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The Saudi Spat with Canada - Messy

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> Saudi Arabia expelled Canada's ambassador, froze trade with the country and will reportedly dump its Canadian investments. The kingdom's ire was raised by a series of tweets from Canada's foreign minister, in which she called for the release of Saudi human-rights activists. The Saudi government insisted that only a full Canadian climbdown would "fix its big mistake".
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> - The Economist, Espresso 8.11.18

Kind of continuing from last week's theme about authoritarianism, the Saudis are demonstrating how liberalization requires harsh stances to be taken to prevent a slippery slope away from government control. [1]

Saudi foreign policy recently has struck me as quite odd. There's a really intriguing NewYorker Article [a] that runs through it — don't let title throw you - there's definitely a lot of stuff on Trump and Kushner but the meat is on Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) and his ally the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ). War in Yemen [2] and

a united Sunni movement against Shiite Iran has reshaped the politics of the Middle East (article focused specifically on how this has affected the PLO's efforts) and have surely served to only strengthen domestic support for the young princes.

Continuing on the theme of external crisis, there seems to be a strong correlation between external crisis and approval rates of leaders. Vladimir Putin has harnessed this phenomenon over the last 20+ years to keep domestic support high (the dubious Russian Apartment bombings [b] helped lead to the Second Chechen War [c] and conflicts like the Russo-Georgian War [d] and the seizure of Crimea [e] have served to galvanize the Russia public against the West and encouraged Putin's rule of the Russian Federation. Even George Bush saw his approval rating spike 40% in the wake of September 11th attacks and ~10% both after the invasion of Iraq and the capture of Saddam Hussein.

I don't totally understand why this correlation exists but I don't have strong memories of transformative events like this. It's probably a sense of nationalism and fear that leaders play well to when they show strength in a crisis but would love to hear your thoughts [3] :)

When I cross posted this on my Medium [f] on 07/06/19 I added some reflection:

[1] MBS had me and many others optimistic that he would be a liberalizing force in Saudia Arabia. After the slaying of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in late 2018, we aren't so sure [g] :/

[2] A war [h] that seems to only become more brutal and wrought with crimes against humanity [i] as the conflict lumbers towards its fifth year.

[3] also to feel that someone is in control when there's chaos

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Links

a. newyorker.com/magazine/2018/06/18/donald-trumps-new-world-order
b. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_apartment_bombings
c. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Chechen_War
d. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Georgian_War
e. en.wikipedia.org/wikiAnnexation_of_Crimea_by_the_Russian_Federation
f. medium.com/@spencerburleigh
g. minnpost.com/foreign-concept/2018/10/mbs-takes-the-short-route-from-reformer-to-tyrant
h. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Civil_War_(2015%E2%80%93present)
i. hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/yemen