

ARAB NEWS

King to pray in Mecca

Mosque renegades smashed; 135 killed

Regime collapses after five-decade rule

Syrians wake up to new reality led by ITFS

Assad and family in Russia, granted asylum

Prevent Syria from falling into disarray, KSA

Israel takes over Gaza, offers zone

King receives message from N. Yemen leader

U.N. Council urges Iran to release U.S. hostages

NEW DAWN

ASSAD OUSTED

VISION 2030

Arab news

King: We together will build a better future

Syrians at home and refugees abroad experienced a historic day on Sunday, as they awoke to news of the collapse of the Assad regime that had ruled the country for more than five decades.

Forces led by the Islamists, the National Front for the Liberation of Syria (NFS) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) overtook the capital, Damascus, on Sunday.

CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

The end of Sudan's 30-year military rule

Saudi Arabia highlights urban sustainability vision at forum

Development Goals

Arab News

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

Sunday, April 20, 2025
Shawwal 22, 1446
www.arabnews.com

Terror strikes

Thousands die as planes crash into WTC towers

Major cities turn into eerie ghost towns

Bus crashes in U.S.

Al-Qaeda leader Bin Laden is killed

Obama is elected president

9/11 attacks

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

50

ANNIVERSARY

Recounting the stories that changed the region over the past fifty years

TH

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

Bin Laden's death

Obama's election

9/11 anniversary

Fahd visits campus today

120 Marines, 20 French killed

Bomb-laden trucks reduce 2 headquarters to rubble

Arap Mo'i arrives

Iraqis using missiles deep inside Iran

White House suspects Iran

Saud expresses sadness

Gunman held at Reagan golf course

Reconciliation talks set Oct. 31

Massacre shock

White House suspects Iran

Saud expresses sadness

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9/11 anniversary

ARAB NEWS: HISTORY, ON A DAILY BASIS

Newspapers, as has often been said, write 'the first rough draft of history'

Over the 50 years since it was founded in Jeddah on April 20, 1975, Arab News has had the privilege of documenting one of the most significant periods in the history of the region. Launched exactly one week after the start of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, by the end of that decade Arab News had borne witness to three more seismic events — the Iranian revolution, the siege of Makkah and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Each of the following decades claimed their own often bloody place in the history books — seemingly endless terrorist attacks; the Gulf wars; the rise, fall, and

rise again of the Taliban; the Arab Spring; the rise and fall of Daesh; the horrors of Oct. 7; the even greater horrors visited upon Gaza and Lebanon; and the sudden collapse of the Assad regime in Syria. We witnessed the founding of the GCC; the flight of the first Saudi astronaut; the Saudi peace plan that ended the agony of Lebanon's civil war; the unveiling of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 blueprint and the sweeping reforms that are transforming Saudi Arabia today. Today's news is, of course, the rough draft of history. We have taken great pride in documenting our times, and we look forward to covering the next half century, and the history it will make.

TIMELINE

1975 | 1978 | 1989 | 1991 | 2002 | 2008 | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2024 | 2025



Arab News, the first English-language newspaper to be produced in Saudi Arabia, is founded in Jeddah by brothers Hisham and Mohammed Ali Hafiz, owners of the Saudi Research and Marketing Company. The first issue, a 16-page tabloid produced in a small Jeddah garage, is published on April 20, 1975.



Arab News, launched as a tabloid, becomes a broadsheet.



Prince Ahmad bin Salman becomes chairman of the SRMG, leading its growth as the region's largest media group.



Arab News is the first newspaper to enter newly liberated Kuwait.



Prince Faisal bin Salman assumes the SRMG chairmanship, following the death of his brother Prince Ahmad.



Arab News joins Facebook, where it currently has almost 8 million followers.



Prince Turki bin Salman succeeds Faisal bin Salman as chairman of SRMG, after Prince Faisal's appointment as governor of the Madinah province.



Arab News begins collaboration with YouGov, the world's leading online polling firm, to produce a regular series of surveys capturing the pulse and changing dynamics of the Arab world. One of its most recent reports looked at the attitudes of Arab Americans in the run-up to the US presidential election in November 2024.



Arab News opens overseas bureaus in London and Pakistan.



At the inaugural Arab Women Forum at King Abdullah Economic City in Riyadh on April 20, Arab News announces plan to have a 50-50 gender-balanced newsroom by 2020 — a target that it would successfully hit.



On Aug. 12, Arab News launches its Hajj coverage and becomes first Saudi newspaper to cover the pilgrimage with an all-female team of journalists, from its Riyadh, Jeddah and Dubai bureaus.



March: Arab News launches a new series, Preachers of Hate, exposing hate-mongers from all religions.



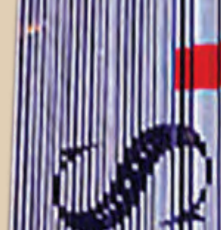
On Oct. 13 Arab News launches its Research & Studies Unit, to produce specialist in-depth reports, manage the paper's relationship with polling firm YouGov and run its long-form interactive Deep Dives.



Arab News partners with the Future Investment Initiative Institute to co-produce expert panel discussions, surveys and white papers examining how the regional media industry can survive digital disruption.



On Feb. 18 Arab News launches The Mayman Show, a podcast hosted by journalist Hussam Al-Mayman.



On Feb. 8 Arab News launched its online Pakistan edition as part of its digital expansion program.



On Nov. 28, Arab News launches its first talk-show, Frankly Speaking, initially hosted by Frank Kane. The YouTube-based show is now led by news anchor Katie Jensen.



2021 Arab News is selected as official media partner for the Saudi national cricket team.



With eight wins at the 2025 European Newspaper Awards, Arab News' total reaches 153 awards since its 2018 relaunch. Recognition includes the Deep Dive series, special coverage design, and illustrations and infographics.

THE COVER

Illustration for Arab News by: Mr Xerty

- Featured moments:
1. Bashar Assad ousted from Syria
 2. 9/11 terror strike
 3. MBS unveils Vision 2030
 4. Barack Obama presidency and his Middle East policy
 5. Camp David Accords

6. The Siege of Makkah
7. The Arab Spring
8. The fall of Muammar Qaddafi
9. The rise and fall of Daesh caliphate
10. Oct. 7 attacks and the war on Gaza
11. Donald Trump presidency and his foreign policy
12. Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Israel

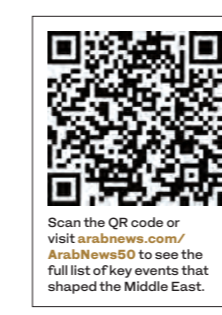
13. FIFA World Cup in Qatar
14. Oslo Accords
15. First Intifada
16. Lebanon's civil war
17. US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan
18. The lift on the driving ban for Saudi women
19. Second Intifada
20. King Salman ascends to the throne
21. The Sabra and



22. COVID-19 pandemic
23. The Iranian Revolution
24. Kuwait war
25. The fall of Saddam Hussein
26. The rise of the Houthis in Yemen
27. The Taif agreement
28. The Syrian civil war

29. The bombing of US Marines in Beirut
30. End of Omar Bashir's rule in Sudan
31. The assassination of Rafik Hariri
32. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
33. Saudi prince's journey to space
34. Osama bin Laden's Saudi citizenship revoked

35. King Abdullah II of Jordan ascends the throne
36. The Hebron Agreement
37. The Iran-Iraq war
38. The founding of the Gulf Cooperation Council
39. The bombing of Khobar Towers
40. Nawal El-Moutawekel's Olympic win



Scan the QR code or visit arabnews.com/ArabNews50 to see the full list of key events that shaped the Middle East.

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF



AHMAD MAHMOUD
Apr. 20, 1975 – Oct. 1, 1977



MOHAMMED ALI HAFIZ
Oct. 1, 1977 – Oct. 1, 1979



MOHAMMED AL-SHIBANI
Oct. 1, 1979 – Apr. 30, 1982



KHALED ALMAEENA
May 1, 1982 – Feb. 20, 1993



FAROUK LUQMAN
Feb. 25, 1993 – June 1, 1993



DR. ABDOLQADER TASH
Jun. 2, 1993 – Feb. 28, 1998



KHALED ALMAEENA
Mar. 1, 1998 – Oct. 8, 2011



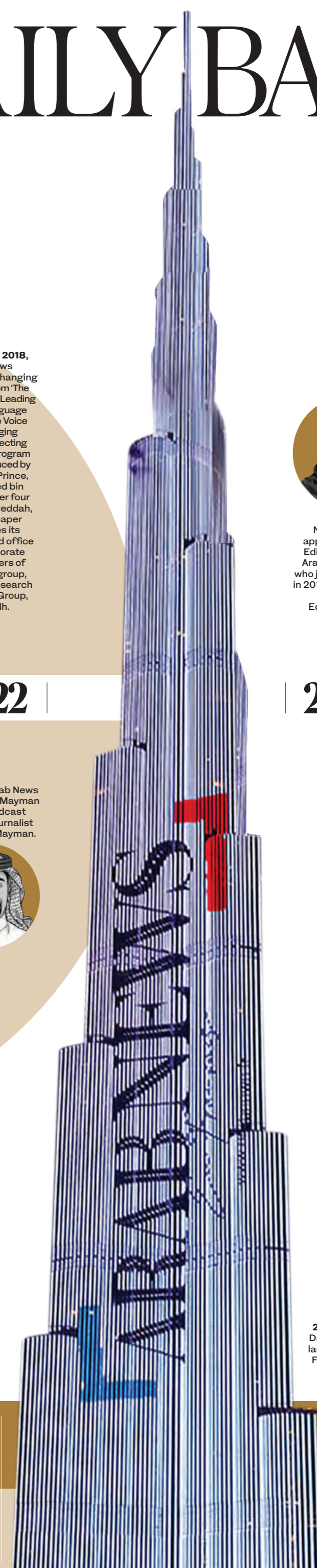
ABDULWAHAB AL-FAIZ
Oct. 9, 2011 – Jan. 4, 2013



MOHAMMED FAHAD AL-HARTHI
Jan. 5, 2013 – Sept. 26, 2016



FAISAL J. ABBAS
Sept. 27, 2016 – Present



On Jan. 17, Noor Nugali is appointed Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Arab News. Nugali, who joined Arab News in 2017, was previously Assistant Editor-in-Chief.

On April 4, 2018, Arab News relaunched, changing its motto from 'The Middle East's Leading English Language Daily' to 'The Voice of a Changing Region', reflecting the reform program being introduced by the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. After four decades in Jeddah, the newspaper also moves its editorial head office to the corporate headquarters of its owning group, the Saudi Research and Media Group, in Riyadh.



The SRMG board appoints Dr. Ghassan bin Abdulrahman Al-Shibli (left) as chairman. Later in the year, he is replaced by Eng. Abdulrahman Ibrahim Al-Ruwaita (right), who oversees the company's rebranding to Saudi Research & Media Group and is re-elected in 2021 and 2024 for a new three-year term.



The Board of Directors at SRMG, the publisher of Arab News, appoints Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al-Saud as chairman.



In 2020, Jomana R. Alarashid is appointed CEO of SRMG, marking a historic first for a Saudi Arabian woman.



In partnership with the Makkah-based Muslim World League, Arab News launches a free Hajj app, packed with useful information for pilgrims and enabled with an optional tracker that allows pilgrims to share their location in real time with friends and families.



On June 24, Arab News senior editor Mo Gannon is one of the first women to drive in Saudi Arabia after a decades-long ban on women driving was ended by Royal decree.



On July 14, 2020, Bastille Day, Arab News launches digital French edition



1979
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND THE SIEGE OF MAKKAH RESHAPED THE MIDDLE EAST

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1987
WHEN INTIFADA DEFINED THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Page 14



1990
HOW SADDAM'S INVASION OF KUWAIT FRAGMENTED THE ARAB WORLD

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2016
SAUDI VISION 2030 HERALDED THE ARRIVAL OF CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN

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FIRST SAUDI ENGLISH DAILY

Arab News

PUBLISHED BY SAUDI RESEARCH AND MARKETING COMPANY

Vol. 1, Issue No. One JEDDAH SUNDAY APRIL 20, 1975 JAMADI-ETH-THANI 9, 1395



PRICE: ONE SRL.

Arab Summit in Riyadh

FAHD RECEIVES MARWAN & NUMEIRI'S ENVOYS

RIYADH, April 19: Crown Prince Fahd, first deputy premier and Minister of the Interior, received here this morning President Sadat's Foreign Affairs Secretary Dr. Ashraf Marwan, it was reported today.

Later, CR Fahd also received Salim Issa, Sudanese President's envoy.

STOP PRESS

BEIRUT, April 19: (AP) —A huge fire broke out to night at Beirut Port, lighting up the entire harbour area.

As dozens of fire engines raced toward the scene, the fire brigade and police said the causes of the fire could not be determined immediately.

From a half-mile distance the fire appeared to be raging in the warehouse area north of the Piers near modern multi-million dollar Grain Silos.

Middle East to Get Top Priority

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

A limited Arab Summit conference will be held in Riyadh tomorrow, informed sources revealed yesterday.

The summit will be attended by His Majesty King Khaled ibn Abdul Aziz, President Mohammed Anwar Al-Sadat of Egypt, President Hafez Al-Assad of Syria and Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Earlier yesterday, His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan, who flew in here on Friday, discussed with His Majesty King Khaled ibn Abdul Aziz, the Middle East conflict in preparation for the summit.

King Hussein had arrived, here at the start of an Arabian Gulf tour. Observers said his talks with His Majesty Khaled ibn Abdul Aziz were designed to coordinate the Arab stand against Israel.

The conference will be the first Arab summit to be held since the death of His Majesty King Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz, who had dedicated his life to Arab unity in the service of the Palestinian question.

Observers see the forthcoming conference as further consolidation of Saudi diplomacy and the energetic role it is playing in securing Arab solidarity in partnership with the confrontation states and the PLO.

The conference is expected to award top priority to Arab plans regarding the Middle East problem and will seek to achieve complete unity of thought and action.



HM King Khaled meeting with HM King Hussein Saudi Jordanian Talks

RIYADH, April 19: Talks were held here this morning between HM King Khaled and HM King Hussein of Jordan, according to Saudi Press Agency.

The talks were attended by Premier Zaid Rifai, Prince Raad, Minister of

Royal Court, Maj. General Awad Khalidi, Military Secretary, and the Jordanian ambassador, on the Jordanian side, on the Saudi side there were Crown Prince Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz, first deputy premier and minister of the Interior, Prince Mosaad ibn Abdul Rahman, Minister of Finance and National Economy, Prince Abdallah ibn Abdul Aziz, second deputy premier and National Guards Commander, Prince Sultan ibn Abdul Aziz, Minister of Defence and Aviation, Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Rashad Faroun, HM's advisor, Sheikh Abdul Rahman Aba El Kheil, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, and Sheikh Ahmed Al Kihimi, Saudi Ambassador to Jordan.

King Hussein and Crown Prince Fahd held talks this evening on issues of bilateral interest with the attendance of the two delegations members, the reports added.

In the evening, King Khaled entertained King Hussein and his delegation to a state dinner at which Crown Prince Fahd and members of Saudi delegation to the talks, were also present.

Survey Of Western Provinces Needed

JEDDAH, April 19: Prince Ahmed ibn Abdul Aziz, deputy governor of Mecca, presides over a meeting due to be held on Sunday to put the final touches on arrangements concerning the departure of members of committees set up by the Third Conference of Provinces associated with Mecca Governorate, for Taif, Mecca, towns and villages

of the Western coast to carry out a preparatory survey of these provinces needs of development projects, it was reported today.

Technical reports have been prepared, SPA added, about these areas covering a long range of development schemes.

KING HUSSEIN RECEIVES MARWAN

RIYADH, April 19: HM King Hussein of Jordan received in audience here today President Sadat's Foreign Affairs Secretary Dr. Ashraf Marwan with the presence of Premier Zaid Rifai who earlier received Marwan immediately after his arrival in Riyadh late last night.

King Hussein is currently on a visit to the Kingdom with a highly powered delegation since last Friday.

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50TH
ANNIVERSARY

This was the first Arab News front page, 50 years ago today

In this special edition, the key events of those five decades, and how we covered them

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST – 1985



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News' front page captured Prince Sultan's journey, hailed in the Arab world as a 'proud day.'



Clouds of exhaust blanket Launch Pad 39A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center as the space shuttle Discovery lifts off for the first time in August 1984. NASA

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi prince's pioneering journey into space

Prince Sultan's NASA 1985 space shuttle mission inspired a generation of Arabs, including Hazza Al-Mansouri, the first Emirati in space

Sherouk Zakaria Riyadh

On June 17, 1985, Saudi Arabia made history when the NASA space shuttle Discovery blasted off from Cape Canaveral in Florida on its fifth mission, carrying the first Arab, Muslim and royal astronaut — and with him, the dawn of a new era of Arab space exploration.

Prince Sultan bin Salman, a 28-year-old Royal Saudi Air Force pilot, spent seven days conducting experiments in space as part of an international crew of seven. During Discovery's voyage, the prince monitored the deployment of Arabsat-1B, the second satellite launched by the Arab Satellite Communications Organization, designed to boost telephone and television communication between Arab nations. Saudi Arabia's leadership in the regional space-exploration sector began at that moment, setting the stage for the remarkable progress that followed and has shaped its vision.

Confidence in the Kingdom's ability to spearhead the Arab world's journey into space was evident when Arab League member states nominated Prince Sultan, the second son of Saudi King Salman, as a payload specialist to travel aboard the space shuttle. The Kingdom had played a pivotal role in the

Arab League's founding of satellite communications company Arabsat. Its first satellite, Arabsat-1A, was launched into space on a French rocket in February 1985.

During 10 weeks of intensive training in Saudi Arabia and with NASA in the US, Prince Sultan made the transition from Royal Saudi Air Force pilot to an astronaut ready for a mission on which he would be the youngest person on the crew.

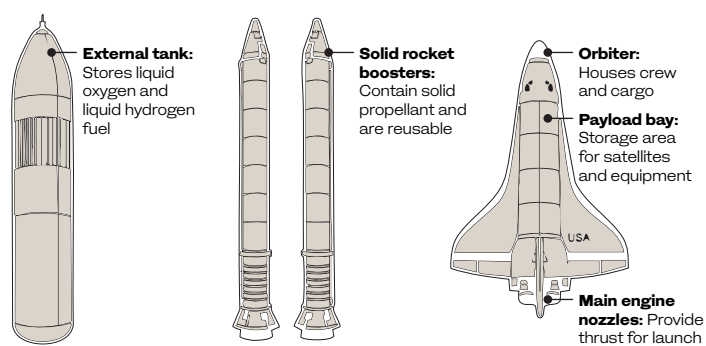
He returned to a hero's welcome in Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world when the space shuttle touched down safely at Edwards Air Force Base in California at 6:11 a.m. local time on June 24, 1985, and inspired a generation of Arabs to turn their gaze toward the stars.

His own mission in the space sector was far from over, however. Upon his return, the prince was promoted to the rank of major in the Royal Saudi Air Force and, when Saudi Arabia decided to accelerate its space-exploration endeavors as part of Vision 2030, there was no better choice of chairperson for the Saudi Space Commission when it was established in 2018.

Prince Sultan's efforts to develop a new generation of Saudi astronauts quickly began to bear fruit. And on

Back home, Prince Sultan bin Salman was greeted as a hero and appointed a major in the Royal Saudi Air Force. NASA

NASA'S SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY



Source: Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum

ARAB NEWS



May 21, 2023, the Kingdom celebrated another milestone in its journey into space when the first female Saudi and Arab astronaut took flight.

Rayyanah Barnawi was joined by Ali Al-Qarni, the second Saudi man in space after Prince Sultan, on the first mission of the Saudi Space Commission's Human Space Flight program. A month later, the commission was renamed the Saudi Space Agency by a Cabinet resolution. In 2020, Saudi Arabia announced the allocation of \$2.1 billion to its space program as part of the diversification efforts outlined in Vision 2030. Two years later, the Saudi space sector generated \$400 million in revenue, with the figure expected to reach \$2.2 billion by 2030. Beyond Saudi Arabia, Prince Sultan's pioneering

journey into space inspired Arabs elsewhere in the region.

Two years later, in July 1987, Muhammed Faris from Syria was a research cosmonaut on an eight-day, three-person mission aboard a Soviet spacecraft to the Mir space station. Hazza Al-Mansouri, the third Arab in space, who in September 2019 became the first Emirati astronaut and the first Arab to set foot on the International Space Station, also took inspiration from Prince Sultan.

"Al-Mansouri's passion for space and desire to pave the way for future generations to explore it had been inspired by Prince Sultan's 1985 mission," Mohammed Nasser Al-Ahbab, a former director general of the UAE Space Agency, wrote in 2020 in an article marking the 45th anniversary of Arab News.

"As a young student, the future astronaut saw a photo of Prince Sultan, the first Arab in space, in his fourth-grade schoolbook — a turning point in his life." As the Arab region continues to expand its projects and investments in the space sector, the role of the Saudi prince in reminding younger generations to reach for the stars will always be remembered.

Sherouk Zakaria is a UAE-based journalist at Arab News, with more than a decade of experience in media and strategic communication.

Key Dates



JUNE 17, 1985

Prince Sultan becomes first Arab in space after he blasts off from Cape Canaveral on the space shuttle Discovery.



JUNE 24, 1985

After orbiting Earth 111 times and traveling more than 4.6 million km, Discovery lands at Edwards Air Force Base, California.



JULY 22, 1987

Muhammed Faris from Syria becomes second Arab in space, flies to the Soviet Mir space station.



DEC. 27, 2018

Prince Sultan appointed chairperson of newly established Saudi Space Commission.



MAY 21, 2023

First Saudi and Arab female astronaut, Rayyanah Barnawi, and Ali Al-Qarni, the second Saudi man in space after Prince Sultan, visit the ISS on a 10-day mission.

JUNE 14, 2023

Cabinet resolution changes name of Saudi Space Commission to Saudi Space Agency.

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 1986



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News reported Iran's arrest and expulsion of US national security adviser Robert McFarlane.

IRAN

The Iran-Contra affair

The scandal serves as stark reminder of how unchecked power, secrecy and political ambition can quickly undermine democracy

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami Riyadh

The 1986 Iran-Contra affair remains one of the most controversial episodes in modern US history, revealing a complex web of clandestine operations, legal violations and political intrigue.

The scandal, which unfolded during Ronald Reagan's presidency, revolved around covert sales of arms to Iran and the illegal diversion of the profits to fund right-wing Contra rebels in Nicaragua. It challenged the principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law in democratic governance.

The backdrop to the events was shaped by Cold War tensions and volatile Middle Eastern geopolitics. On May 17, 1985, Graham Fuller, the CIA's national intelligence officer for the Near East and South Asia, wrote a memorandum to CIA Director William Casey on the options for US policy toward Iran.

"Events are moving largely against our interests, and we have few palatable alternatives. The US has almost no cards to play; the USSR has many," Fuller wrote.

To provide the US with "some leverage in the race for influence in Tehran," Fuller suggested Washington should "remove all restrictions on sales — including military — to Iran."

In Nicaragua, meanwhile, the Sandinista government, which in 1979 overthrew a US-backed political system, aligned itself with socialist policies and the Soviet Union. This development alarmed the Reagan administration, which supported the Contra rebels, a group accused of widespread human rights abuses.

Simultaneously, the US faced complex challenges in the Middle East. Iran was engaged in a protracted war with Iraq (1980-1988), and Washington sought to limit Soviet influence in the region while securing the release of US hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon.

Despite its public stance of refusal to negotiate with terrorists, and its own arms embargo on Tehran, the Reagan administration saw an opportunity to leverage arms sales as a means of influence. It wanted to secure the release of US hostages held by Hezbollah in Lebanon, and attempt to open a channel for dialogue with more-moderate elements in Iran.

The Iran-Contra scandal involved two distinct yet interconnected operations. Firstly, senior US officials facilitated the secret sale of arms to Iran, ostensibly as a



Main: Lt. Col. Oliver North was summoned to testify before a joint congressional hearing on the Iran-Contra scandal. **Below:** Protestors gather outside the venue of an Oliver North speech. Getty Images

gesture of goodwill to moderate factions within the Iranian government and to secure the release of US hostages. This violated an arms embargo imposed by Washington on Iran, and contradicted Reagan's public statements condemning terrorism.

Secondly, profits from these arms sales were diverted to fund the Contras in Nicaragua. This contravened the Boland Amendment, a series of laws passed by Congress between 1982 and 1984 that explicitly prohibited US military assistance for the group.

The plan was orchestrated by a small group of officials within the National Security Council, including Lt. Col. Oliver North, with the knowledge and support of senior figures such as National Security Adviser John Poindexter.

At the same time, the CIA and the Department of Defense conducted Operation Tipped



Kettle, which involved secret negotiations with Israel on the transfer of armaments captured from the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon to the CIA and, ultimately, to the Contras.

In May 1983, Israel duly handed over several hundred tonnes of weapons, valued at \$10 million. This was repeated in 1984.

In 1985, Israel began shipping US weapons to

Iran, in an attempt to curry favor with Tehran and pave the way for the release of American hostages, with the approval of Poindexter's predecessor as Reagan's national security adviser, Robert McFarlane.

On Nov. 2, 1986, within days of the delivery of 500 antitank missiles to Iran, US hostage David Jacobsen was released by his captors in Beirut. North anticipated the release of other hostages would follow but this did not happen.

In response to media inquiries, White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan publicly acknowledged, for the first time, the ongoing negotiations with Iran.

The Iran-Contra affair fully came to light in late 1986, after Lebanese publication Ash-Shiraa revealed details of the arms deals with Iran. On Nov. 3, 1986, it published an account of a secret visit to Tehran by McFarlane in May 1986. Subsequent investigations by journalists and Congressional committees

uncovered the broader plan, which raised serious questions about executive overreach, the subversion of Congressional authority, and the ethical conduct of government officials. It sparked outrage among lawmakers and the public.

Televised hearings in 1987 captivated the country, with key figures, including North, testifying about the operation. While some viewed North as a patriot simply following orders, others considered him emblematic of an administration willing to circumvent the law to achieve its goals.

The hearings also revealed a culture of secrecy and deception within the Reagan administration, damaging the president's credibility and eroding public trust in state institutions.

The fallout from the Iran-Contra scandal included several criminal prosecutions. North, Poindexter and other officials were charged with crimes such as obstruction of justice, conspiracy and lying to Congress.

The affair also raised questions about the extent of presidential knowledge and oversight, as Reagan maintained he was unaware of the transfer of funds to the Contras. Politically, the scandal tarnished his legacy, though his approval ratings remained high until the end of his presidency in 1989.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami is head of the International Institute for Iranian Studies (Rasanah).

Key Dates



1983

US and Israeli intelligence organizations collude in Operation Tipped Kettle, which involves the transfer to Contra rebels in Nicaragua of weapons seized from the PLO.

AUG. 20, 1985

With US agreement, Israel sends first of several shipments of American-made armaments to Iran in a bid to secure release of US hostages in Lebanon.



DEC. 4, 1985

Lt. Col. Oliver North of the US National Security Council proposes direct sale of armaments to Iran, with the profits to go to the Contras in Nicaragua.



NOV. 3, 1986

Lebanese weekly Ash-Shiraa exposes the illegal Iran arms deal.



MAY 4, 1989

North convicted on three charges relating to the Iran-Contra affair. In September 1991, all charges are dismissed on appeal.

DEC. 24, 1992

President George H.W. Bush pardons the former secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, and five other defendants facing trial over the Iran-Contra affair, saying it is 'time for the country to move on.'

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 1993



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News marked the Oslo Accords signing with a three-page special, prematurely declaring 'Pact heralds dawn of peace in Mideast.'



US President Bill Clinton stands between PLO leader Yasser Arafat (right) and Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin as they shake hands for the first time after signing the Oslo Accords. AFP

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The Oslo Accords and the broken promises of peace

The interim agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization aimed to establish a framework for peaceful coexistence but were derailed by extremist violence

Ray Hanania Chicago

As a Palestinian, I grew up in the shadow of the pain and suffering of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israeli violence during the 1947 and 1948 war forced my father's family to flee their homes in West Jerusalem and live for more than two years in the squalor of a refugee camp in Jordan, until my father could bring them to the US in 1951.

My mother and her family in Bethlehem were forced to suffer through constant Israeli military assaults after the war, even though they lived under Jordanian control. They were uncertain whether they could survive, so eventually they fled to the welcoming arms and sanctuary of the diaspora, settling in Colombia and Venezuela.

But they lost so much. To this day, more than 10 acres of my family land, on my mother's side, adjacent to the Israel settlement of Gilo, remains under Israeli control and outside our reach, simply because we are Christian Palestinians and not Jews.

This cumulative weight of suffering was lifted from me as I sat and watched my hero, Palestine Liberation Organization

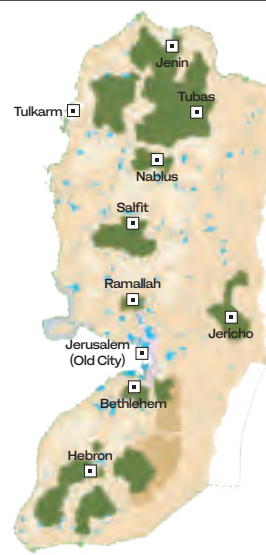
leader Yasser Arafat, shake the hand of our oppressor, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, during the signing of the Oslo Accords peace agreement at the White House on Sept. 13, 1993.

Yet we were willing to set all of that aside for an Israeli who was willing, for the first time, to recognize Palestinians as a people; a people that had been denied recognition by all of his predecessors, including Golda Meir, a Milwaukee schoolteacher who became an immigrant prime minister and once cruelly declared that the Palestinians "did not exist."

On Sept. 13, 1993, we set aside the pain of the past and hoped to move forward thanks to a new beginning on "a great occasion of history and hope," as President Bill Clinton declared at the beginning of the momentous event.

The Oslo Peace Accords included recognition of certain

ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF THE WEST BANK (2025)



Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ARAB NEWS

rights on both sides. The Palestinians openly recognized Israel's "right to exist," considered a major concession at the time, while Israel recognized only that Palestinians would be granted a process leading to limited self-rule. Israel did not agree to recognize Palestinian statehood under the accords, instead committing only to a vaguely defined system of Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories, and to withdrawing its

armed forces from much, but not all, of the West Bank.

It was to be the foundation for a promise of a process that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state within five years. But this was never written down or documented. It was only interpreted.

And yet, even as limited as it was, the agreement was an overwhelming relief to many, including my family. My wife is Jewish, and we subsequently traveled through Israel and Palestine, in 1994 and 1995. Although the agreement did not spell out the granting of true freedom, it did create an

atmosphere of hope. Palestinians and Israelis, for the first time, got the chance to know each other as potential friends, not enemies.

But the hopes for peace promised by the Oslo Accords were quickly cut short, in a large part because of the violence committed by Israeli fanatics, which provoked Palestinian outrage and sparked counterviolence.

And so the peace quickly unraveled. Israeli and Palestinian extremists, both of whom opposed any form of compromise, escalated their violence. Eventually, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu took control in Israel and quickly peeled back the Oslo promises.

But I will never forget one memory from the time before the hopes were dashed. I was driving with my wife through the Jordan Valley in the summer of 1995 when we arrived at an Israeli checkpoint. The soldiers there handed us a flower and were curious about the idea that a Palestinian and a Jew would marry.

"You're the future," one soldier said to us with a smile.

It was one of the last smiles I would see on the face of an Israeli soldier.

Ray Hanania is an award-winning former Chicago City Hall political reporter. He is a columnist for Arab News and hosts the Ray Hanania Radio Show.

Key Dates



OCT. 30-NOV. 1, 1991

At the Madrid Peace Conference, US Secretary of State James Baker invites Israeli officials to meet representatives of several Arab countries to pursue peace and establish self-rule for Palestinians. Israel objects to direct talks with the PLO. Palestinians from the occupied West Bank partner with Jordanian delegation to explore peace prospects.



JULY 13, 1992

Yitzhak Rabin is elected prime minister, vowing to make progress in peace negotiations and the establishment of Palestinian self-rule. He enters into secret, direct talks with the PLO in Norway.



SEPT. 13, 1993

US President Bill Clinton hosts the signing ceremony of the Oslo Accords. Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat sign the Declaration of Principles, marking a historic step towards peace in the Middle East. The agreement recognizes the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, with the PLO renouncing terrorism and recognizing Israel's right to exist.



OCT. 14, 1994

The Nobel Committee awards Nobel Peace Prize to Arafat, Rabin and Israel's foreign minister, Shimon Peres for the Oslo Accords.



50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST – 1994



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News provided six-page coverage of Osama bin Laden's assassination, headlined 'Bin Laden's luck finally runs out.'

SAUDI ARABIA

Osama bin Laden stripped of Saudi citizenship

Decision was a sign of the Kingdom's firm stance against terrorism, which continues until today

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami Riyadh

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 created an environment conducive to the rise of terrorist organizations.

Osama bin Laden, a Saudi-born dissident, emerged as a key figure during this period, exploiting the circumstances of the invasion, and his own financial resources, to enhance his position as founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, one of the largest armed groups that promoted jihadist ideology.

Bin Laden sought to target not only the West, but also Islamic countries that did not comply with his radical positions and views.

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. Encouraged by what he perceived as his accomplishments during the war, he began preaching in mosques, inciting action against regional governments and calling for jihad, or a "holy war" against several countries.

This stark divergence in the positions of Bin Laden and the Saudi government caused a rift, resulting in political and security restrictions on his movements, and efforts to curb his power and interference in Saudi affairs at both the regional and international levels.

Recognizing the serious threat his extremist ideology posed to national and regional security, in 1991 Saudi Arabia expelled him from the country. Bin Laden subsequently moved to Sudan, where he continued to expand his group's activities, including its involvement in global conflicts and acts of terrorism.

In 1994, Saudi Arabia revoked his citizenship and froze his assets, forcing him to rely on external sources for funding. In 1996, he moved his operation to Afghanistan after he was expelled from Sudan following US pressure on the country's government. Riyadh began coordinating with allied

nations in an attempt to track Bin Laden's movements and contain his terrorist activities.

The revocation of his citizenship reflected the Kingdom's pragmatic recognition of the threat he posed to both national and global security. At the time, though, Saudi authorities faced significant criticism from some international media outlets and Western human rights organizations, which viewed the decision to revoke citizenship as a breach of human rights, portraying it as a repressive measure to apply to individuals.

Despite the criticism, the Saudis remained firm in



Above: Osama bin Laden leads shooting training at Al-Qaeda's Al-Faruq base in Afghanistan. Left: The former Saudi citizen was expelled from Sudan in 1996 amid American pressure on the country.
Video grab/AFP

their stance, regarding it as essential to distance the Kingdom from a figure who had become controversial worldwide, and to remove any association with the radical ideologies he promoted.

Additionally, they sought to send a clear message to the world that neither Bin Laden nor his actions represented the beliefs of the Saudi state or its people.

Seven years after his citizenship was revoked, when it became clear that he and his Al-Qaeda operatives were responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the US, the voices advocating for his human rights fell silent.

By expelling Bin Laden and adopting a strong stance against extremist ideologies, Saudi Arabia had emerged as a reliable partner in the global war on terrorism, through the restriction of financial aid to individuals and organizations suspected of supporting terrorism, and increased counterterrorism cooperation with international partners.

In the three decades since then, it has become evident that Saudi Arabia's handling of Bin Laden was not an isolated case but part of a broader strategy aimed at eradicating extremism at its roots. Successive Saudi leaderships have upheld a firm, zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism and worked to eliminate

extremist elements within the Kingdom. This included shutting down sources of jihadist and extremist financing, restrictions on financial aid to individuals or institutions suspected of supporting terrorism, and the implementation of internal programs to combat extremist ideology.

The pivotal international role Saudi Arabia plays in efforts to combat terrorism was evident as recently as last year when authorities in the Kingdom said they warned German counterparts about Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen and his extremist views.

The warnings fell on deaf ears, however, and on Dec. 20, 2024, Al-Abdulmohsen drove his car into crowds at a Christmas market in Magdeburg in an attack that killed six people and injured at least 299.

In March 2019, 25 years after revoking Bin Laden's citizenship, Saudi authorities did the same to one of his sons, Hamza. He sought to revive Al-Qaeda, having embraced many of his father's extremist ideologies, including incitement to hatred and violence, and the recruitment of young Muslims to join extremist groups. He directed his rhetoric against Arab regimes and the world at large.

Saudi authorities announced their decision the day after the US State Department offered a \$1 million reward for information leading to the capture of Hamza, describing him as "an emerging Al-Qaeda leader."

On Aug. 1, 2019, US media reported that Hamza was killed in an American airstrike. Citing unnamed US intelligence officials, the reports offered little information about the location or date of his death. In a brief statement on Sept. 14, President Donald Trump confirmed Hamza had been killed in a US "counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region." He gave no further details. Al-Qaeda did not confirm the death.

In September last year, media reports claimed that intelligence documents suggest Hamza might have survived the attack thought to have killed him and was secretly running Al-Qaeda operations in Afghanistan with his brother, Abdullah.

The accuracy of the reports remains unclear but the uncertainty means the question of whether Al-Qaeda's threat to the region and the West is truly over has yet to be resolved.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami is head of the International Institute for Iranian Studies (Rasanah).

Key Dates

1957

Osama bin Laden is born in Riyadh, one of more than 50 children of a millionaire businessman. Accounts of his exact date of birth vary.



DEC. 26, 1979
Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

1988

Bin Laden establishes Al-Qaeda from a network of Arab and other foreign veterans of the US-backed Afghan insurgency against the Soviet Union.

1991

Bin Laden expelled from Saudi Arabia and travels to Sudan.



APRIL 9, 1994

Saudi Arabia, angered by Bin Laden's propaganda against its rulers, revokes his citizenship and freezes his remaining assets in the country.



SEPT. 17, 2001

US President George W. Bush declares Bin Laden 'Wanted: Dead or Alive' for the 9/11 attacks.



MAY 1, 2011

Bin Laden killed in Abbottabad, 60 km north of the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST – 2009



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News' front page covered Obama's Cairo University speech, where he pledged to mend ties with the Arab world.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Obama Doctrine: Good intentions gone bad

Despite key diplomatic wins, Barack Obama's cautious approach drew criticism for major failures in the Middle East and beyond

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami Riyadh

In 2009, the first year of Barack Obama's presidency, a distinctive approach to US foreign policy began to emerge, now often referred to as the "Obama Doctrine."

It was characterized by a pragmatic, multilateral and diplomacy-first strategy that aimed to restore Washington's standing in the world after years of unilateral, aggressive interventions, spearheaded by his predecessor, George W. Bush. At its core, the doctrine sought to redefine US leadership in a multipolar world. It was not apparent in any single document or speech, it was fashioned through a series of policy decisions, speeches and actions after Obama took office.

This rhetoric of engagement marked a departure from the more confrontational policies of the previous administration, particularly in the Middle East.

Obama's speech in Egypt in June 2009 further solidified this approach. Addressing an audience at Cairo University, he underscored his administration's commitment to soft power and diplomacy as tools to address global issues, including terrorism, nuclear proliferation and regional conflicts.

Departing from the discourse on democratization that had become too closely associated with the "war on terror" and the neoconservative ideology that had formed the theoretical framework for the 2003 military intervention in Iraq, Obama instead focused on rebuilding relations with Egypt, as well as "reaching out" to Syria and Iran.

His administration's approach, rooted in engagement with longstanding adversaries, translated into the landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, and was also evident in dealings with Cuba. After Obama's inauguration, diplomatic efforts began in an attempt to thaw relations with Havana, culminating in the reestablishment of diplomatic ties in 2015.

While he was not averse to using military power, his administration sought to limit large-scale interventions, focusing instead on targeted operations and partnerships. The drawdown of US forces in Iraq, announced in February 2009, signaled this shift toward the winding down of protracted wars.

His foreign policy, in response to criticisms of America's previous "go-it-alone" strategy, focused on strengthening ties with NATO and Russia, building alliances with Asia, reengaging with the UN, and taking part in international forums such as the G20 to tackle issues ranging from economic recovery after the 2008 financial crisis, to climate change.

Despite these successes, however, his doctrine would soon prove less effective in the Middle East, where his policies, or absence thereof, drew criticism for undermining Washington's credibility, emboldening adversaries and shaking the confidence of allies.

His military intervention in Libya, which was authorized by the UN Security Council with the aim of protecting protesters from the crack-down by Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi on unrest in 2011, left the country in chaos and under threat from violent extremists.

In a 2016 Fox News interview, Obama admitted that the operation in Libya was the "biggest mistake" of his presidency, for its failure to plan for the aftermath



Above: Michelle and Barack Obama with Saudi Arabia's King Salman during the US president's 2015 visit to the Kingdom. Below: Obama addresses the Muslim world from Cairo University in 2009. AFP

of Qaddafi's ouster. His stance would later be reflected by his inconsistent approach to the Middle East, in particular when Syria descended in civil war in 2012, where his reluctance to intervene led to accusations of complicity in the violence perpetrated by President Bashar Assad's regime.

His hesitant approach was most evident when, in August 2012 he pledged military intervention if Assad used chemical weapons in Syria, describing this as a "red line." A year later, on Aug. 21, 2013, Obama's "red line" was crossed when images of victims emerged as evidence that Assad had used sarin and chlorine gas against towns near Damascus.

In a September 2013 speech, Obama, haunted by a decade of failed wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, backed down from launching air strikes against

the Assad regime in favor of diplomacy, saying: "I've spent four-and-a-half years working to end wars, not to start them."

Instead, he settled for a deal with Russia, later enshrined in UN Resolution 2118, which required Syria to dismantle its stockpiles of chemical weapons and provided some covert military aid for the moderate opposition, to help diffuse the power of Islamist fighters.

Soon, however, that proved not to be enough. Washington's absence from Syria solidified Assad's grip on cities, empowered Iran and Russia in the region, and created a vacuum that allowed Daesh to emerge.

In August 2014, a US president who had once rejected the notion of a "global war on terror" found himself entangled in one. He authorized air strikes on Daesh targets in Iraq and, later, Syria, as he organized an international coalition to combat the terror group.

The rise of Daesh complicated Obama's plans for winding down the US military presence in Iraq. At the same time, it forced him to authorize limited airstrikes in Libya.

The influx of refugees and spillover of repercussions from the civil war in Syria destabilized the country's neighbors, including US security partners such as Jordan and Turkey, and undermined trust in Obama's administration, the cautious approach of which was seen as a missed opportunity to shape the outcome of the war in Syria.

Some viewed the Obama doctrine as appeasing Iran, with the lifting of multilayered sanctions allowing the Islamic Republic to freely trade and receive foreign investment, leading to the regime in Tehran strengthening its proxy networks across the region and its corridor, via Iraq and Syria, to Lebanon.

Overall, the legacy of the doctrine continues to be debated. Some hail it as a necessary recalibration of US foreign policy after the war in Iraq, while others consider it a retreat from leadership, or an overly cautious approach to global challenges.

At a time when the Middle East was undergoing radical transformations, Washington appeared to favor hesitation over initiative, raising questions about the effectiveness of this strategy in achieving regional stability.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami is head of the International Institute for Iranian Studies (Rasanah).

Key Dates



JAN. 20, 2009

Barack Obama takes office as US president; during inaugural address he vows 'a new way forward' with the Muslim world 'based on mutual interest and mutual respect.'



JUNE 4, 2009

He addresses issue of US-Middle East relations during a speech at Cairo University.



DEC. 10, 2009

Obama receives the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for 'extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.'



MARCH 17, 2011

UN Security Council passes Resolution 1973, spearheaded by the Obama administration, which authorizes airstrikes to protect civilians in Libya.



SEPT. 10, 2013

Obama declares his intention not to launch airstrikes against the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad, despite evidence it had used chemical weapons.

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST – 2010



HOW WE WROTE IT
The front page of Arab News celebrated the opening of the Burj Khalifa, described by its developers as a 'vertical city.'

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Burj Khalifa: The world's tallest tower

A marvel of engineering, the building stands as a symbol of Dubai

Peter Harrison Dubai

The day the Burj Khalifa officially opened, it stood as a sign of prosperity at a time when the world was on its knees, crippled financially by the worst recession of our lifetime.

Dubai had just rung in the new year, waving a relieved farewell to a turbulent 2009, with this vast, new, 828-meter-tall building towering over the city, its roots held solid in the foundations of Dubai Mall, itself one of the biggest structures of its kind.

Four days later, the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, on the anniversary of his accession, officially opened the world's tallest tower, originally named Burj Dubai and later renamed Burj Khalifa in honor of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, whose support helped complete it amid economic challenges. Those of us lucky enough to cover the story on Jan. 4, 2010, were given a sneak peek at the observation deck and a chance to take in the breathtaking views it offers, mist and haze permitting.

Sheikh Mohammed had ordered construction of the

building years earlier, when the global economy was in a much healthier state. It was clear even before the recession that Dubai needed to diversify its economy, moving away from a reliance on oil revenue, and the service and tourism industries seemed an obvious way forward.

Sheikh Mohammed wanted an iconic symbol of Dubai that would be recognized around the world but he was not satisfied with just another skyscraper. Simply building the world's tallest was not good enough; this one had to smash all existing records. In short, he was raising the bar.

The Burj Khalifa boasts the world's highest observation deck, with views of the world's largest choreographed fountain display. One side of the tower is fitted with the world's biggest lighting display. Inside are the highest apartments, restaurants and nightclub.

When the tower was completed, its opening in 2010 was overshadowed by a financial crisis that began in 2007 and had taken a toll throughout the world, and Dubai was no exception.

An Arab News editorial published the day after



Fireworks illuminate the Burj Khalifa during its inauguration spectacle. AFP

the official opening noted: "Burj Khalifa is a reminder of the vision which has driven the quite remarkable real estate development in the emirate (of Dubai).

"So, at a time of profound pessimism and sky-high debt around the world, the sky-high Burj Khalifa, as it is called now, is a mighty finger pointing upward toward better and altogether more prosperous times."

The creation of the world's tallest tower naturally required great attention to detail, including details that ultimately save lives. For example, the building is actually a series of interwoven towers that end at different levels, meaning no single surface runs all the way from the ground to the top. The shape this creates prevents strong winds from causing vortexes that could cause the building to sway too much.

The external glass was designed to reflect more than 70 percent of the sun's heat; without it, temperatures inside would be deadly during the summer. The structure features an escape network, including a lift that can travel 138 floors in less than a minute (the greatest distance traveled

by any single lift in the world) within a shaft encased in fire-resistant concrete; effectively the Burj Khalifa's "lifeboat" in case of emergency.

The design was so advanced and ambitious that the architects and engineers even had to rethink how to deal with the messy business of sewage. A straight drop down a pipe from the top would not work; waste created by the flush of a toilet at the top of the tower would have reached speeds of up to 160 kph by the time it arrived at the foot of the building. Therefore waste drops just a few floors at a time through a series of sound-proofed pipes and pumps, while super-pressured pumps send fresh water to a series of water tanks throughout the building.

The Burj Khalifa was a first, in many respects, and will always mark the moment when architecture changed forever, though it seems likely to lose its world record a few years from now when Saudi Arabia's 1,000-meter-tall Kingdom Tower is completed.

Peter Harrison is the Dubai bureau chief for Arab News. He has covered the Middle East for more than a decade.

Key Dates



JAN. 4, 2004
Construction of the building, initially called Burj Dubai, begins.

JULY 21, 2007
Still under construction, it surpasses Taipei 101 (509.2m) to become the tallest building in the world.



SEPT. 1, 2008
The structure reaches 688m and is confirmed as the tallest human-made structure ever built, surpassing the 646m Warsaw Radio Mast, which stood from 1974 until its collapse in 1991.



2009
Dubai's housing crash threatens completion of the project.



JAN. 4, 2010
Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, inaugurates the tower, announcing during its opening that it has been renamed Burj Khalifa in honor of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, whose financial support helped ensure the project was completed.

JAN. 1, 2011
The Burj Khalifa hosts its first New Year's Eve fireworks display, establishing a tradition.

THE WORLD'S TALLEST BUILDINGS (METERS)



50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 2015



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News' five-page spread covered King Salman's ascension amid mourning for his predecessor King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's passing.

SAUDI ARABIA

The accession of King Salman

His rise to the throne marked the start of an ambitious new chapter for the Kingdom

Noor Nugali Riyadh

The Saudi Arabia in which my two daughters are growing up today is a very different country to the one in which they were born.

On Jan. 23, 2015, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began a momentous new chapter in its history with the accession to the throne of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Now, aged 12 and 10, ambitious and daring, my daughters, Nahed and Salma, are growing up in a Saudi Arabia in which all doors are open to them, secure in the knowledge that only hard work and ambition stands between them and the realization of their dreams.

Born on Dec. 31, 1935, in Riyadh, the man who would become King Salman was the 25th son of King Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the unifier of modern Saudi Arabia. His career in governance began in 1954 when, at the age of just 19, he was appointed deputy governor of Riyadh Province.

A year later, he assumed the position of governor, a role in which he would serve two terms, from 1955 to 1960, and from 1963 to 2011.

During more than five decades as governor of Riyadh, the future monarch transformed the capital from a city of 200,000 inhabitants into a thriving metropolis, home to more than 7 million people.

His path to the throne was paved with a series of pivotal roles that showcased his leadership skills. In 2011, he was appointed minister of defense, in which position he spearheaded the modernization of the Saudi military and bolstered national security.

His appointment as crown prince in 2012, following the passing of Crown Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz, was recognition of his decades of public service and unwavering commitment to the Kingdom.

The coronation of King Salman in 2015 as the seventh monarch of Saudi Arabia was greeted with optimism, as he pledged to uphold the legacy of his predecessors while steering the nation toward a future defined by innovation, inclusivity and global engagement.

He is the sixth son of the nation's founder to occupy the throne, but also the first Saudi monarch to pass the torch to a new generation.

On June 21, 2017, King Salman appointed his son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as crown prince, in the process not only ensuring a stable line of succession but also paving the way for a dramatic transformation of the Kingdom.

On April 25, 2016, while he was still deputy crown prince, Prince Mohammed, in his role as chairperson of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, had



Above: Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz (C) is greeted by well-wishers during a ritual ceremony in Riyadh following his accession. SPA

unveiled Vision 2030, describing it as "an ambitious yet achievable blueprint, which expresses our long-term goals and expectations and reflects our country's strengths and capabilities."

This blueprint set out not only to diversify the national economy, thereby reducing the dependence on oil and fostering sustainable development, but also to transform the Kingdom socially.

Over the past decade we have seen a series of momentous social and economic reforms under King Salman, in many cases driven by his son, the crown prince, with his father's blessing.

Women have been granted the right to drive, travel and establish businesses independently; a long-standing ban on cinemas has been lifted; several economic reforms and megaprojects designed to diversify the national economy have been launched; and Saudi Arabia has been opened up to the world, both for global investment and

King Salman's reign has been defined by inclusivity and innovation, setting the stage for a brighter future for Saudi Arabia.

as an international destination for tourism, sport and culture.

Beyond his domestic achievements, King Salman's humanitarian efforts have had a profound global impact. As chairperson of the Saudi aid agency KRelief, established in 2015, he has overseen more than 3,300 projects in 105 countries that have provided critical aid to millions in need.

As for my daughters, blessed by the empowerment of women that is one of the pillars of Vision 2030, they now understand that it is thanks to King Salman and his son, the crown prince, that they are growing up in a "new" Saudi Arabia, one in which women are fulfilling their potential as business executives and owners, board members, ambassadors and even government ministers.

They know, as King Salman knew, that in years gone by Saudi women never lacked talent, they merely lacked opportunity.

Noor Nugali is deputy editor-in-chief of Arab News.



Key Dates

DEC. 31, 1935

King Salman born in Riyadh, the 25th son of King Abdulaziz Al-Saud, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



MARCH 1954

He is appointed deputy governor of Riyadh.



APRIL 1955

Becomes governor of Riyadh; first term lasts 5 years.



FEBRUARY 1963

Second term as governor of Riyadh begins; he remains in the position until 2011.



NOV. 5, 2011

Appointed minister of defense.



JAN. 23, 2015

Succeeds King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz as king of Saudi Arabia.

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 2016



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News celebrated the launch of Vision 2030 with a special front page and an editorial headlined, 'KSA's leap into future.'

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Vision 2030 unveiled to the world

Mohammed bin Salman's eagerly awaited moment of change was welcomed in particular by the youth of the country, who form the majority of the population

Faisal J. Abbas Riyadh

A seminal event occurred on April 25, 2016. On that date, Saudi Arabia's then-Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced the details of what we have come to know as the path-breaking, paradigm-shifting Saudi Vision 2030.

That day, he gave Al Arabiya News Channel an exclusive interview, his first ever on television. At the time, I was based in Dubai editing the channel's English-language digital arm, and it was obvious to me that if ever there was an eagerly awaited moment of change that would positively impact the region, this was it.

Five months later, on Sept. 26, 2016, to be precise, I was in Jeddah after being appointed editor-in-chief of Arab News. Having lived there during my formative years, I felt I had a genuine feeling for, and understanding of, the city.

What I failed to consider, however, was that in the five months since the announcement of Vision 2030, change had become the new norm. And not a slow, glacial process of change but a fast and urgent one.

It was a coincidence that I returned to the Kingdom only five months after the announcement of Vision 2030. But from the perspective of a journalist it was an exciting time, even though I had no idea what to expect. Nor did I know whether the announced changes, genuine as they and the intentions underlying them were, would ever materialize into reality.

Day after day, however, it became evident that Saudi Arabia was on a new track and nothing could stand in the way.

It is disappointing that the Saudi leadership gets very little credit for their remarkable achievement, which represented a complete reversal of the status quo in the Kingdom.

That decision followed the introduction of concerts and musical performances in front of live audiences, the very kind of events that had been unheard of in the past. Some of the old-timers in the newsroom flinched when we decided to run large photos showing ordinary Saudi men and women sitting next to each other, eating popcorn as they enjoyed themselves and hummed along to live music during a show.

It was a striking sign of



SAUDI ARABIA'S MAJOR PROJECTS
Projected completion date



with what was to come. Next, the ban on women driving was lifted and draconian guardianship laws were abolished. Then there were the high-decibel concerts that began to take place at Diriyah. The setting is straight out of the "Arabian Nights," and it was enthralling to see the nation's history encounter the modern world in the ancient deserts of Arabia. At the same time, the crown prince did not forget about Saudi Arabia's history and heritage. Yes, we have futuristic projects such as the NEOM megacity on one hand, but when it came to preserving history, heritage and even wildlife, MBS was adamant about the importance of that as well. Places

such as Diriyah, AlUla and the old town of Jeddah are living examples of this commitment.

He also set about rehabilitating the image of the country and transforming it into a center of moderation. To do this, he hosted leaders of other religions in Saudi Arabia and focused on the virtues and advantages of interfaith cooperation.

The most significant announcement by MBS, however, was the one in which he stated that he wanted to restore Saudi Arabia to a more moderate form of Islam; or, in his words, return things to the way they were before 1979.

Why 1979? Because, as he said during an interview with Norah O'Donnell on CBS, people in Saudi Arabia "were living a very

normal life, like the rest of the Gulf countries. Women were driving cars. There were movie theaters in Saudi Arabia. Women worked everywhere. We were just normal people, developing like any other country in the world, until the events of 1979."

Having said all of this, I must now ask a question: Has the crown prince's Vision 2030 succeeded in all that it set out to achieve? No. Will it? Probably not. But this is no secret, and Arab News publishes an annual report in which we keep track of the progress and the shortcomings.

Were there mistakes along the way? Yes; painful ones, too, some of which have had harmful consequences on progress and the reputation of the Kingdom. While nothing can be said in their defense, there are two overarching arguments that can be made here.

The first is to imagine, despite the mistakes, if all these reforms had not happened. What would have become of Saudi Arabia then? The second is to consider whether the Kingdom is better off, and its people happier, now than they were nine years ago?

Just ask the youths who form about 60 percent of the Saudi population what they think, and there you will find the answer.

Faisal J. Abbas is the Editor-in-Chief of Arab News.

Key Dates



APRIL 25, 2016
Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launches his Vision 2030 plan for national development and diversification.



JUNE 21, 2017
King Salman appoints him crown prince.



OCT. 24, 2017
At the Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh, the crown prince pledges a return to moderate Islam and launches NEOM, a \$500 billion project to develop a new Saudi megacity.



APRIL 18, 2018
First commercial movie theater opens in Riyadh, with a screening of the Marvel movie 'Black Panther,' ending a 35-year ban on cinemas in the Kingdom



NOV. 28, 2023
Kingdom bids successfully to host Expo 2030 in Riyadh, beating competition from Rome and Busan.



Above: The then-Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announces Vision 2030. Left: The master plan for Riyadh Expo 2030.
AFP/Royal Commission for Riyadh City

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 2021



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News reported the Taliban's takeover of Kabul '20 years after the US-led invasion that ousted them.'

AFGHANISTAN

The fall of Kabul

After 2 decades, trillions of dollars and countless lives lost, Afghanistan is back where it began. Was it all in vain?

Sayed Salahuddin Kabul

During the hot summer of 2021 a deep sense of eeriness, and at the same time optimism, hung over Afghanistan as one city and province after another fell to the Taliban ahead of the imminent full withdrawal of US-led troops.

Those weeks were a microcosm that reflected much of the previous 20 years that followed the US invasion of a country that had already suffered a bloody, decade-long occupation by the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and between 1838 and 1939 endured a series of conflicts with the British Empire.

On Feb. 29, 2020, the Taliban signed the Doha Accord, a peace agreement with a US administration determined to end to America's longest war, which began in 2001 in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks by Al-Qaeda.

As part of the deal, Washington agreed to dramatically reduce the number of US forces in the country ahead of a complete withdrawal within 14 months.

It immediately became apparent, however, that without US air and ground support, Afghan government forces could not cope with the sudden surge in Taliban attacks that followed the signing of the agreement.

Even the Taliban were stunned by the speed of their victories in 2001, which by Aug. 15 had brought them to the gates of Kabul.

The fall of the city was predicted a year earlier by Mariam Koofi, a member of the Afghan parliament, while the talks between Taliban delegates and US diplomats were still in full swing in Doha.

"I fear that we would see the Taliban on the streets of Kabul one day when you get up from your bed," Koofi told me.

Her assessment was based on a number of factors, including corruption within the government, rising numbers of deaths among Afghan troops, power struggles between state and non-state actors, the growing push for a US withdrawal by regional rivals such as Iran, Russia and China, and the decline in vital American military and logistical aid to the government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

On Aug. 15, 2021, Koofi's prediction came to pass. As news spread that Ghani and members of his government had fled by helicopter to Central Asia, and US and other Western diplomats had abandoned their embassies in panic, Taliban fighters



Above: The commander of US Central Command, Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, tours an evacuation control center at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan. Left: US Air Force C-17s and other aircraft assist with the withdrawal from Afghanistan. AFP/US Air Force

entered Kabul and captured the presidential palace.

In some parts of the city, large crowds gathered on the streets, some in fear, some to welcome their new rulers. Others were merely curious to see them for the first time, because they were born during the US occupation and so had not experienced the first rule of the Taliban, which was cut short by the American-led invasion in 2001.

According to Brown University's Costs of War project, 20 years of war in Afghanistan claimed the lives of more than 168,000 Afghans, including 69,000 members of the national police and military, and 46,000 civilians.

Despite the loss of more than 6,000 American lives, and after spending trillions of dollars on the conflict, the US had handed power back to the very group it drove out 20 years earlier.

In the center of Kabul, banks and businesses closed, fearing looting, but the Taliban swiftly managed to stop any threat of plundering. The group quickly announced the reestablishment of its Islamic Emirate, rather

than the formation of a broad-based government as agreed in the Doha deal.

At Kabul airport, diplomats, some of their local employees, and foreign aid workers were flown out of the country on US and other foreign military aircraft.

Fearful for the future of Afghanistan under Taliban rule and the return of civil war, tens of thousands of residents mobbed the airport amid rumors that aircraft were waiting to transport Afghans who wanted to leave the country.

As evening approached, a human tide broke through barriers and flooded onto the runway. In chaotic scenes, broadcast around the world, some desperate people tried to cling to aircraft as they took off. On Aug. 16, a young dentist fell to his death from a plane, his remains found on a rooftop four miles from the airport. A teenage soccer player similarly died after plummeting from a US aircraft.

In the days that followed, the

Taliban, who had promised to be more lenient and inclusive than they had been during their previous rule, began imposing curbs and draconian policies. Billboards depicting women were defaced or torn down, Afghan flags were lowered, cafes stopped playing music, and a few female-run restaurants were closed. Demonstrations by women protesting against the Taliban's actions were suppressed.

On Aug. 26, a suicide bomber, later identified as a member of Daesh, killed 170 Afghans and 13 US troops at the airport. Five days later, on Aug. 31, the US completed its full withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Since then, the Taliban have continued to impose tough restrictions, particularly on women, who are barred from education above grade 6, attending university, and most public jobs. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans have fled the country, seeing no future there.

Meanwhile, the Taliban government faces ever-deepening international isolation, signs of internal divisions, and growing local frustration with its fundamentalist policies.

Sayed Salahuddin is a Canadian-based Afghan journalist who covered the rise of the Taliban in 1996, the US invasion and the fall of Kabul in 2021.



In chaotic scenes, broadcast around the world, some desperate people tried to cling to aircraft as they took off.

Key Dates



FEB. 29, 2020

In an agreement that excludes the Afghan government, the Taliban and the US sign the Doha Accord, under which Washington commits to a full withdrawal of troops within 14 months.



APRIL 14, 2021

Newly elected President Joe Biden announces all US troops will leave Afghanistan by Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the start of 'the forever war.'



MAY 1, 2021

Taliban launch major offensive.



AUG. 15, 2021

Taliban seize Kabul; government of President Ashraf Ghani collapses.



AUG. 25, 2021

Suicide bombing at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport kills 170 Afghan citizens and 13 US military personnel.

AUG. 30, 2021

Last-remaining US soldiers leave Afghanistan. Taliban declare victory.

50 MOMENTS THAT CHANGED THE MIDDLE EAST - 2022



HOW WE WROTE IT
Arab News went viral with its front-page headline 'Don't cry for me, Argentina,' celebrating Saudi Arabia's historic win.

QATAR

FIFA World Cup in Qatar and Saudi football revolution

Green Falcons' stunning victory sets the stage for major transformation in Saudi football

Ali Khaled Dubai

On Nov. 20, 2022, billions of viewers tuned in to watch Qatar take on Ecuador and make history as the first Arab country to host the FIFA World Cup.

The moment marked a turning point for football in the Arab world, and Saudi Arabia in particular, setting the stage for a revolution in the sport that would be fueled just days later by an unforgettable victory.

Hosting the World Cup was a monumental achievement for Qatar, after more than a decade of preparation and significant investment in infrastructure. The tournament showcased state-of-the-art stadiums, cutting-edge technology, and a commitment to delivering an unforgettable experience for fans from all around the world.

However, the significance of the event extended well beyond football as Qatar, together with the rest of the Gulf region, seized the opportunity to present itself as a modern, dynamic hub at the crossroads of tradition and innovation.

The tournament not only broke new ground by taking place during the winter, it also introduced the world to the warmth of Arab hospitality and culture, challenging preconceived notions and fostering a greater understanding of the region.

For the second World Cup in a row, and the second time ever, four Arab teams were taking part: Qatar, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

On the pitch, Morocco shocked the football world by reaching the semi-finals, defeating Belgium, Canada, Spain and Portugal along the way before losing to reigning champions France. It was the finest-ever performance by an Arab nation at the World Cup.

While hosts Qatar would disappointingly suffer an early exit, Tunisia at least managed the distinction of beating France 1-0 in the group stages.

For Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, the World Cup became a catalyst for the country's football revolution, ignited by a historic result on the third day of the tournament.

On Nov. 22, as the great Lionel Messi stood scratching his beard in bewilderment, Salem Al-Dawsari celebrated a goal with his traditional somersault. Half of the



Above: Lionel Messi receives the World Cup from FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani after Argentina's penalty shootout victory over France. Right: Salem Al-Dawsari battles with Messi during the Green Falcons' historic 2-1 first round win. AFP



HIGH-PROFILE TRANSFERS TO THE SAUDI PRO LEAGUE CLUBS



ARAB NEWS

fans at the Lusail Stadium in Qatar were thrown into utter delirium. The rest were shocked into stunned silence. Across Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and, indeed, the globe, screams of celebration could be heard in the vicinity of every television screen.

The world had just witnessed the greatest moment in Saudi football history, and arguably the most memorable at that point by any Arab nation on football's biggest stage.

Just seven minutes into the second half of the Green Falcons' opening match of the World Cup, Al-Dawsari had scored what turned out to be the winning goal against eventual champions Argentina.

Though the Green Falcons would not progress to the round of 16 in Qatar, a revolution in Saudi Arabian football was nevertheless about to unfold.

Just over a month after the game, and only 13 days after Messi raised the World Cup trophy when Argentina

beat France on penalties, the world of football was again shaken to its foundations by the announcement that Saudi Pro League club Al-Nassr were signing Cristiano Ronaldo during the winter transfer window.

And where the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus star goes, others follow.

In the summer of 2023, after the Saudi sovereign Public Investment Fund acquired majority stakes in four of the

country's top clubs, Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad, Al-Nassr and Al-Ahli, along with other investments in the game, the Pro League became the hottest destination for some of the world's best players.

Sadio Mane and Aymeric Laporte followed Ronaldo to Al-Nassr. Riyad Mahrez and Roberto Firmino moved to Al-Ahli. Fabinho, N'Golo Kante and Karim Benzema joined then-champions Al-Ittihad. And, in the capital, the arrival of Neymar, Aleksandar Mitrovic and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic bolstered an already formidable Al-Hilal side.

Many more would follow in the summer of 2023 and during the January 2024 transfer window.

While the influx of superstars was changing the face of Saudi football on the pitch, a lot of game-changing work was being done behind the scenes, with some very notable results.

In 2027, the AFC Asian Cup will finally be hosted by the Kingdom for the first time. The Green Falcons will be among the favorites to win the trophy, for what would be the fourth time in their history but the first since 1996.

But even that exciting announcement was surpassed when Saudi Arabia was awarded hosting rights for the 2034 FIFA World Cup. Fifteen futuristic stadiums are already in the pipeline for what will be the next World Cup hosted entirely by a single nation.

Thanks to Saudi Vision 2030, the ambitious plan for national development and diversification, the sports sector has been a central part of the Kingdom's remarkable progress in recent years. This is set to continue, thanks to similar advances in the business, tourism and entertainment fields.

One of the Vision's crowning achievements looks set to arrive in the form of Riyadh Expo 2030, when the Saudi capital will open its doors even wider to the rest of the world.

By the time the World Cup rolls around four years after that, few people around the world will be surprised by any Saudi achievements in the way they were when Al-Dawsari made history that memorable evening at Lusail Stadium.

Qatar 2022 had changed the game. But it was just the beginning.

Ali Khaled is the sports editor at Arab News. He previously worked as a writer and editor at The National and GQ Middle East.

Key Dates



NOV. 20, 2022

The FIFA World Cup begins in Qatar, marking the first time the tournament has been held in an Arab country.



NOV. 22, 2022

Saudi Arabia beat eventual champions Argentina 2-1 at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, a historic moment that sends shock waves throughout the footballing world.



DEC. 30, 2022

Cristiano Ronaldo signs for Saudi Pro League side Al-Nassr.

JUNE 5, 2023

Saudi Public Investment Fund takes ownership of four Pro League clubs: Al-Nassr, Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad and Al-Ahli.

SEPT. 7, 2023

By the end of the transfer window, Saudi Pro League clubs spend a collective \$957m on new players, with many notable signings.



DEC. 11, 2024

Saudi Arabia confirmed as host of 2034 FIFA World Cup.