

Book Review

Blood and Oil: Mohammed bin Salman's Ruthless Quest for Global Power

- Authors: Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck
- Publisher: Hachette Books
- Published Year: 2020
- ISBN-10: 0316535576
- ISBN-13: 978-0316535578

Reviewer

Syed Shah Hussain¹

The compelling and painstakingly researched book *Blood and Oil* by Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck provides an in-depth look at the goals and lives of Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. The book, which will be published in 2020, provides insight into MBS's rise to prominence, his unwavering quest for worldwide influence, and the intricate relationships that surround Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, and the international scene.

The writers start by giving a thorough overview of the geopolitical environment and the House of Saud's past. They explore the complex network of power conflicts, alliances, and oil dynamics that have molded Saudi Arabia's history. The story then turns to MBS's ascent to prominence and his strategic attempts to usurp power as King Salman's favorite son.

The book's thorough analysis of MBS's foreign and domestic policy is one of its strongest points. The subtitle, *Blood and Oil*, sums together both Saudi Arabia's long-standing reliance on oil earnings and the brutality with which MBS works to protect and advance the kingdom's interests. The authors adeptly maneuver through the intricacies of Saudi Arabia's endeavors to broaden its economic base and the obstacles presented by MBS's lofty plan, Vision 2030, which aims to revolutionize the Saudi economy.

The contentious events surrounding the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen occupy a large chunk of the book. A detailed overview of the Yemeni conflict is given by Hope and Scheck, who also explain the military tactics, humanitarian issues, and reactions of the international community. The writers examine MBS's involvement in the Yemeni conflict and present it as a crucial part of his larger geopolitical goals.

Blood and Oil does not hold back while exploring the complex network of ties that exist between Saudi Arabia and its allies, particularly the US. The writers examine the relationships with US administrations, highlighting the difficulties in striking a balance between geopolitical objectives, human rights issues, and economic relationships. The book focuses on the careful

¹ Mphil Scholar in International Relations

balancing act between major world powers and a Saudi government that wants to establish its supremacy internationally.

The narrative's ability to humanize MBS while closely examining his behavior is one of its main advantages. They present an image of a youthful, aspirational leader who is struggling with the fallout from his autocratic ways while striving to modernize Saudi Arabia. The book sheds light on MBS's relationships, decision-making procedures, and the inner workings of the Saudi royal family in addition to offering insights into his personality.

The writers also examine how MBS's policies have affected Saudi society, paying special attention to the movement for social change. The book depicts the changes in Saudi Arabian society, from the removal of the prohibition on women driving to the loosening of entertainment regulations. It does, however, continue to critique the authoritarian tactics used to quell dissent, illustrating the nuanced interactions between modernization and repression.

As the story progresses, *Blood and Oil* explores MBS's involvement in regional crises and his encounters with rivals, taking readers beyond Saudi Arabia's boundaries. The book offers a sophisticated comprehension of the proxy conflicts, the embargo on Qatar, and the tensions with Iran that have influenced the political climate in the Middle East.

Some critics contend that although the writers give a convincing and thoroughly researched account, the book might benefit from a deeper examination of specific geopolitical settings. Additionally, as events continue to unfold, a complete analysis of MBS's evolving role on the global stage may require revisions beyond the book's 2020 release date.

In summary, *Blood and Oil* makes a substantial contribution to our knowledge of Middle Eastern geopolitics today. The story by Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck deftly handles the complex power dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and worldwide ramifications of MBS's leadership. For readers who are interested in the intricacies of Saudi Arabia, oil politics, or the changing nature of power in the twenty-first century, the book is an extensive and easily readable resource.