

# US Senate Resolution Potentially Changes Middle East Dynamics

By [James M. Dorsey](#)

Global Research, December 06, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Law and Justice](#)

A [draft US Senate resolution](#) describing Saudi policy in the Middle East as a “wrecking ball” and **Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** as “complicit” in the killing of journalist **Jamal Khashoggi**, if adopted and implemented, potentially could change the dynamics of the region’s politics and create an initial exit from almost a decade of mayhem, conflict and bloodshed.

The six-page draft also holds Prince Mohammed accountable for the devastating war in Yemen that has sparked one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, the failure to end the 17-month-old Saudi-United Arab Emirates-led economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar, and the jailing and torture of Saudi dissidents and activists.

In doing so, the resolution confronts not only Prince Mohammed’s policies but also by implication those of his closest ally, UAE crown prince **Mohammed bin Zayed**. The UAE was [the first country that Saudi leader visited](#) after the Khashoggi killing.

By in effect challenging the position of king-in-waiting Prince Mohammed, the resolution raises the question whether some of his closest allies, including the UAE crown prince, will in future want to be identified that closely with him.

Moreover, by demanding the release of activist **Raif bin Muhammad Badawi**, better known as Raif Badawi, and women’s rights activists, the resolution further the challenges fundamentals of Prince Mohammed’s iron-fisted repression of his critics, the extent of his proposed social reforms as part of his drive to diversify and streamline the Saudi economy, and the kingdom’s human rights record.

A 34-year-old blogger who named his website Free Saudi Liberals, Mr. Badawi was barred from travel and had his assets frozen in 2009, arrested in 2012, and [sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for insulting Islam](#). His sister, **Samar Badawi**, a women’s rights activist, was detained earlier this year. Mr. Badawi’s wife and children were granted asylum and citizenship in Canada.

[A diplomatic row that stunned many erupted](#) in August when Saudi Arabia expelled the Canadian ambassador after the foreign ministry in Ottawa demanded in a tweet the release of Ms. Badawi and other activists.

Prince Mohammed and Saudi Arabia, even prior to introduction of the Senate resolution, were discovering that the Khashoggi killing had weakened the kingdom internationally and had made it more vulnerable to pressure.

[Talks in Sweden between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Houthi rebels](#) to end the war is the most immediate consequence of the kingdom's changing position.

So is the resolution that is unprecedented in the scope and harshness of the criticism of a long-standing ally.

While the resolution is likely to spark initial anger among some of Prince's Mohammed's allies, it nevertheless, if adopted and/or implemented, could persuade some like UAE crown prince Mohammed to rethink their fundamental strategies.

The relationship between the two Mohammeds constituted a cornerstone of the UAE leader's strategy to achieve his political, foreign policy and defense goals.

These include projecting the Emirates as a guiding light of cutting-edge Arab and Muslim modernity; ensuring that the Middle East fits the crown prince's autocratic, anti-Islamist mould; and enabling the UAE, [described by US defense secretary Jim Mattis as 'Little Sparta.'](#) to punch above its weight politically, diplomatically and militarily.

To compensate for the Emirates' small size, Prince Mohammed opted to [pursue his goals in part by working through the Saudi royal court.](#) In leaked emails, UAE ambassador to Washington Yousef al-Otaiba, a close associate of Prince Mohammed, said of the Saudi crown prince that

"I don't think we'll ever see a more pragmatic leader in that country."

Mr. Al-Otaiba went on to say:

"I think in the long term we might be a good influence on KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), at least with certain people there. Our relationship with them is based on strategic depth, shared interests, and most importantly the hope that we could influence them. Not the other way around."

The impact of the Senate resolution and what it means for the US policy will to a large extent depend on the politics of the differences between the Congress and President Donald J. Trump who has so far sought to shield the Saudi crown prince.

To further do so, Mr. Trump, with or without the resolution, would likely have to pressure Saudi Arabia to give him something tangible to work with such as an immediate release of imprisoned activists followed by a resolution of the Qatar crisis as well as some indication that the Yemen peace negotiations are progressing.

Whichever way, the fallout of the Khashoggi killing, culminating in unprecedented Congressional anger against Prince Mohammed and the kingdom, is likely to have significant consequences not only for the Saudi crown prince but potentially also for the strategy of his UAE counterpart.

That in turn could create light at the end of the Middle East's tunnel of almost a decade of volatility and violent and bloody conflict that has been driven by Saudi and UAE assertiveness in countering dissent at home and abroad in the wake of the 2011 popular Arab revolts as well as Iran that has played its part in countries like Syria and Yemen in

fuelling destruction and bloodshed.

\*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

*This article was originally published on the author's blog site: [The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer](#).*

**Dr. James M. Dorsey** is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, co-director of the University of Würzburg's Institute for Fan Culture, and co-host of the [New Books in Middle Eastern Studies](#) podcast. James is the author of [The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer](#) blog, a [book](#) with the same title and a co-authored volume, [Comparative Political Transitions between Southeast Asia and the Middle East and North Africa](#) as well as [Shifting Sands, Essays on Sports and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa](#) and just published [China and the Middle East: Venturing into the Maelstrom](#)

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [James M. Dorsey](#), Global Research, 2018

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [James M. Dorsey](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)