

The Conversation is a non-profit media service.
If you value what we do, please make a tax-deductible donation.

Make a donation Don't show again ✕

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair



Saudi Arabia

February 28, 2017 11:26am AEDT

Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir will likely intensify the Washington charm offensive and continue to stress Saudi Arabia's indispensability to regional security and terrorism matters. XXSTRINGERXX Xxxxx/Reuters



The Conversation/Zenobia Ahmed, CC BY-SA

This year will continue to be a period of great uncertainty in Saudi Arabia. After a deterioration of relations with the United States under President Obama, the kingdom will be focused on strengthening ties with the new Trump administration.

Early signs, such as Saudi preclusion from the recent travel ban, look positive.

However, Trump's erratic temperament and seeming ignorance of basic geo-strategic realities mean this

is far from assured.

As a result, Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir will likely intensify the Washington charm offensive and continue to stress Saudi Arabia's indispensability to regional security and terrorism matters. It's a transactional language that should appeal to the former property mogul.

Author



Ben Rich

Lecturer in International Relations & Security Studies, Curtin University

Regionally, the geopolitical competition between Riyadh and Tehran is set to intensify. Saudi influence in Iraq has been overshadowed by Iran's far more successful efforts to influence politics in the war-torn country.

In Syria, Iran, along with its Russian ally, has all but assured the survival of the Assad regime, despite heavy investment and protestations to the contrary by Saudi Arabia.

Saudis also remain extremely concerned about Iranian influence on their periphery in Bahrain and Yemen. This has placed the Saudi leadership on the back foot, which will likely drive it to look for new means to check what it sees as the Islamic Republic's aspiring regional hegemony.

On the domestic front, Riyadh will continue to pursue the economic restructuring of the Vision 2030 initiative to wean the population off the oil teat. Despite some elite optimism, the grandiosity of the reforms and the current political leadership's inexperience with implementing such massive structural changes mean that the full realisation of Vision 2030 by its target date is unlikely.

Terrorism by Islamic State and its sympathisers will likely continue inside Saudi Arabia at low intensity, but will not prove a significant threat to the state. Despite some agitation for political and social reforms, mass protests reminiscent of 2011 remain highly unlikely in the near future.



[United States](#) [Security](#) [Terrorism](#) [Saudi Arabia](#) [Iran](#) [Yemen](#) [Islamic State](#) [Countries to watch in 2017](#)



The Conversation is a non-profit + your donation is tax deductible. Help knowledge-based, ethical journalism today.

[Make a donation](#)