and stood by me throughout my life. It is thanks to her that I have managed to reach my academic and life achievements, I have been as well blessed by having a mother who is a role model for perseverance, hard work and talent. During my thesis writing process I have endured many difficult moments and have faced many realizations which have enabled me to grow, during the later stages of conducting this thesis project my current supervisor Torsten offered me his help. It is thanks to him that I have received the right guidance and the necessary moral support I needed. He has managed to provide me with the necessary academic critique while managing to allow me to have my own input. Furthermore, I owe gratitude to friends who have given me much needed advice and support in my thesis writing process. My thanks is extended to these significant people: Baraa Aji, Nadeen Khoury, Marah Barakat, Carl Bradshaw,and last but not least Ziad El-Awad.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand current Saudi Arabian political trajectories and recent reform initiatives, in relation to the traditionalist ideological roots and conservative Islamic legitimacy of the state. Methodologically based on a quantitative case study of the 'Saudi Vision 2030' reform project, the thesis discusses the limitations of democracy and secularization in relation to the pursuit of economic liberalization. Theoretically, the thesis takes a critical discussion of modernization theory as its point of departure, discussing its early formulations, its development and its relation to recent discussions on Islamism, post-Islamism and neo-modernization. In discussion of the Vision 2030 project in relation to current research on Saudi Arabian politics and ideological orientation, the thesis explores the negotiations and contradictions inherent to the Saudi Arabian 'modernization' project, balancing economic reform, privatization and cultural initiatives with religious conservatism and political authoritarianism. The thesis concludes that any significant Saudi Arabian socio-political change would require democratic and secularizing efforts outside of current reform initiatives. In the final analysis, Vision 2030 comes across as a limited cultural and economic liberalization initiative, aimed at (and potentially successful in) strengthening state legitimacy, while preserving ideological traditionalism and political authoritarianism.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Modernity, Modernisation, Traditionalism, Privatisation, Development, Progress

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Introduction

Since the death of the former king Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in 2015, the country has been swept with radical changes and challenges. Under a new leadership with a different vision for the country, Saudi Arabia has attempted to portray a new image of itself for the world. For instance, in an interview for *Time Magazine* in 2018, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman expresses a desire of returning to "moderate Islam", since contemporary Saudi Arabian Islamic practices allegedly have been "hijacked" since 1979. He alleges that Islamic practice in "the first" Saudi Arabia was different from today and expresses the opinion that Saudi Arabia should "return" to a pristine, moderate Islam and be open towards all faiths:

> We believe the practice today in a few countries, among them Saudi Arabia, it's not the practice of Islam. It's the practice of the people who have hijacked Islam after '79. And also it's not the practice of the social life in Saudi Arabia even before '79. And even it's not aligned with the idea of Saudi Arabia that it's a country following the religion of Islam from the first Saudi Arabia. You see the idea that the first Saudi Arabia tried to tackle. For Islam it's totally different from what the extremists are trying to promote today. (*Time Magazine* 2018)

He also opposes the very concept of Wahhabism, claiming it is promoted by two, misguided and vested interests: "extremists" opposing any type of modernizing developments as contrary to "the foundation of Saudi Arabia;" and secondly the Islamic Republic of Iran, attempting to " isolate us from the whole Muslim world by claiming that we are coming with a different sect in Saudi Arabia." (*Time Magazine* 2018). Despite Bin Salman's rejection of Wahhabism, this research paper will still use the concept because it is an established academic term.

Mohammed Bin Salman's statements need to be seen in the broader context of Saudi Arabian identity as being a promoter of Pan-Islamism, current geopolitical ambitions, diplomatic relations as well as internal political and financial processes (Gallarotti & Al-Filali 2012, 243). The notion of returning to an "original" Saudi Arabian Islamic identity cooccurs with the social and financial reform projects launched as "Vision 2030" by the Crown Prince, requiring massive foreign investments and international good will. Contradictory, however, such aspirations also cooccurs with Saudi Arabia's aggressive and conspicuous domestic and regional policies pursued in recent years.

Among them were the 2017 arrest of 11 princes from the royal family, orchestrated by Bin Salman as part of an "anti-corruption" campaign (BBC 2017), when more than 300 other individuals (businessmen and government officials) were arrested; more than 50 individuals remain in custody (Kalin 2018). Also, public executions in Saudi Arabia remain abundant, with draconian methods such as crucifixion (Qiblawi 2019). The anti-corruption purge and the executions are hardly instrumental for building confidence among foreign investors or world governments. The same holds true for the diplomatic crisis between Saudi Arabia and Canada, which was sparked after Canada expressed concerns over the imprisonment of two female activists and demanded their immediate release. Saudi Arabia reacted by discontinuing trade deals with Canada and expulsing their diplomats (Cecco 2018) Other events affecting the public image of Saudi Arabia is the Saudi involvement in the war in Yemen (BBC 2019) and the humanitarian disaster which follows as a result. And perhaps most devastating, from a media and goodwill perspective, the bizarre events surrounding the Khashoggi assassination (Farhi 2019), spurring an international outcry and jeopardizing the crucial Saudi – US relations.

All such events and processes provide the broader context for the current "modernising" reform project of Vision 2030 launched by the Saudi regime. It raises questions how reform initiatives relate to the image of Islamic primordialism and how the Islamic "bed rock" of current Saudi policies are to be reconciled with reformism. In short, it raises questions about how notions of "tradition" and "traditionalism" relate to the current "modernising" policies launched by the regime. The involvement in regional conflicts and international diplomatic embarrassments hence strains Saudi Arabia's ability to change and gain the international community's trust in its ability and commitment for modernising reform, and especially so since Saudi Arabia is seeking to develop an investment-based economy. As will be presented in this thesis, any real progress will rely on inspiring international confidence in willingness to invest, which is dependent on an image of "modernization" and religious moderation.

Current Saudi Arabian affairs thus provides a fruitful case for exploring notions of "tradition" and "traditionalism" in relation to "modernity" and "modernization", challenging over-dichotomized conceptualizations of modernity as inherently contrary to promotion of religious values and constitutional provisions, as will be developed in the following chapters. For instance, in political theory, modernity has commonly been

conceptualized as the pursuit of human freedoms and the enhancement of the range of choices and individual ability to take charge of oneself (Madan 1987, 748). Tradition, then, has been conceptualized as opposite to values of modernity. An influential exponent for such a perspective was Rostow's modernization and growth theory of the 1960s, theorizing, how states are prognosticated to progress and develop through a number of steps and phases through which a "traditional," religiously oriented society transforms into a modern, secularized one. While this theory has been heavily criticized, the idea of the dichotomous relation of "tradition" and "modernity" has continued to influence much political thought (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004) – thus failing to analyse how religious discourse often retain a central function in current Middle Eastern politics and modernizing reforms. In order to elaborate a more fruitful perspective on current Saudi Arabian reform initiatives, this thesis will discuss modernization processes through the prism of Richard. By bringing into focus Sakwa's notion of neo-modernisation and its assessment of the complex reality of state modernisation. This will be combined with recent theorizing of Islamism, post-Islamism and Cihan Tugal's (Gramscian) notion of "passive revolution" and Islamic hegemony in analysing the current Saudi Arabian case. Saudi Arabia hence represents a modernised state with a wealthy economy which maintains traditionalist values. It is this reality of Saudi Arabia which compelled me to explore in detail how current trajectories of Saudi Arabian politics fits to the theoretical debates on traditionalist values as not contradictory to, but even as an inherent aspect of, modernity and current reform initiatives.

The notions of modernity and traditionalism become particularly interesting and complex with regard to religious discourse and legal provisions in current state policies – and the inadequacy of much earlier political theory in this regard. In earlier political theories there was a view that secularism is (and should be) the basis for understanding modern societies and its relations. Religion was assumed to attain a diminishing role in the public sphere as societies modernise (Tepe 2008, 35). However, current developments in Saudi Arabia provides interesting insights into the complex interrelation of religion and modernity on a state level. By discussing the insights as well as flaws of older and more recent formulations of modernisation theory in relation to state Islam and combining with more contemporary and inclusive theories such as post Islamism, the present thesis aims to better understand the trajectories of religion and traditionalism in the current Saudi Arabian reform project of Vision 2030.

In order to assess the state of Saudi Arabia's modernization processes with regard to different fields such as economic freedom, individual freedom and rights, democratic performance and press freedom, this study combines data produced by research institutes such as Democracy Index and Freedom House in addition to data released by the Saudi Arabian government, mainly the policy documents focusing on the Saudi vision 2030 initiatives. This material will be assessed and analysed from the vantage point of the multiple theories applied in this thesis.

From a freedom and democracy perspective, Saudi Arabia tends to perform poorly as assessed by many research centres and NGO's indexes. As of 2018, Freedom House assesses Saudi Arabia as the least free (7/7) in all categories it measures, the main categories being political rights and civil liberties. Moreover, in its annual report, the institute assess Saudi Arabia to be one of the poorest democratic states globally, in a series of 25 indicators. With each indicator having a total of 4, it received a total of 7/100 points (Abramovitz 2018, 6). Democracy index for 2017 suggests an overall score of 1.93/10.Furthermore, the state received 1.47/10 in civil liberties and 3.13/10 in political culture. While the index of economic freedom 2018, Saudi Arabia scored 59.6 in its economic freedom score, which puts it slightly below average in its economic freedom performance (Economic Freedom Score 2018, 358). In sum, these figures are giving us clear indications of the uncomfortable relationship between modernising and pervasive traditionalism and political authoritarianism, underscoring the contrast between the claims of recent international charm offensives versus the reality suggested by the various indexes of development and human rights assessments.

1.2 Purpose, Aim and Research Question

Modernization theory remains significant to study since, despite the increasing critical perspectives in contemporary research, there is still a tendency to view modernization through normative tendencies. For example, religion is usually excluded and marginalized from political sciences and therefore modernization theory needs to be reassessed from the perspectives suggested by research and theorization suggested by scholars such as Dale Eickelman & James Piscatori, Ased Bayat, Cihan Tugal and Sultan Tepe.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the normative claims of modernization theory on modernization and traditionalism, while studying more contemporary theoretical frameworks and concepts such as post Islamism, Islamic hegemony and the notion of multiple modernities. These concepts provide fruitful perspectives on the development of the academic debate on modernization, in the context of the Saudi Arabian reform initiatives of Vision 2030, thus contributing to theoretically interpreting current trajectories of Saudi Arabian modernity and traditionalism. The present thesis therefore takes the following research question as its point of departure:

> *How does current Saudi Arabian state political discourse negotiate traditionalist values versus reformist ambitions within the Vision 2030 framework, and what is the significance of traditionalist values in the Saudi modernization?*

1.3 Disposition

After the present introduction of background, purpose and research question. the thesis proceeds in Chapter 2 to discuss ideology, politics and reform previous works on Saudi Arabia. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework of the thesis, with a focus on various schools of modernization theory. Chapter 4 on methodology and methods introduces the research paradigm of the thesis and the methods of research used, in addition to the limitations, ethical considerations and reflexivity. Chapter 5 presents the findings and analysis of the thesis, where the findings are presented and discussed in reconnection to the theoretical perspectives of the thesis and the field of previous research. In Chapter 7, the thesis concludes the results of the thesis in a broader Middle Eastern context.

Chapter 2. Previous Research

2.1 Modernity and Traditionalism

Modernization in Saudi Arabia occurred on the basis of economic development, bureaucratization and centralisation of power. The state realized the need for economic and administrative modernisation, and therefore it created and institutionalised modern education, political and economic systems for the purpose of shifting from tribal political union into modern statehood (Quamar 2015, 72). Even so, the state remained loyal to the Wahhabi doctrine in order to maintain the allegiance of the subjects (Commins 2006, 106). There is an aspect to Saudi Arabian modernization which is political, where modern institution building serves non-liberal modernist objectives. For example, in the early sixties, with Saudi Arabia in conflict with Gamal Abd- El Nasser of Egypt, the Saudi Arabian state felt compelled to curb Nasser's influence of Saudi Arabian newspapers and therefore created the ministry of information which regulated the media in order to live up to a certain standard Furthermore, the reinvigoration of the Committees for Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong paved way for the ban on women driving in 1957 (Commins 2006, 109-110).

The merge of modernity and traditionalism in state institution building was further elaborated when the judicial system was modernized: it remained a system under the influence of Wahhabism. The judicial system was unified and was no longer divided based on regions. The higher judicial council was created, and all the courts were regulated under the control of one institution (Commins 2006, 111). It was not the intention to modernize Wahhabism; these measures were rather taken in order to give religious institutions a modern form (Commins 2006, 112). The process of modernization also cooccurred with the introduction of institutions to monitor mosque employees, to issue fatwas, and for the education of girls (Commins 2006, 113). Therefore, Saudi Arabia has historically bureaucratized its institutions while maintaining its core nature of traditionalism.

2.2 Saudi Arabian Modernization

During the 1950's Saudi Arabia experienced an oil revenue boom. Hertog explains the influence of the oil boom on the process of bureaucratization. In his analysis of state building process, based on rentier economy theory, Hertog demonstrates how the Saudi state modernized when relying on natural resources as its main source of income. The availability of massive capital led, as predicted by rentier theory, to a reduced ability to build legal and rational institutions, hence restoring to uncontrolled expenditure, again leading to inefficient state institutions (Hertog 2010, 49).

As noted by Okruhilik, Saudi Arabia's endeavor to be part of the global capitalist economic system creates the dilemma of how the state should present itself to the world. How will it be possible to invite foreign investments and foreign tourists, while at the same time maintaining a national identity which transcends any national divisions based on region, class or Islam (Okruhilik 2004, 201). Saudi Arabia addresses its concerns by using tourism to further its cause of creating a unified national identity, since tourism contributes to increasing local historical and cultural pride. When it comes to tourism, advocating for such an industry had to occur as a balancing act, between introducing tourism and opening up the society, while at the same time not upsetting the conservative forces in society. Oil has been a contributing factor in allowing Saudi Arabia to be an active member of the globalized economy. This, however, comes with a challenge to the status quo for Saudi Arabia if it seeks to expand its integration in the global economy by increasing secular tourism.

2.3 Saudi Arabian National Identity

Joseph Nevo argues that religion was used to forge a Saudi Arabian national identity. Nevo provides us with an explanation of how Saudi Arabia fused modernity and religion together since the inception of the state. This blend of religion and state was necessary for the establishment of the modern Saudi Arabian state identity, as there is an absence of other forms of unifying identities (Nevo 1998, 34). Saudi Arabia has been established and protected for years by the cooperation of religious elites and the political leadership, producing a symbiosis and mutual dependency of religious and political discourses (Alsaif 2013, 376).

When Saudi Arabia sought to modernize, the relationship between the modernizing state and the religious establishment grew more complex. Entering late into the modernization process, the marginalizing of the ulama we have seen in countries such as Egypt and Turkey was counteracted by the Saudi state's dependence on Wahhabism. Therefore, the Wahhabi cleric establishment modified its methods of imposing their religious doctrine on society. They relied on modern communications, transportation and institutionalization to solidify their presence and role. The fact that the state was expanding meant that Wahhabi civil servants were under state authority, but it also meant that they had received direct funding which in turn enabled them to amplify their message in society (Commins 2006, 105). With time however, Saudi Arabia gained the role of defining Islam (Nevo 1998, 36).

Despite this merger between the state and religion, the process of modernization put the alliance between the religious forces on collision course. Therefore, since the 1970's up to the 1990's steps had been taken to limit the power of the Ulama. For example, the ministry of justice had taken over the authority of the Grand Mufti. The reshuffling of state institutions and the limits imposed on Islamic institutions intensified in the 1990's, as a result of increased tension between the royal and religious establishment on the nature of modernization and progress imposed by the state (Nevo 1998, 44). What began as a state vision of implementing the right form of religion, has eventually turned into tension between the statesmen and the clerics, where the clerics were required by the state to have a new role. Instead of being the absolute moral guide of the state, they became a tool of legitimizing the state authority and its intention of imposing secular progress. This in effect transformed the religious elites into mere state agents who fight the state's battles against its fundamentalist adversaries (Nevo 1998, 39), ultimately making Islam "statist," rather than the state becoming Islamic (Nevo 1998, 41).

The role of the clerics in challenging fundamentalists is very clearly part of state propaganda, as not all of the state adversaries have been fundamentalist. Some Islamists have indeed reacted by adopting a more radical view of state opposition as a response to state violence. However, a group of Islamists have reacted to state violence by criticizing Wahhabism, arguing for democratization and extending their arms to cooperation with other political forces. This group have been identified as Islamo-liberals who have actually tried to take advantage of then Crown Prince Abdullah's policy of intellectual *infitah* (liberal economic reform, literally "opening") (Lacroix

2013, 278). During the period of tolerance towards the Islamo-liberals, there was a power struggle which complicates the reality of how the Saudi state functioned at the time and more importantly how it progresses. Not all the members of the royal family were on board in increasing dialogue, Islamist liberalization and reform. For example, Prince Nayef [1] did not approve of the Islamo-liberals and therefore sought to counterbalance their influence by approaching the Wahhabi religious establishment and former religious leaders of the Sahwa movement (Lacroix 2013, 288).

The state centric view of Islam has been challenged as a result of internal and external factors prior to the emergence of the Islamo-liberals. This challenge emerged in the 1960's with the rise of Al-Sahwa movement, as a result of the exposure to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. (Lacroix 2013, 277). Specifically, Al-Sahwa was opposed to the westernization policies imposed by the state, while supporting the policies which strengthen religious activism and institutions. However, today Al-Sahwa no longer represents the opposition it may have once done, as Al-Sahwa leaders have once more returned into arms of the state. They are once more cooperating or working with state officials as advisors and lawyers and others founded their own media institutions (Alsaif 2013, 394). The Islamist liberals had other intentions for the state which disregard the above-mentioned required balance. The Islamist liberals sought to redefine Saudi Arabian National identity by shifting it from Wahhabi values to a more democratic, human rights oriented and pluralistic Saudi Arabia. All to be based on Islamic principles (Lacroix 2013, 279). In later years, particularly after the Arab uprisings since 2011, a new prominent reformist group rose. *Al-Tanweeris* call for political reform and the transition towards a constitutional monarchy (Alsaif 2013, 396). This group with its democratic inclinations opposes both traditional Salafism and the Al-Sahwa movement (Alsaif 2013, 397).

Al-Rasheed provides a deeper insight into the political reality of Saudi Arabia by focusing on a prominent Saudi Arabian scholar (Muhammad Al-Abd Al-Karim) and his perspective on the Saudi Arabian government and its approach to power and identity. Al- Rasheed explores the challenges he faced, shedding light on, the nature of power relations between the state and its subjects and the role expected from the citizens. Abd Al-Karim shows how the perceived role of the citizen lays the foundation for the undemocratic nature of the Saudi Arabian state, as the citizen is not perceived

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[1] Prince Nayef was the Saudi minister of Interior from 1975-2012.

through one's rights and responsibilities, but through one's allegiance to the state (Al-Rasheed 2015, 118). He furthermore points out the supportive role the religious scholars carry when they emphasis the "rights of the rulers," meaning that citizens owe their rulers obedience and compliance (Al-Rasheed 2015, 128).

In sum, the above discussion demonstrates that Saudi Arabia has undergone many changes in its national identity formation as a result of various forms of domestic power struggles; among the different factions of the royal family, between the states functionaries in relation to the clerics, as well as between the state versus camps of political opposition. These power struggles have redefined the role of the state, its identity and relationship with Islam.

2.4 The Relations Between the Religious Opposition and the State

The struggle between modernity and traditionalism intensified during the 1990's because of the Gulf war and American intervention and presence in Saudi Arabian lands. The Gulf war made internal debates within the Saudi Arabian state visible; the mass influx of reporters to the kingdom and the open relationship of the Saudi Arabian state with the Western states created a polarized debate on matters of liberalization and modernization. The war intensified calls among citizens for liberalization. At the same time, the discontent of Islamist opposition grew with what it considered to be a shift from the principles of Islam, namely in the Saudi Arabian royalty's role in cooperating with non-Muslim states in invading Iraq (Al-Rasheed 2010, 161). The Saudi Arabian state was trying to simultaneously silence those who call for progress and Islamist opposition such as the committee for the defense of legitimate rights in Saudi Arabia (CDLR). In doing so, it relied on the religious police to clamp down on those who perform any public act deemed immoral, such as women demanding their right to drive (Al-Rasheed 2010, 162).

Islamic scholars voiced their objection to the limitation in the right to preach in matters beyond spirituality and morality, demanding more rights to reflect on political and contemporary matters (Al-Rasheed 2010, 164). Furthermore, they requested the establishment of an independent consultative council, to provide them influence in domestic and foreign policies (Al-Rasheed 2010, 166). In reaction to these demands, the government enforced the 'Basic Law.' The law establishes 'the family' as the core value of Saudi Arabian society, emphasising that the teachings of Islam are central to the upbringing of the members of the families. The government has a role of protecting

the Islamic and Arabic identity of the state, in addition to its role of preventing disunity and dissent (Al-Rasheed 2010, 167). With regards to the judiciary, it is to remain independent but with regular control by the state over the judges' appointment and termination (Al-Rasheed 2010, 168).

The internet was another contributing factor in allowing citizens to challenge authority and norms and became a widely used tool amongst the rapidly growing group of Saudi Arabian youth during the late 1990s. They were able to access information and express their views online. This powerful tool of change enforces a new reality where modernity pushes aside traditional values in society and governance (Al-Rasheed 2010, 179).

In the early 1990s during the Gulf war, prominent Islamists within the kingdom released a memorandum directing the government on how it should act on matters of economy, politics, society and Islamic values, especially how it should uphold Islamic values by cracking down on immoral acts and granting more power to the religious police and the ulama of the state. The response from Ibn Baz, Grand Mufti at the time, was that the content of the memorandum is permissible, as it is the duty of the ulama to advice their leaders. However, he criticized its publication, as it could lead to dissent amongst the population (Al-Rasheed 2010, 166).

In sum, Saudi Arabia has undergone significant changes from the 1990's as a result of regional political developments, and the Iraq war in particular, with has had substantial effects on its domestic politics. Internal dissent grew and more voices were critical of Saudi Arabia's involvement with foreign powers in the invasion of Iraq and expressed increasing discontent with the limitations of rights to express their views.

2.5 Saudi Arabian State Resistance to Islamic Liberalism

Despite any stated aims of modernization, the Saudi Arabian state and the ulama have been largely resistant to 'Islamic Liberalism.' In fact, the state has successfully curbed this trend in the country. This became particularly evident in connection to the dissent of Islamo-Liberals in the early 1990's who were trying to replicate the preceding 'Sahwa Movement.' The Islamo-Liberals attempted to merge Wahhabi and Muslim brotherhood ideas, orchestrated in the context of with Crown Prince Abdullah's policy of Infitah (Openness). This group of intellectuals, academics, journalists and judges were demanding the reform of the Wahhabi ideology and the political system, suggesting the introduction of an elected parliament, a formal constitution and the

separation of legislative, executive and judiciary powers. The Saudi Arabian state responded by labelling the Islamic liberals as terrorists and arresting them (Bayat 2013, 20).

During the Arab uprisings, this movement of Islamic liberals created Saudi Arabia's first political party (the Islamic Umma Party). The party did not meet with any success due to the fact that it was unable to determine whether political or religious reform is the priority. Furthermore, its calls for democratisation were squashed as the state relied on providing its citizens with benefit packages. The Islamic Umma party were not favoured by the ulama and the little space of freedom they had prior to Crown Prince Abdullah coming to power seized to exist as he had lost interest in supporting them (Bayat 2013, 21). As Lacroix concludes, there were attempts by the Sahwa and later the Islamo-liberals to create opposition and to introduce wider freedoms, pluralism, democratisation and ultimately have a constitutional monarchy. However, the curbing of this post-Islamist current effectively demonstrates the limitations of post-Islamism in Saudi Arabia[2]. Since the actors were unable to reach out to the public, they had difficulties in gaining the support of the ulama, furthermore, cooperation between opposing actors (Islamists/ non-Islamists) in a polarised political environment has proven to be difficult (Lacroix 2013, 293).

2.6 Forced to Change

Despite the Saudi regime's resistance to any domestic change and any form of political opposition, Saudi Arabia had come under economic constraints forcing it to change; the constraints stem from the fact that the economy is attached to oil prices. In the beginning of the 21st century, Saudi Arabia was facing challenges on 4 fronts; low oil prices, unemployment, national debt and finally the threat of terrorism (Al-Rasheed 2010, 211). The consequences of the economic pressure on Saudi Arabia had been dire for the country, limiting the ability to provide services for its citizens as lavishly as it did during the period of high oil prices. In realization of King Abd Al Aziz' words, where he stated, that potentially the welfare state would have to be limited, the government took steps to shrink its subsidies (Al-Rasheed 2010, 215-216). The state was compelled to adopt liberal economic policies of privatization of government owned enterprises in order to decrease the role of the government and to increase revenues.

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[2] Post- Islamism will be discussed in the theory chapter below.

This adaptation of liberalization and decrease of the welfare state was only slowed down when the oil prices increased after the Iraq war (Al-Rasheed 2010, 217).

There was more pressure on Saudi Arabia to enforce liberal changes in its society as a consequence of the 'war on terror.' The US administration under President George W. Bush had exercised pressure on Saudi Arabia to impose new measures to curb extremism in its own backyard. The US administration required the Saudi Arabian authorities to uproot their radical preachers along with their extremist interpretations. More specifically, demands were made for reform of the educational system and control of Friday sermons (Al-Rasheed 2010, 233). Such politics has however to be pursued cautiously: firstly, not to disrupt the balance of power within the royal family, as some of the princes have allegiance to the religious establishment; and secondly in order to preserve the delicate balance between Wahhabism and the Saudi Arabian state. Were Wahhabism to be gravely challenged, the Saudi state would lose its foundational, national legitimacy (Al-Rasheed 2010, 237). Such considerations limited the introductions of reforms to measures not threatening its foundations. Changes included some measure of relaxation of the control of the press, limited municipal elections and allowing semi-independent civil society associations. (Al-Rasheed 2010, 242). Furthermore, Crown Prince Abdullah promised that Saudi Arabia would amend its curriculum by incorporating love for the "infidel" in their educational curriculum and dismissed a number of preachers and Imams deemed as 'extremist.'

In 2005, the Saudi Arabian state allowed for municipal elections to take place, half by appointment and the other by elections. The powers given to the elected members was limited to providing basic services, meaning that power essentially remained in the hands of the state (Al-Rasheed 2010, 250). Another government initiative was the "National Society for Human Rights," set up to engage with the public interaction and registering complaints. It was assigned to implement the international human rights charters signed by Saudi Arabia and engage with international NGO's such as Amnesty International, thus facilitating their research in Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed 2010, 251). And lastly, the Saudi government has made attempts to challenge extremism by inviting ulama, academics, writers and journalists to a forum in the King Abd El-Aziz Centre for National Dialogue (Al-Rasheed 2010, 243). In sum, the Saudi government has adapted to the pressure by providing change it can control, effectively limiting reforms and safeguarding the effective powers of the state.

In summary the modern Saudi Arabia has bureaucratized its economic, education and religious institutions for various factors which usually include a response to outside pressure, or a leader's vision of change, and finally it could be a response to fluctuating oil prices. Despite any imposed changes, the state seems to be established on two pillars, the first is monarchism and the second is the Wahhabism. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has had domestic strife by opposition which some demands more representation and adherence to Islamic principles and other requesting more individual rights, political representation and the creation of a constitutional monarchy.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Modernization Theory

During the 1960's many formerly colonized states started gaining independence. In response to this reality and to provide an alternative to Marxism, Whitman Rostow formulated his modernization theory. It sought to explain Western modernization process and how developing nations can follow the same path (Rostow 1990, 2). Rostow suggests five stages of development which each state had to go through: Traditional Society, Pre-Conditions for Take-Off, Take-Off, The Drive to Maturity, and The Age of High Consumption. Therefore, the theory is a method for identifying on which level each individual state is positioned on a scale, suggesting the course each state should pursue in order to develop into a modern industrial society (Rostow 1990, 4).

Rostow's modernization theory was formulated during the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is a theory that is compliant with US foreign policy interests and one which focuses on economic development and, hence, formulated in order to counter act Communism and promote capitalist values worldwide (Campbell 2013, 119). The theory hence is heavily ideological. Moreover, the steps identified have been questioned due to the theory's Western-centric perspective, modelled on the historical stages of Western state industrialization processes. This suggests the existence of one blueprint or manual for all states to follow. While it might appear as a logical and universal step by step progress, it fails to account for other, non-Western courses for modernity and development (Campbell 2013, 121).

Fangjun discusses the shift which has occurred within modernization theory, and how it has been adjusted to be able to encompass such modernizing varieties with a larger scope of states. This was in reaction to social scientists from the 'Third World' objecting to the divisions set between tradition and modernity. There were also sentiments of dissatisfaction of how the theory failed to provide accurate analyses of the development of Western states. In response to such criticism, modernization theory was modified to include the notion of tradition and modernity as coexisting and supplementing of each other. This is a shift from the previous position which withheld the belief that modernity and traditionalism are on opposite ends and traditionalism stands as an obstacle to modernity. Hence, a specific form of 'Western development' is no longer viewed as the only path, suggesting there are multiple paths available

(Fangjun 2009, 9). This is captured with the notion of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000, 3). Accordingly, attention must be devoted to the specific historical conditions and trajectories of each state individually, while simultaneously adopting a comparative approach (Fangjun 2009, 10).

3.2 Modernity Vs Traditionalism

As illustrated, modernization theory in its original formulation was western centric in its view of modernity and development. As such, it has had a deep impact on the construction and scholarly analysis of states and politics in the Middle East. From the perspective of modernization theorists, the Middle East had to make a choice between religion and modernization, suggesting a contradictory relationship between Islam and development (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 22). The logic behind modernization was assumed to be secularism and thus industrialisation and secular institutionalisation were considered natural path towards modernization. As demonstrated by Eickelman & Piscatori, however, the Middle East demonstrates the viability of religious political discourse and institutionalism through the trajectories of modernity and development, arguing against a binary and dichotomous perspective on traditionalism and modernity. (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 24-25).

Huntington[3] criticizes the very concepts of traditional and modern. He views traditionalism as not being in conflict with modernity. When investigating his earlier arguments, one can expand the research and relate Huntington's points to Saudi Arabia. Huntington makes an interesting argument where he says that all too often modernity and traditionalism are defined by standards which oppose each other, but traditional societies differ in values. Moreover, they are static and susceptible to change (Huntington 1971, 294). Eickelman presents how tradition is susceptible to change and in fact family and religious connection may enable change (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 25). Since tradition actually occurs by common and shared practices, the author is arguing that traditions are invented and are extended to individuals, family and society and could even be bureaucratized. Therefore, they do not exist in reference to older values (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 28-29), rather traditions are constructed

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[3] Huntington has been severely criticized for his work on "Clash of Civilizations," however, I am referring to his earlier work. As Huntington is an important component of early modernization theory.

norms and new traditions may replace old ones in a changing society. This is the case in all societies, without the need to create a distinction between traditional and modern (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 30).

Huntington gives interesting insight on how modernity and traditionalism are related; they are not mutually exclusive he argues. One does not replace the other, he views that when modernization occurs, its beliefs and practices are added to the traditional ones. Furthermore, modernization may strengthen traditions and pre-existing cultures, for example religion (Huntington 1971, 296). There is a distinction marked between modernization and modernity, this distinction between the two means that a society can achieve modernization without having modernity. This occurs when such a society achieves widespread literacy and access to modern medicine, these are elements of modernization which have been achieved. This occurs when such a society achieves widespread literacy and access to modern medicine but does not develop other aspects of modernization (Huntington 1971, 297).

The complex relationship between modernity and traditionalism, Rippin explains that traditional societies have two approaches to dealing with change. Either they reject change or alter their conception towards reality, a modern society however is not detached from tradition (Rippin 2012, 182). An aspect of modernization is secularization, it both is a result and indication of said modernization. It means the elimination of the dominant religious influence over social, cultural and political aspects (Rippin 2012, 185).

Tipps explains that modernization theory is one which explains the transformation of national states (Tipps 1973, 202). There is another notion of defining modernization and relating it to "man's" most basic instincts, modernization is viewed as one's claim over the natural and social. The transformation of national states mentioned above is interpreted by some as modernization equating to industrialization and economic development. Proceeding from the nature of modernization to the type of changes it introduces, there are two schools of thought on the matter. The first argues that modernization occurs in a single form and it is referred to as "critical variable" theories, the second believes in traditional societies adopting the attributes of modernity and these types of theories are referred to as "dichotomous" (Tipps 1973, 203).

Modernization theory makes an important distinction, one which it argues exists in all societies. It says any society has two sectors "a modernising and industrial sector" and the other is a "backward traditional agricultural sector" (Campbell 2013, 119).

Viewing contemporary Saudi Arabia, its economic wealth and modern infrastructure and services on the one hand could be representative of the "modernization process," while on the other hand Wahhabism and the absolute monarchy is representative of the traditional and the backward. The debate on modernity and traditionalism is long and extensive, it is one which has been discussed from both the lenses of modernization theory and more contemporary theoretical analysis. Traditional modernisation theory separates the between modernity and traditionalism, but newer research argues that modernity and traditionalism are not necessarily exclusive. Traditionalism need not be equated with old values, rather traditionalism is static, and its influence is extended to all levels of society.

3.3 Religion, Transition, Democracy and Secularism

While researching modernity and traditionalism, we can expand our understanding of modernization by highlighting the attachment and relevance between democratization and modernization, as sometimes the two terms could be used to mean the same thing. Fangjun explains this correlation by describing how a state modernizes and what this modernization eventually leads to. He analyses the modern governmental system as being one where there are differentiations and specializations in the system of governance, adding that such a system prioritizes a secular and rational decision-making process. This form of governance ends up being a more open system of governance which allows more room for the citizens to engage in the democratic process (Fangjun, 2009, 8).

The relationship between religion and democracy is an important discussion which enriches the debate on modernity and democratization. In this debate on the relationship of religion and democracy, Stepan explains how a state operates in managing the relationship between religion and secular power. Furthermore, he discusses an important question regarding the compatibility of various religions with democratic values. The argument he brings up is that state and religion should be separated and that religious institutions should not dictate public policies (Stepan 2012, 5). With regards to Islam, he questions the compatibility of Islam with democracy (Stepan 2012, 14).

Stepan explains that one understands that state and religion need a healthy separation (Stepan 2012, 7). As part of the modernization process, a state needs to work on regulating the relationship between the state and religion. Thus, weakening

religion's ability to control the state. Stepan adds that if secularism is part of a modernization process, it needs to be defined in terms of democratization. This is necessary as secularism could occur in non-democratic terms, where religion and state do not have a twin toleration and is therefore not in line with the Western defined modernization process (Stepan 2012, 8).

The manner of which Stepan's argument is formulated is debated. Tepe argues that such formulation of the relations between religion and secularism is flawed. Stepan's argument is based on separation of secularism from religion, this from Tepe's perspective is a mistake. The relationship between religion and secularism is complex and when one studies the two, one needs to be aware of not forcing religion in its own separate vacuum. As religion is static and it is a tool to understand and can be interpreted and reproduced by individuals in several ways (Tepe 2008, 51). Tepe though does not exclude that religion is still a source of unity and shared knowledge (Tepe 2008, 52). She further explains that secularism is not exclusively focused on non-religious traits, as it does have influence on religious politics (Tepe 2008, 53). It influences society both on an individual and institutional level (Tepe 2008, 54).

Religious institutions which monitor tradition and communities who lead a traditional lifestyle cannot ignore the changes which are dictated by liberal values. Therefore, they attempt to incorporate new ideas into their religious doctrine and thus the relationship between religion and secularism is based on mutual interaction and should be studied as such. Consequently, grasping how individuals understand religion and how religious doctrine influences them is crucial (Tepe 2008, 53). Tepe summarises how she views religion as a force which does not operate against the state, but rather within the state system (Tepe 2008, 59). Religion, democracy and secularism are viewed by two different lenses, one views them as incompatible with each other. Stepan as an example explains that religious institutions should have no power over the public sphere, Tepe however sees that religious institutions are under the grip of the state and therefore viewing them as incompatible or separate is incorrect.

Regarding democratization, a key concept to consider is "transition." The meaning of the concept here falls under the debate of development, where transition occurs when society transforms from one type of social order to another. Sakwa discusses in his article the meaning of change and modernization by focusing on the case of Russia during the Soviet Union and its transition to the modern Russian state which we know today. In his research, development and democracy are discussed, his

focus is on the relationship between the two. He engages in the debate of whether development is a prerequisite for democracy or vice versa. Furthermore, he offers an interesting discussion on the nature of transition, the author engages the different types of transition which could occur.

He provides the example of Russian transition process under the leadership of Vladimir Putin on the one hand and Dimtry Medvedev on the other. Putin undertook a process of transformation that fit the description of a developmental state model, meaning that the political regime is authoritarian, protectionist and it adopts an active industrial policy. Medvedev, however, was more lenient in his approach, he focused more on reforming the existing system. His model focused on competitiveness and political pluralism, which makes it a redevelopmental model, meaning that it represents a democratic form of modernization as opposed to the developmental model which is conservative (Sakwa 2012, 45). Sakwa investigates the actors and agents involved in transitions by utilizing the "comparative democratisation" approach, what comparative democratization does is it investigates political transitions. Its focus is on the creation of new democracies while analysing the transition process and the possibility for a failed transition (Sakwa 2012, 43-44).

In his article he discusses the process of transition in one society from one system to another, asserting that modernization theory argues that there is a link between economic progress and political change (Sakwa 2012, 43). Neo-modernization theory has been readapted to include new perspectives on modernization. Sakwa explains that it combines the "Western" form of modernity and the comparative democratization approach. The comparative democratization approach has its focus on political transitions, including the actors and agents involved. Furthermore, it focuses on democratization and failed transitions and the reasons behind them (Sakwa 2012, 44). Despite the changes which neo-modernization represents, still at the heart of the theory there is a belief in privatization, competition and emphasis on individualism. These core beliefs were strengthened with the fall of the Soviet Union, in what was considered the failure of the Union's collectivist notion of modernization (Sakwa 2012, 47). Neo-modernization offers us an opportunity of viewing different forms of transitions and since democratization is relevant in our analysis of modernity, neo-modernization is a vital tool for understanding states which may emphasis on other than democratization and pluralism.

3.4 State Politics

Reading into traditionalism can be better understood when one relies on Eickelman & Piscatori to explain the nature of "Muslim politics," it signifies the relationship between the state and the individual. The nature of Muslim politics is to be engaged in public symbolism such as the headscarf (veil) and the identity formed as a result of the collective action taken by a large group of individuals. In this engagement and creation of Islamic symbols we find the role of the state, it is the role where the state self-defines its aspirations of identity creation (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 4).

In the Muslim world generally, the family is the unit which everything evolves around, regardless of the social class in society. Therefore, the society is guided by religious and conservative principles which in turn provides the masses with the tools to assess whether their governments adhere to the moral and Islamic order. We establish from this a sense of how one can explain politics within a state, it is not only the command of force and authority; rather it is bargaining amongst several forces (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 7). The forces may vary from one state to another and they may differ depending on context, they could refer to political parties, ethnic or religious groups and regardless of the democratic or lack of democratic values in a state, usually rather than imposing values on society by force, the state mediates between the groups in order to maintain collective order (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 8). Furthermore, the concept of politics could mean the interpretation of symbols. Meaning that politics overall is based on power relations and the interests of groups in a cooperative manner, where they seek to uphold values which they believe are right (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 9). What Eickel & Piscatori are providing for us is the nature of Muslim societies, giving us the knowledge that politics in Muslim state differ in how they are achieved. While still, these said Muslim societies have the same basis of family centric values.

With regards to politics it becomes necessary to comprehend how power relations, interests and mediation could work. It functions by persuasion through speech and language; language is used to affirm power in addition constructing the identity and the aspirations you seek (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 11). Islam, being the language of politics is modernised, as it adopts a more secular approach (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 12-13) which is something we will see more clearly when presenting the Saudi vision 2030 and attached documents. It is imperative to comprehend that

interpretation of Islam is not static, it is constantly redefined and examined, redefined and changed (Eickelman & Piscatori 2004, 16-17).

3.5 Islamic Hegemony

Islamic hegemony means exercising power by linking economy, society and state (Tugal 2009, 32). This concept which is discussed by Cihan Tugal in his book "Passive Revolution," investigates how Islamist politics has become gradually dominant in Turkey. Islamist religious rhetoric has managed to plant its seeds in society and politics, mainly by altering the secular nationalist nature of politics of the state into a diverse religious, nationalist and with heavy liberal economic values. The focus of the book is the development of Islamist political parties.

Tugal counterargues against normative claims by modernists and orientalists, he explains that Islamic politics and modernity have come to exist to create an alternative form of modernity. This he has concluded in response to theorists who assumed that modernity and traditionalism, secularism and religion are naturally opposed to each other; thus, showing in their argument a lack of awareness of cultural complexity (Tugal 2009, 20). He further strengthens his argument by explaining how religion is fused with everyday life in almost every contemporary society with the exception of modern protestant societies, this reality means that religion needs to be included and studied in relation to economy and politics (Tugal 2009, 29).

Tugal describes for us the process of development for Islamic politics, which he explains began with Islamist radicals, but had evolved into Islamists becoming market oriented, pro-western and partially democratic. This development of Islamists has led to the creation of the term "moderate Islam," it is a term created to describe the learning and evolutionary process which Islamic politics has undergone (Tugal 2009, 3). The term passive revolution as explained by Tugal is a long process of adaptation between radicals and the existing status quo represented in secularism, neoliberalism and Western domination (Tugal 2009, 4). Islamist parties are today defined by market-oriented policies and even integration with modern state bureaucratic institutions and their partial commitment to democracy.

One can say that Islamic politics is usually discussed in these two descriptions; fundamental Islam and moderate Islam. Moderate Islam is referred to as progressive and capable of transitioning into democracy (Shehata 2012, 4), this is unlike fundamental Islam which is described in opposite terms, it is backwards and anti-

modern (Shehata 2012, 3). Moderate in Arabic is "Wassatteyya," literally meaning centrist. The importance of this term lies in its meaning, it interprets Islam and modernity as coexisting in harmony. Wassatteya as it is in the Egyptian context means being open and inclusive, the purpose is not to be homogenous. Most importantly it is about understanding the reality on the ground. The political and cultural reality determines how one interacts with one's surroundings as no single idea could be correct across time and space (Shehata 2012, 48).

To understand this balance of modern and traditional in Saudi Arabia, one can research the relationship between Islam and government. This relation allows us to delve into the relationship between the state and religion, thus allowing us to understand how the state introduces religious symbols and the effect this has on its relationship with its citizens. One definition of moderation is Bayat's definition; which explains that moderation is the degree of departure from radicalism. Bayat further explains that while moderation is often referred to, it is still a loosely created term and this makes moderation a very subjective term which can only be explained through the individual eyes (Bayat 2013, 27). Therefore, one can conclude that moderate Islam is an expression which has the following qualities attributed to it: progressive, open to transition into democracy.

The development of Islamic politics is identified in Bayat's explanation of the progress from Islamism to post Islamism. He explains Islamism as the movement to establish a religious state guided by Islamic moral codes (Bayat 2013, 4). Post Islamism is identified as being an upgraded form of Islamism, it is engaged in upgraded ideas, approaches and practices (Bayat 2013, 7). This shift came as a result of Islamism's loss of appeal, even amongst its followers. Post Islamism focused on readapting the priorities of Islamism and abandoning some of its principles. Mainly post Islamism focuses on rights rather than duties, the future as opposed to the past, plurality over singularity and historicity over fixed history. The implications of this is more openness to accommodating modernity, democracy, individual choice and freedom with Islam (Bayat 2013, 8).

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

I seek to use constructivism as a paradigm as it argues that reality is constructed by the social actors involved. Thus, it is in the constructivist belief that social phenomenon is created through social interaction and it is in a constant state of change. The significance of this paradigm is in how it interprets the role of the researcher, it concludes that all researchers have a subjective view while researching. The researcher's subjective lens produces knowledge of a certain aspect of social reality (Bryman 2012, 33). Social reality is viewed by constructivism as a product of social actors, this distinguishes our paradigm from other more naturalist approaches, which believe that reality imposes itself and constraints social actors (Bryman 2012, 34). This choice of paradigm is aligned with the qualitative approach, which gives room for theory exploration, conducting inductive research and finally it gives the ability to rely on texts for research (Bryman 2012, 36).

Since the meanings' individuals may attribute to things vary and are usually complex, the researcher is compelled to view and rely on the variety of views possessed by the participant being researched (Creswell 2014, 37). In this research study, the Saudi Arabian state is studied and therefore the researcher analyses its emic view of progress and development through its official initiatives.

Guba & Lincoln provide their readers with a vital insight on paradigm and its role in our perception of reality. When conducting research, the researcher is taking in many arguments made by subjects being researched. The arguments made are humanely constructed and therefore they are prone to error, this argument advocates for a specific construction of reality, which relies on persuasiveness rather than proof. This rhetoric is extended to the analysis, the arguments produced by a researcher are based on his ability to persuade the reader rather than asserting that he is providing indisputable evidence (Guba& Lincoln 1994, 108).

Constructivism in a nutshell can be defined in the following words, its perception of reality is relativist. This means that ontology is created in local and specific contexts, moreover knowledge is subjective, and findings are created through the author's lens. Finally, the methodology of research is interpretivist. It is interpretivist because one interprets the perceived reality and analyses the subject researched and their input (Guba& Lincoln 1994, 109). In my research, I am

researching the Saudi Arabian emic view of progress, followed by my own interpretation of their policy documents. Furthermore, I will rely on literature review and theory to provide a deeper analysis of the researched data. The collective use of both my input and previous research constructs an interpretive analysis, where the reader receives an interpretation of the current Saudi Arabian modernization process.

The constructivist paradigm is complex in its understanding of reality, this should not come as surprise considering its emphasis on the subjectivity of reality and acquired knowledge. What is meant here is that constructivism is relativist. This means that there is an assumption of multiple realities, it asserts two important things through this assumption, firstly, social realities as perceived by human intellect could become conflicting and secondly, this may actually change, as the constructor of the social reality becomes more informed and sophisticated (Guba& Lincoln 1994, 111). This is in regards of ontology; constructivism offers the same interpretation of knowledge. Knowledge is produced if there is consensus or near consensus on the matter, therefore multiple knowledges could exist. This occurs when there are multiple interpretations and these differences in interpretations are due to social, political, cultural, economic, and ethnic factors (Guba& Lincoln 1994, 113). This paradigm offers me the opportunity to view the Saudi Arabian state and its own interpretation of progress, moreover, I am able to apply my theoretical discussion freely by including multiple views on modernity and traditionalism, which create a debate and a more open understanding of the concepts and their application on Saudi Arabia.

4.2 Materials

My approach of finding the necessary documents has been to focus on relevant ministries and public documents in English and Arabic, I decided which ministries where relevant based on the nature of work each ministry has and more importantly if they have policy documents providing government initiative on development and progress. The reason for choosing documents in English is because it is an international language and I felt that if the Saudi Arabian government wants to produce an image of its progress and modernity, it would do this in the international lingua franca. I chose some Arabic documents due to their availability and because Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia and therefore accessing Arabic sources provides me with the internal view I need. In addition to the Saudi Vision 2030, more data will be provided from sources Saudi Arabia's government initiative policy documents.

These include the Fiscal Balance Program, Quality of Life program and the National Transformation Program 2020. These will be necessary to see how the Saudi Arabian state imagines its future and its own modernity. When searching for the policy documents, I realized that some of them are not labelled with publication dates. This was a challenge as I strive to reference correctly, so I had to resort to using the most commonly found date of publication of the documents in online history.

4.3 Methods

In my research, I will rely on the qualitative method of research. This I deem to be the appropriate method of research because I will be mainly analysing texts which express the adopted policies of Saudi Arabia, these texts will consist of reports and visions set by the different bodies of the Saudi Arabian government. The purpose is to see how the state defines and works on achieving its goal of modernization.

In my discourse analysis of the data, I researched for the following keywords such as modernity, progress and development (Bryman 2012, 528). Using the descriptive coding process, I will read the raw data documents multiple times and then find repetitive patterns, I then proceed by providing words and phrases which are informative of the topic. The coded phrases are then used to analyse and explain the content revised (Saldana 2009 71-72), my coded words and phrases are the following: privatization, local identity, transparency and female participation. These phrases will be used to analyse the different aspects of modernization which Saudi Arabia focuses on in their documents. My data collection and coding will be linked to the previous research on the topic, this means that I will attempt to explain how Saudi Arabia has progressed in defining its traditional values and how it views its own modernity. I proceed by comparing Saudi Arabia's own perception to scholars in the field and how they have explained Saudi Arabia's modernity, in doing this I will be contributing to the research of Saudi Arabia's modernization policies and ultimately proving or disproving previous research. Coding in content analysis entails the transformation of raw data into standard form (Babbie 2013, 300).

Guba & Lincoln discuss the benefits of qualitative data as oppose to its quantitative counterpart. They raise important points which I think make this method of research relevant to my research, they discuss how qualitative data is essential for research. This method of research does not rely on generalizations and assumptions, it does not conclude a certain truth as being the reality (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 106). This

is very important for this research as we are investigating the specific case of Saudi Arabia; therefore, one cannot rely on general assumptions as given facts, one must also understand that any results from this research does not necessarily mean they apply on other cases. The method gains more relevancy when the very concept of research is identified as being entwined between facts and theory, this approach of research pushes aside the notion of having a hypothesis and identifies that facts and the understanding of said facts are only viewed through a theoretical framework (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 107). This means that when analysing a case like in this research study; fact and theory cannot be separated, and this means that qualitative method of research is the reliable method for carrying a discussion in this thesis.

From this, one becomes interested in further researching how one can approach the lack of theory understanding on the specific case of Saudi Arabia. My drive to analyse a specific case on the basis of theory and critique makes cross referencing discourse studies a useful tool for analysing texts. Cross referencing studies means expanding one's horizon of knowledge by reading discourse studies, this in return helps me as a researcher by offering me insight which helps me in analysing and understanding previous research and how one can proceed from their previous research in interpreting my own data and findings (Bryman 2012, 536).

To strengthen the qualitative research approach, the appropriate method for this research is to rely on the case study method. The method relies on investigating a specific issue while being focused on a specific location (Bryman 2012, 66-67). In this case, the focus is on Saudi Arabia and the research is concerned with Saudi Arabia modernization policies within the framework of modernity vs traditionalism debate. One of the common ways of case study researching is adopting a longitudinal case study, this form of research entails studying a case over a long period of time (Bryman 2012, 70). The theoretical debate is a significant aspect of relying on the case study method, in conducting a single case study; the researcher is able to conduct a theoretical analysis of his own findings (Bryman 2012, 71). An interesting aspect of the case study research method is that it is based on carrying out an investigation, which means it provides an opportunity to test a theory. Moreover, it allows the researcher to rely on the findings of other applicable case studies in one's own research (Bryman 2012, 71).

4.4 Limitations

I had the intention previously of relying on grounded theory as it was not attached to theory and it relied on questioning the interpretation of reality as constructed by any given theory, which is what I intend to do in my thesis. However, with more research I found a useful method, Extended Case Method. Relying on this method means discovering a flaw within a theory and then proceed to modify it, this method relies on observation. While observing, the researcher enters the situation with full knowledge and grasp of what the theory explains, I should clarify that my intent with the method is to rely on its understanding of how one identifies a flaw within a theory and then tackle it.

I am aware that I am not doing any actual observation, rather I am studying a case with material available in reports. I am also aware that I am limited in my ability to modify modernization theory, I am only able at this stage to research what could be a possible lack of proper definition of modernity and traditionalism and to research this I decided to examine Saudi Arabia as a case study. In my case this distinguishes me from grounded theory because grounded theory has an approach of "blind tackling" a problem. It believes that one enters without any prior knowledge of the matter in order to not distort our understanding and instead develop knowledge upon entering the field (Babbie 2013, 338). It should be noted that there is criticism directed to Extended Case Method, which is a common critique usually directed towards case study method, case studies are usually described as descriptive of a particular instance or characteristic. Therefore, the cases end up having limited generalizability, meaning that the case it studies is not applicable outside of this case (Babbie 2013, 340).

In my research, when I rely on literature review, theoretical and data material definitions. They could vary slightly in meaning and portray a lack of focus in my research, therefore I decided to explain the various key terms which will come up in my thesis and what they mean and why they exist. Mainly the terms which I use interchangeably are modernity, traditionalism, modernization, progress and development. Modernity, traditionalism and modernization are terms used by modernization and political Islam theorists, while progress and development are used in the Saudi Arabia policy documents. Relying on different concepts may create confusion, but for the sake of representing the terms used in all the material used, I keep them as is. I would like to however, merge the different concepts together, progress and

development as used in the Saudi vision and other documents are meant to explain modernising their economy and their state institutions. Therefore, the concepts have the same meanings given to modernity in political theories.

Furthermore, the limitations I face within my research is most notably in the fact that I am restricted to literary sources and online data. I am restricted to these research sources because I am not able to conduct research within Saudi Arabia in order to gain an inside perspective, thus limiting myself to sources of information which can provide both insight and analysis.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Due to the nature of my research, there does not seem to be much risk of any explicit ethical concerns in my research. The research does not need to rely on conducting interviews, questionnaires, or any quantitative studies. However, in any research one needs to be aware of one's own bias, as a researcher, I have set an objective for my research, which is that I seek to investigate the current state of affairs within Saudi Arabia. In my research, I will face my own constructed stereotypes which I may hold about Saudi Arabia.

In order to tackle this dilemma, I will follow the research model which I have explained earlier in the thesis in order to keep my research ethical and scientific. The focus will be on theory and critical analysis of Saudi Arabian policies, the priority is to interpret in a balanced and scientific manner what Saudi Arabia public policies mean. To frame my ethical dilemma in a more scientific approach, one can explain that any researcher faces a dilemma when investigating the "other," one has to bear in mind that a researcher always bears with themselves a set of ideas which in return affects the individual researcher in their choice of theory, questions and their method of conducting research. Ultimately, being part of a specific interpretive research community, which has its own unique historical research methods, makes one adopt a specific view of the other who is being researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2013, 23).

Considering that a researcher always carries with them their own background and interpretation which stems from their own personal experiences, and since the meaning that each individual gives to the world stems from their own historical, social and cultural reality. Therefore, in this regard, a researcher is obligated to carry out the duty

of interpreting the meaning that others have about the world. Following the research, the thesis will therefore proceed to understand and interpret the context of the subject under study through their own experiences and background. Thus, this thesis is conducting inductive research, where meaning is generated from the data collected (Creswell 2014, 37-38).

Chapter 5. Findings and Analysis

For this research I have conducted qualitative research, by researching through textual policy documents. My choice of data is relevant to my research which is focused on Saudi Arabia's modernity and traditionalism, therefore, accessing the policy documents which the Saudi Arabian government provides to all audiences is the appropriate choice to investigate their initiatives and policies. My main focus while researching the policy documents was to find detailed information which relates to my research topic and theoretical choices; therefore, I researched the documents to find relevance to modernization, modernity and traditionalism. I had the purpose of finding data which could be useful material to find the similarity and differences between the theories discussed in the thesis and the current Saudi Arabian reality represented in the Saudi vision 2030 and other attached policy documents. The data is presented as follows: firstly, I begin by providing a general presentation of the Saudi Vision, as it is the founding document which explains the goals set by the state. Secondly, I proceed to cover all the documents with the themes I have found.

The Saudi Vision sets a roadmap of economic and developmental course of action for Saudi Arabia. The vision was created as a Saudi national initiative to change the state's economic reality, motivated by Bin Salman's goal of reforming the Saudi Arabian state. The document provides description for how Saudi Arabia intends to diversify their economy by endorsing new industries through privatization, including more women in the work force and providing more opportunity for young, educated Saudi Arabian youth to gain access to the job market. The Saudi vision values having a vibrant society and a thriving economy. The goal is to have an economically prosperous nation with a society living on the Islamic principle of moderation and having a proud identity. In order to achieve this vision, economic diversification, job creation and privatization will be the leading methods which carry the country into a successful path (Vision 2030 2016, 7).

I have gathered data from various sources, which provide the emic perspective. I have found multiple government public policy documents which define where the government wants to head and what their identity and goals are. More importantly one gets a specific idea of what their focus with modernization is. After having coded the

public documents, I have found four main themes: privatization, local identity, transparency and female participation.

5.1 Privatization

The first theme is privatization. Here the state puts emphasis on progress in terms of economic privatization. In the fiscal balance program document, the government provides the necessary historical background justifying the need for privatisation. The document makes it clear that oil income since the 1980s has been unstable, sometimes going through periods of high oil prices and other times low oil prices. During the 1980's, Saudi oil production had declined and therefore as a result there was a budget deficit and the government had to resort to various austerity measures (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 17). The same had occurred in the 1990s and the government once more had to cut spending by reviewing subsidies and it resorted to creating initiatives to increase non-oil revenues (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 18-19). Despite the fact that the government had a period of high revenue in the early 2000s, the pattern of having a sudden drop of revenues continued in the late 2000s, during the financial crisis (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 20). Currently, there are struggles facing the non-oil sectors of the economy, combined with increased unemployment and a lack of confidence in the economy by businesses and consumers who are concerned with price hikes and subsidy cuts (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 70). The state response to these problems is simplifying doing business by attracting domestic investments and foreign direct investments. These initiatives will be supported by allowing for deregulating the market and allowing for industries like tourism, entertainment and the mining industry to be invested in. Furthermore, the state will encourage competitiveness between Saudi companies (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 75).

The government has taken its own initiatives to establish companies which invest in the tourist industry. One such company is the Saudi Holding Company for Development and Tourist Investment (Mubadarat 2017, 62). It also established tourist investment centres, and programs for mapping public tourist locations and preparing them to be utilized (Mubadarat 2017, 63).

Privatising government holdings is done in order to stimulate economic growth and to improve the government's fiscal position (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 12). One of those measurements are detailed in the Saudi Vision document which addresses

the government's aspiration to diversify its economy for the sake of economic growth. The focus is on expanding the role of Aramco from being only an oil producing company to becoming a global industrial company. This occurs by transforming the company ownership into the public investment fund and thus making it into the world's largest sovereign wealth fund. The document divulges into other aspirations, such as having all the means to achieve their dreams and not allowing the country to be hostage to commodity price volatility or external markets (Vision 2030 2016, 7). The Public Investment Fund acts as a form of economic security (Public Investment Fund 2018, 12) and it is a mean of investing in the Saudi economy (Public Investment Fund 2018, 22). It invests in Saudi companies, thus giving them the economic support needed to grow. Furthermore, the PIF is able to use its global network connections to bring new investments in Saudi Arabia (Public Investment Fund 2018, 49). Moreover, the Saudi Arabian government sets to reform its subsidy policies so as to reach more equality, less consumption and relocation of water and energy subsidies in order to diversify the economy (Fiscal Balance Program 2016,36). The government clarifies where it is currently positioned on non-oil revenues, pointing out that non-oil revenues have already increased fourfold in the past 20 years. Yet, this covers only 17% of the government expenditures, thus, leaving the rest relying on and vulnerable to oil prices (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 48).

5.2 Local Identity

The second theme is local identity. The Saudi vision 2030 document begins by mentioning its first pillar, which states that Saudi Arabia is at the heart of the Islamic and Arab world (Vision 2030 2016, 6). The same pillar emphasises that the Almighty God has given the nation a gift more precious than oil. The real wealth lies in the people and their ambitions, especially the younger generation who are described to be the nation's pride and the architects of the future (Vision 2030 2016, 6). The Saudi Vision imagines a Saudi Arabia which is stable, thriving and one which provides opportunities for all.

Moreover, Islam is described as the constitution of the state and moderation as the method of the state (Vision 2030 2016, 7). The Vision emphasises national and religious pride, expressing that the Islamic faith and national unity are a source of pride. For this reason, the vision devotes a section to Islam, where Islam is viewed as a way of life and as the basis for Saudi Arabian laws. Moreover, Islam is utilized by this vision

as a driving force for tolerance, moderation and transparency (Vision 2030 2016, 16). Furthermore, the Vision reaffirms its commitment to the national heritage and identity. It emphasises pride in the historical and cultural legacy of the Saudi, Arab and Islamic heritage (Vision 2030 2016, 17). Another matter of interest is Saudi Arabia's vision of modernity, which puts a clear emphasis on the importance of family. It considers family relations alongside Islamic values as being the defining characteristics of the kingdom (Vision 2030 2016, 28).

Additionally, the Saudi Arabian government is boosting local pride and identity by revitalizing tourism (Mubadarat 2017, 32). Encouraging tourism is not only done to strengthen the local identity, it serves as well the goal of economic diversity (Mubadarat 2017, 34). The kingdom wants to preserve its identity as being the home of Islam, it wants the kingdom to be "in the heart of every Muslim," in addition to increasing the kingdom's international standing (Mubadarat 2017, 82). Preserving the national Saudi Arab Islamic identity has been mentioned in multiple programs including the Quality of Life Program (QFP), where it states that both Islamic and Arabic national heritage should be upheld and strengthened, while promoting moderate Islamic values (Quality of Life Program 2017, 25).

5.3 Transparency

The third theme is transparency, as the government has expressed its desires to introduce more transparency and institutionalization. The government intends to monitor its own initiated progress, to make sure it functions. Further institutionalization serves the same purpose of monitoring and evaluating government performance (National Transformation Program 2017, 12). The government aims at transparency by including periodic auditing and constant follow up to ensure continuous improvement in its own initiative targets (National Transformation Program 2017, 14). On the matter of welfare, the vision shows two different types of commitments by the state. The first type implies modification of the welfare system in a bid to make it more efficient. Subsidies on water, fuel, food and electricity will be directed to the people in need of them (Vision 2030 2016, 29). The second type, as addressed later in the vision, clearly states that there will be no taxes on income or basic goods. Balancing the budget will occur by more stricter spending control as well as diversifying the revenue sources (Vision 2030 2016, 64). This is however peculiar as in the Fiscal balance program it is clearly stated that low income households will need to be supported as a result of

increasing cost of living from energy price reforms and VAT, which is value added tax on services and goods (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 12).

Transparency also occurs through institutionalization. Therefore, Saudi Arabia has clarified that they are intent on creating new institutions with the purpose of curbing and monitoring their expenditure. One such institution is the Bureau of Capital and Operational Spending Rationalization, which is an independent unit under the Council of Economic Affairs and Development (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 25). The bureau has been assigned the task of cooperating with all the ministries and branch governments for the purpose of rationalizing expenditure (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 32). This is strengthened with the government emphasizing extensive monitoring and robust governance (Fiscal Balance Program 2016, 84).

5.4 Female Participation

The fourth theme is female participation. The government has made a goal of increasing the workforce percentage of females from its current baseline of 39.8% to 42% by 2020. Moreover, without any clarifications, the government has concluded that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs to develop mechanisms to improve women's employability. However, the focus on women extends beyond employment and also focuses on activities which women can be engaged in. The intention is to refurbish the main sporting facilities in the kingdom, in order for women to access sporting events (Quality of Life Program 2017, 117). More measures are to be taken by the state in including women in sports, education and the working market. It plans to introduce a bachelor's program for women in physical education, thus allowing women to work in sports facilities as sports instructors and to participate in various sports activities. This physical education program will not only be on a university level, but also on a public-school level and will be taught by trained female specialised teachers (Quality of Life Program 2017, 119). The program addresses the importance of removing obstacles which stand in the way of women to fully participate in sports (Quality of Life Program 2017, 123). In addition, the government has the intention of engaging more male and female students in cultural and artistic competitions in order to instil artistic values in students at an early age (Quality of Life Program 2017, 136-137).

The QFP evaluates the socioeconomic importance of gender equality and female employment in order to become a top performer amongst countries (Quality of

Life Program 2017, 30). The document stressed the point of inequality by mentioning the disproportionate figures in unemployment between men and women. 33.1% of the women are unemployed, while it is only 7% of the men. The means of tackling this problem as set by the program document is by relying on Saudi Arabian women for employment and providing them services such as childcare and transportation for them (Quality of Life Program 2017, 113-114). In order to strengthen women's economic participation, the government intends to create business centres for women in order to give the women the opportunity to conduct all types of activities including female owned businesses without limitations (Ministry of Commerce and Investment Annual Report 2016, 16).

5.5 Theoretical Analysis of Public Documents

Based on the themes found in the public documents, the limitations of the democratizing aspects of Saudi Arabian Vision clearly emerge. There are no indications from the leadership in its initiatives or actions which shows that it is willing to open up for more dialogue, neither does it show any will to include citizens in the political process by means of election and representation. The Vision has instead made its priorities clear; it outlined a version of modernization that fits the state's own narrative of priorities, boiling down to the issues of economic progress, certain measure's aiming at women's public participation and an additional focus on the local Saudi, Arab and Islamic identities. To expand further on how we can understand Saudi Arabia's Vision, we can rely on Sakwa's "neo-modernization." This term argues that there are multiple modernities, meaning that states can modernise in different ways.

With that in mind, one finds indications of Saudi Arabia's modernization trajectories based on the facts we know today. As mentioned above, the main changes will be economic in the form of privatization and economic diversity, in addition to certain individual, cultural and educational rights being granted mainly for women. Otherwise, we will be witnessing no changes in the political style of governance and Saudi Arabia will remain an absolutist monarchy. The reality of Saudi Arabia fits the developmental model, meaning that any introduced changes are all packaged and delivered by authoritarian means of enforcement, where political participation and plurality are not allowed.

The discussion in Sakwa's study on the various types of modernization possibilities in a state, could provide a tool for understanding Saudi Arabian vision 2030. The Saudi Vision clearly states that privatization is the path forwards, which is typically capitalist, globalist and aligned with many modernization theories. But, on the other hand Saudi Arabia does not mention individual, civil and political rights in their stated goals – rather the opposite. Traditional Islamic values of family and faith are given prominence, which makes it difficult to align current tendencies in Saudi Arabia to the neo-modernization theoretical framework and its emphasis on individualism.

Building upon the previous sections we need to acknowledge the hegemony of Islamic politics in the Saudi vision 2030. The role of Islam in this vision is still clearly present in the language of the document and in the perceived role the state imagines upon itself. This is illustrated with Saudi Arabia ambitions to forward 'moderate Islam' and the emphasis of reinforcing the Islamic identity in terms of traditionalist and religiously conceptualized 'family values.' Saudi Arabia is reinterpreting its view of religion in a manner which would fit the vision it has for the society and the state. This vision, firstly, puts emphasis on having a strong Saudi national identity with local pride in traditional values and, secondly, argues that Saudi Arabia is in need for both economic and cultural change. Yet, in contrast with the envisioned goals, Saudi Arabia has not shown any tendency to adopt pluralism and political representation, while clearly committing to a liberalization of financial and business markets. Therefore, the Saudi vision expresses itself as an empirical example of Islamic hegemony politics. Through the lens of the vision, Saudi Arabia is imagining an integration of their economy, state and society to be bound by the state power and their imposed values of moderate Islamic values, strong Saudi identity with a market economic orientation.

Indeed, 'moderate Islam,' comes across a deeply ambiguous and contentious concept, worthy of further elaboration. One interpretation of 'moderate Islam' could mean Islamic politics within a market-oriented economy, with partial democracy and a pro-Western approach. The entire motivation to advocate for moderate Islam begs careful scrutiny, Saudi Arabia does orient itself towards a market economy and it maintains a turbulent yet strategic alliance between Saudi Arabia and the West. However, in essence, Saudi Arabia remains an absolute monarchy and, as Lacroix argues, the current state of affairs in Saudi Arabia demonstrate little evidence of any substantial post-Islamist tendencies or political reform, such as any opening for political

opposition parties. Therefore, attempts of economic or cultural modernization, in the context of Saudi Arabia, can hardly be interpreted as any deep-rooted shift towards 'moderate Islam' in the sense of increasing political liberties and rights. Therefore, Saudi Arabia remains committed to a traditionalist and authoritarian governance and there is no indication of any shift towards ('Islamic' or otherwise) liberal values of pluralism, representation or democratisation.

In the Saudi vision 2030 there is an apparent lack of regard for civil and political rights while one finds emphasis on family values. The focus is here on the state, religion and identity formation. The state, according to the Vision, clearly remains in control of defining its identity from above, mirroring the well-documented highlighting in political Islamism of 'the family' is as the national unit and crux of public virtue. In this aspect, Saudi Arabia echoes broader themes in Middle Eastern Islamist discourse. And this cooccurs with the Saudi vision advocating for economic and social changes in the country, which in return indeed does challenge the traditionalist status quo in the country. What therefore may be deduced from the attention given to family and Islam in the vision 2030 is that the state is aware of the legitimizing aspects of highlighting Islamic virtues in the form of 'family values' and will hardly be willing to give up on them. This is partly due to a dynamic of power within the kingdom that needs to be respected, soliciting Wahhabi scholars essential for the institutional power of the state. Therefore, the emphasis of underscoring the state's 'Islamic' orientation while committing to 'moderation' as a path towards modernization is a sensible approach for the Saudi monarchy.

Historically, Saudi Arabia has witnessed similar actions for change by previous leaderships, when for example in the late 1990s Crown Prince Abdullah continued King Fahd's reform program. This reform included doubling visa fees for foreign workers and decreasing subsidies on electricity and petrol. In addition to amending property and employment laws and modifying the tax code. Okruhilik pointed out that these reforms were put in place in order for Saudi Arabia to gain membership to the WTO. The reforms put in place today are economically liberal. In the Saudi vision, it is specified how the state intends to modernize the social welfare system in order to make it more efficient and more protective of the vulnerable citizens in need of help. There is a focus on economic progress through investment and privatization of state-owned industries and public services, as a means of diversifying revenues.

As concerns institutionalization, we have seen that Fangjun argues that the democratization process is consistent with modernization. He focuses on the modern governmental system which can be divided according to functional specialization and is defined by rational and secularized procedures in decision making. It forwards democratization through its inclusiveness of broader segments of the population in political processes. Should Saudi Arabia implement its intended changes, there is a path towards a modernizing of governance, by means of diversifying and expanding the institutional roles. These tendencies towards public sharing of the new economic policies, in addition to the structural changes proposed by the government, provide certain indications of a partial democratization.

The discussions above suggest that Saudi Arabia shows little evidence of Post-Islamism. Even if they may appear liberal and 'modern,' such changes remain state centric. Rather, the tendency essentially mimics past developmental initiatives in the country, initiating partial change while safeguarding that the power remains in the hands of the state with no opportunity for political opposition or national dialogue. Indeed, initiatives towards political representation and pluralism are even more absent in Saudi vision 2030, compared with past endeavours for change. In previous development initiatives, Saudi Arabia was engaged in introducing an environment of open engagement by having an open national dialogue forum. The dialogue forum was established to create more room for discussion and engagement amongst Saudi Arabian scholars and diverse individuals. Ultimately the goal was to modernise an authoritarian rule and to create an image of openness to the outside world.

Currently, there is no mention of appealing to any parties acting outside of the state framework; not even youth are referred to in terms of representation. What is clear from the findings is that Saudi Arabia can be identified mostly with a neo-modernist developmental model, maintaining the authoritarian state of the regime. However, in accordance with Islamic hegemony approach, the vision is adopting liberal economic policies and allowing for more institutionalization through its transparency initiatives.

5.6 Modernization Theory

Based on the above analysis of the Saudi Arabian Vision 2030 initiative we may revisit the academic discussions of modernization theory. Despite its evident limitations and deterministic tendencies, discussed earlier, the current Saudi trajectories indicate that it should not be completely discarded entirely. This deterministic approach is primarily and effect of the tendency in modernization to isolate a singular path of modernization, ultimately leading to a liberal democratic culture within state and society – while turning a blind eye to realities such as colonialism, poverty, conflict, religion and local national cultures. Indeed, despite this classical approach to modernization, early scholars such as Tipps and Huntington provided interesting views on the relations between modernity and traditionalism. Huntington explained that traditionalism and modernity need not be opposed and that traditionalist societies are far from static or resistant to change. Tipps explains that modernization is usually equated with economic development and industrialization, but it can be dichotomous and therefore capable of bearing some of the attributes of modernity. Complemented by a more contemporary scholar, Rippin adds that a traditional society facing change can choose to completely reject any suggested change or alter their views and embrace it, thus allowing itself to modernize while retaining tradition.

The theoretical framework of Eickelman & Piscatori disregards the normative approach of traditional modernization theory. The argument they represent is that the political systems of Saudi Arabia and its surrounding region display modernity and traditionalism simultaneously. Therefore, they cannot be classified with classical notions of modernity as they are not fully developed nor are they pre-industrial. This highlights the significance of neo-modernisation, which has rebranded modernization from being singular to multiple forms, while at the same time maintain the core belief of liberal economic values. I argue therefore that neo-modernization has developed in a manner which makes it relevant and capable of explaining diverse and complex state approaches to modernity. However, Eickelman & Piscatori offer us a deeper analysis which covers the integration and translation of family values and Islamic politics from an individual level up to the state level.

Stepan's twin tolerations theory has a normative view not unlike that of modernization theory, the problem lies in the fact that theory is incapable of viewing traditionalism and religion as active and integral part of state institutions, identity and progress. The theory becomes a vocal voice for liberal ideology where separation of religion and state is the goal, thus allowing for secular democracy to govern. While it may be a goal many in academic quarters share, the reality is that it ignores that even in secular democracies the religious institution is one of the bodies of the state, as usually the state is responsible for monitoring and supporting one religious institution or even several religious institutions for several religious communities. Al-Rasheed focuses on this point and she says that the modern state has not always been able to separate religion from the state, but it is able to separate the powers.

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Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this research, I am trying to investigate the contemporary Saudi Arabian state and its balance between maintaining traditionalist values and modernist. By researching different theories, one understands the progress of political theories, which were motivated by secular/ liberal and Eurocentric views of modernisation. Therefore, modernisation theory in contemporary academic research tends to be normative, since the discussion focuses on achieving an ideal goal in a society. Nevertheless, it should be noted that modernisation theorists have gradually refined the theory in exploring modernity from non-western perspectives. Some political scientists have disregarded religion as a factor in political scientific analysis, imbuing proper analysis. Therefore, in this research I focused on neo-modernisation, Islamism, post Islamism and the study of Islamic politics as a tool of understanding the current processes of Saudi Arabian state politics. The theory discussions suggested by Bayat, Tugal, Lacroix, Eickelman & Piscatori refined perspectives beyond the outdated concepts of modernity and traditionalism in older modernisation theory.

By relying on the above-mentioned theories, the Saudi Arabian policy documents and previous research on Saudi Arabia, one may capture how Saudi Arabia aspires to maintain its traditional identity in its prospect of progress. Saudi Arabia is expanding its level of economic liberalisation while underscoring that 'moderate' Islamic virtues and 'family values' are central to the state identity. The public documents subject to analysis in this thesis illustrate an emphasis on economic liberalisation and some initiatives to advance certain civil liberties, but no real political pursuit of inclusive forms of governance. There is no mention of any political changes in government, an aspect which distinguishes Saudi Arabia from other Muslim majority countries. Saudi Arabia maybe an Islamic state, but it is also an authoritarian monarchy; this distinguishes it from countries like Egypt and Turkey since the latter two countries are constitutional republics with party systems and parliaments. Regardless of how democratic or free the above-mentioned countries are, they have had history of Islamist parties who have had engaged with state institutions and adopted the democratic principles of representation. More importantly, Egypt and especially Turkey are governed by both secular and Islamic politics. The same cannot be said about Saudi Arabia which has had very limited experience of granting civil liberties and freedom of

political participation. The absolute monarchy type of governance in Saudi Arabia does not allow for any separation of government and other bodies such as parliament (legislative) and legal court (judiciary), and therefore, the state is built as a model of an Islamic state hardly fulfilling the criteria of post Islamism in Islamic politics by means of political democratic representation.

In many ways it seems that history is repeating itself. Saudi Arabia has been through similar circumstances previously in history, at times of decreasing revenues from oil and facing a volatile regional political reality. The motivation for change today is not much different from the past, Saudi Arabia today spearheaded by the current Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is retracing previous steps by moving forward with economic reform, mainly tackling welfare and opening for granting certain economic and cultural rights. The main difference is the marketing and propaganda strategy advocating changes within the kingdom. In addition to the cosmetic changes, there is a far more serious shift occurring, namely the current power shifts within the monarchy. As Mohammed bin Salman consolidates more power for himself, Saudi Arabia is currently witnessing a move towards an absolute monarchy which disregards the status quo and consolidates power. These changes are not stipulated in the public documents but are evident from the radical events which have taken place in the last couple of years, most notably the Khashoggi case and the 'corruption' scandals. These incidents have undoubtedly counteracted the goals aspired through the Saudi Vision 2030 and suggest an individualization of Saudi political power.

The findings of the present thesis suggest the current trajectory of Saudi Arabian politics. Saudi vision 2030 and other affiliated public documents amply illustrates the type of (and limitations of) political reforms currently pursued by Saudi Arabian leadership. Furthermore, this data has been useful in assessing the theoretical discussions on Islamic politics and modernization. The case of Saudi Arabia provides interesting insights, helpful to evaluate whether both merits and shortcomings of previous research and theoretical debates. This research has tried to contribute to such fields, arriving to the conclusion that previous research indeed extensively has covered Saudi Arabian development and its complex relations between modernity and traditionalism. However, theoretically Saudi Arabia is an elusive case, not fully compliant with current modernization theories, since Saudi Arabia operates as an absolute monarchy, with aspirations of liberal economic progress while maintaining its statist grip on Islamic politics. Therefore, neither concepts of neo-modernization, post-

Islamism, passive revolution and Islamic hegemony fully captures the essence of current Saudi Arabian modernity. An adequate understanding of current Saudi Arabian ideological orientation and reform initiatives require a dynamic, analytical combination of aspects of such theories – an analysis to which the present thesis hopes to have contributed.

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