



PROFILE
KING SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ
AL SAUD

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Key findings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• King Salman has a positive view on the nature of politics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The King seeks to achieve cooperative goals by pursuing cooperative tactics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The King's perception of the ability to control historical events has increase as his focus on cooperation has decreased
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In situations of conflict, the personality model suggests that the King favors settling over deadlock or submission.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nevertheless, in cases of a failure to settle, the King will attempt to dominate or deadlock before submitting to anybody.

BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM TO RECIPIENT

On Monday, June 5th, to the surprise of the international community, five Arab countries announced their plan to isolate Qatar by cutting existing diplomatic relations as well as economic ties with the Arabian monarchy.¹ The actions, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and justified in reference to allegation of support for terrorism and Iran by Qatar, illustrate the sudden rift between the different Middle Eastern countries.²

The decision by the Saudi monarchy of King Salman to close its borders and expel Qatari nationals is even more surprising considering that just over six months ago the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman, visited the Qatari capital of Doha to discuss cooperation and the deepening of economic relations with the Emir.³ Symbolizing the good relations between the two nations, the Saudi King received the highest honor of the country when he



¹ Anne Bernard and David D. Kirkpatrick, "5 Arab Nations Move to Isolate Qatar, Putting the U.S. in a Bind", June 5, 2017, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/world/middleeast/qatar-saudi-arabia-egypt-bahrain-united-arab-emirates.html> (accessed June 8, 2017)

² Anne Bernard and David D. Kirkpatrick, "5 Arab Nations Move to Isolate Qatar, Putting the U.S. in a Bind", June 5, 2017, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/world/middleeast/qatar-saudi-arabia-egypt-bahrain-united-arab-emirates.html> (accessed June 8, 2017)

³ Habib Toumi, "Warm welcome for Saudi king in Doha", December 5, 2016, *Gulf News*, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/warm-welcome-for-saudi-king-in-doha-1.1940628> (accessed June 8, 2017)

was presented the sword of Sheikh Jassim, the founder of Qatar, during his visit.⁴

While becoming more assertive towards Iran, King Salman, crowned King of Saudi Arabia in early 2015 following the death of King Abdullah,⁵ has predominantly sought to deepen the ties with fellow Arab countries in the region.⁶ In consideration of these attempts to strengthen relations and taking into account that despite some diplomatic discords, the relations with Qatar had been stable, the closing of the border and the restriction of any travel by air or sea represent a drastic and surprising change in the foreign policy of King Salman's government in relation to its neighbor.⁷

ANALYSIS

To illuminate the background factors that influenced the unanticipated decision by the Saudi government to cut the ties with Qatar, this report examines the beliefs of the Saudi King Salman using the Verbs In Context System (VICS) for operational code analysis. Operational code was chosen from a variety of different approach because it highlights "(...) the decision maker's worldview and predisposition towards political actions" in the realm of foreign policy⁸ and thus sheds a light on the interpretation of the currently tense situation in the Persian Gulf by King Salman.

An analysis of motivation can be disregard in the case of King Salman because as a monarch he did not 'choose' to seek this leadership position. Thus, an analysis of the factors that 'drive' the

⁴ Shabina S. Khatri, "Life pauses in Qatar during King Salman's visit", December 6, 2016, *Doha News*, <https://dohanews.co/life-pauses-qatar-king-salmans-visit/> (accessed June 8, 2017)

⁵ BBC.com, "Profile: King Salman of Saudi Arabia", January 23, 2015, *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30945925> (accessed June 8, 2017);

⁶ Jordan Times, "King, Saudi monarch 'keen' on enhancing ties", November 11, 2015, *Jordan Times*, <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/king-saudi-monarch-keen%E2%80%99-enhancing-ties> (accessed June 8, 2017); Anwar Ahmad and Celine Malek, "King Salman visit analysis: 'UAE-Saudi ties as strong as they come'", December 03, 2016, *The National*, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/king-salman-visit-analysis-uae-saudi-ties-as-strong-as-they-come> (accessed June 8, 2017); Al Arabiya, "Saudi Arabia, Egypt hold Riyadh summit to strengthen ties" April 23, 2017, Al Arabiya, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/04/23/King-Salman-welcomes-Sisi-in-Riyadh.html> (accessed June 8, 2017); Habib Toumi, "Warm welcome for Saudi king in Doha", December 5, 2016, *Gulf News*, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/warm-welcome-for-saudi-king-in-doha-1.1940628> (accessed June 8, 2017)

⁷ Anne Bernard and David D. Kirkpatrick, "5 Arab Nations Move to Isolate Qatar, Putting the U.S. in a Bind", June 5, 2017, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/world/middleeast/qatar-saudi-arabia-egypt-bahrain-united-arab-emirates.html> (accessed June 8, 2017)

⁸ Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer and Michael D. Young, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis: Measuring and Modeling Jimmy Carter's Operational Code*, (Malden: International Studies Quarterly 42, 1998), p. 175

pursuit for leadership are meaningless.⁹ While an analysis of the leadership traits of King Salman might provide an indication of the leadership ‘style’ of the monarch, an examination of the King’s characteristics proved difficult due to the lack of available content for analysis. An extensive open source intelligence (OSINT) search revealed the scarcity of ‘spontaneous texts’ that fulfill the necessary requirements for the Leadership Trait Analysis.¹⁰

Speeches by King Salman for the operational code analysis on the other hand could be retrieved from amongst others the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.¹¹ Although the speeches (n = 12) are unequally distributed over the course of the King’s reign: four public speeches in 2015, seven speeches in 2016, and thus far one speech in 2017, they do provide a general overview of several features of King Salman’s belief system. In addition to providing an indication of the ‘filter’ that influences his foreign policy decisions, the analysis also suggests that his beliefs changed over time and, lastly, enable the creation of a leadership profile based on the classification by Holsti (1977).¹²

Table 1:

	Salman (total)	Norm group ¹³	Salman (2015)	Salman (2016)	Salman (2017)
n=	12	164	4	7	1
P1	0,3405	0,301	0,3444	0,3176	0,3617
P2	0,2189	0,147	0,2254	0,1843	0,2482
P4	0,1874	0,224	0,1268	0,2735	0,2878
I1	0,5581	0,401	0,7714	0,375	0,4737
I2	0,2636	0,178	0,4286	0,125	0,193

⁹ compare with Margaret G. Hermann, *Political Psychology and the study of political Leadership*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership*, ed. Rhodes and 't Hart, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

¹⁰ In order to be available for analysis, spontaneous texts “(...) has to be at least 100 words long (...) (and) taken at different times, and about various topics.” see Tobias Van Assche, *Hermn van Rompy: Calm Resolve in the European Union*, (Antwerp, Media, Movements & Politics Working Paper, 2009), p. 7 in reference to Margaret G. Herman, *Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis*, in *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, ed. Jerrold M. Post, (An Harbor: Michigan University Press, 2003)

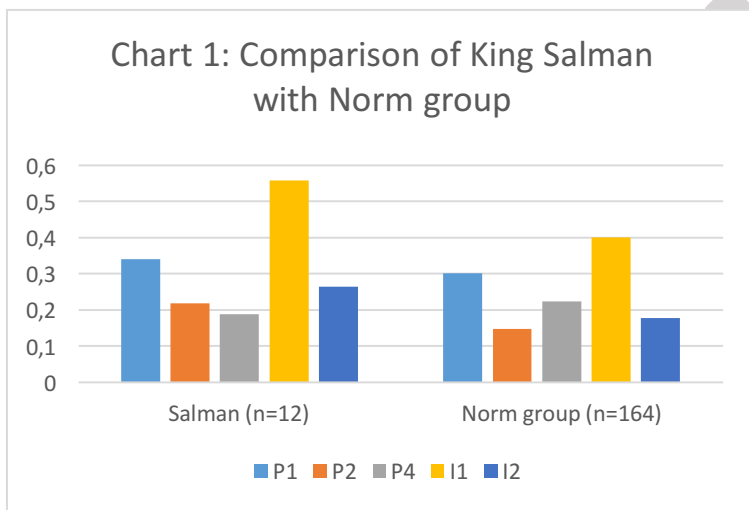
¹¹ In order to be applicable for the analysis, speeches had to relate to foreign policy in that “(...) (1) the subject and object are international in scope; (2) the focus of interaction is a political issue; (3) the words and deeds are cooperative or conflictual.” see Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 182

¹² see Ole Holsti, *A typology of ,operational code‘ belief system*, in *Decision-making research: Some recent developments*, ed. Daniel Heraldveit, (Oslo: National Institute for International Affairs, 1977), p. 156ff

¹³ based on Akan Malici and Johnna Malici, *The operational codes of Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung: the last cold warriors?*, (Lund: Political Psychology 26.3, 2005), p. 401

First, the P1 value shows how King Salman perceives the political universe, that is, whether he deems it to be inherently hostile and conflictual or cooperative.¹⁴ The data suggests that King Salman views the nature of politics as positive and that his beliefs have remained relatively stable since his coronation in early 2015 (see Chart 2). Moreover, the data illuminates that while the Saudi monarch holds a more positive belief than the norm group, the difference appears rather insignificant.¹⁵

The P2 value indicates that King Salman is rather optimistic about “(...) *the prospect for achieving (his) fundamental political values (...)*.”¹⁶ Similar to the P1 value, King Salman’s P2 score also decreased minimally from 2015 to 2016 before rising again in 2017.



According to Walker et al., the P4 index reveals that King Salman did not believe that he “(...) *can control historical developments and political outcomes (...)*”¹⁷ at the start of his reign. In contrast to P1 and P2, the P4 value, however, increased over the past two years.

The significant differences between King Salman and the norm group as well as the different years regard the fourth score I1 which delineates the extent to which a leader follows a cooperative or conflictual “(...) *strategic approach to political goals (...)*”.¹⁸ The high value for 2015 shows that after his coronation, the King moved in a very cooperative direction with regards to his political objectives. Keeping in mind the limitations of the value for

¹⁴ Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 178

¹⁵ in order to establish whether or not the result is significant, a two-tailed Anova comparison is necessary. Such a statistical analysis, however, would exceed the limits of this intelligence report.

¹⁶ Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 178 (emphasis in the original)

¹⁷ Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 179 (emphasis in the original)

¹⁸ Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 179 (emphasis in the original)

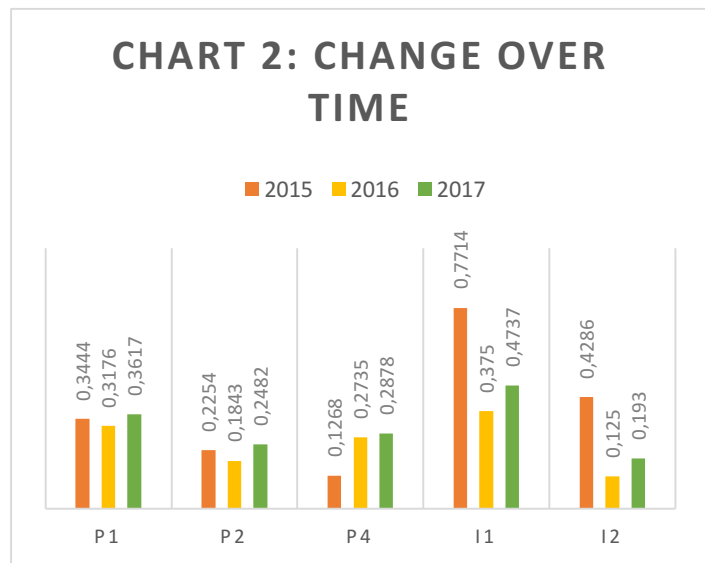
2017,¹⁹ the score for 2017 could indicate a return to a more cooperative strategy, after the index had decreased significantly in 2016 to a modest cooperative strategy.

Finally, the I2 index regards the tactics by which “(...) *goals and objectives can be pursued most effectively* (...)”.²⁰ The value shows that even though the King in total pursued a moderately more cooperative tactic in comparison to

the norm group, the intensity of his cooperative tactics has drastically decreased over the years, reaching a level resembling that of other foreign leaders.

Considering actions taken by King Salman and taking into account the changes over time in tactical intensity as well as a the belief in the ability to control historical developments, the results of the operational code analysis indicate that the King can be regarded as a Type C leader pursuant to the categorization by Holsti (1977).²¹ According to the typology, Type C leaders are predominantly motivated by high achievement and “(...) are likely to exhibit choice and shift propensity that favor the tactics of Reward and Deter associated with an Assurance strategy.”²²

From this categorization, it can be anticipated that for the case at hand the King is likely to attempt settling the conflict with Qatar through a process of bargaining. If such an approach fails, the Type C leader is theorized to favor a dominating approach over a potential deadlock or submission.²³ Based on such a profile of King Salman, Ministers engaging in contact with King Salman are advised to make use of his cooperative beliefs. As one of the biggest trading partner of Germany in the region and an important market of the future, close cooperation can only be beneficial to Germany. In cases of conflicts, moreover, the King’s cooperative strategy suggests



¹⁹ is est., it is only based on one speech. Potentially demonstrating the limitations of the index for 2017, the notions of a somewhat more cooperative strategy and tactic (I2) for 2017, however, are in contrast to the current events.

²⁰ Walker et al, *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis*, p. 180 (emphasis in the original)

²¹ Holsti, *A typology of ,operational code' belief system*, p. 156ff reference in Simbarashe Nhandara, *The Operational Code of Tony Blair*, (Flemingsberg: Södertörns Högskola, 2015), p. 21ff

²² Simbarashe Nhandara, *The Operational Code of Tony Blair*, (Flemingsberg: Södertörns Högskola, 2015), p. 21

²³ Holsti, *A typology of ,operational code' belief system*, p. 156ff reference in Simbarashe Nhandara, *The Operational Code of Tony Blair*, (Flemingsberg: Södertörns Högskola, 2015), p. 21

that he is likely to engage in negotiations to resolve the conflicts that he considers temporary rather than permanent. To avoid hurting German economic interests, Ministers are advised to settle any conflict in order to prevent potentially being domination by the Saudi Arabian King. Based on his profile, he is unlikely to submit and would rather deadlock the situation which can ultimately hurt German economic interest.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that King Salman is rather positive and cooperative in his views with regard to the nature of politics as well as his strategy and tactic approach to achieve political goals. Nevertheless, the analysis has also shown that his cooperative strategy and the intensity by which he pursues these cooperative goals have declined significantly over the past two years. At the same time, his belief in the ability to influence events has increased, highlighting a shift to a strategy of Assurance rather than appeasement with regards to foreign policy.

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