

The Political Economy of East Asia-Saudi Arabia Relations

Abstract

Over the past half century, Saudi Arabia has been the largest source of oil for East Asia. Through oil trade, East Asian states and Saudi Arabia have maintained highly reciprocal relations: the supply of oil by Saudi Arabia has been integral to the energy security of East Asian states, while the demand of East Asian states for oil has been central to the fiscal security of Saudi Arabia. This oil-centred narrative of East Asia-Saudi Arabia relations is, however, no longer sufficient today. With the new oil boom now over, the Saudi government has begun embarking on the transformation of its oil economy. Accordingly, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the son of King Salman, visited Beijing and Tokyo in August and September 2016 to re-align Saudi Arabia's ties with these two East Asian powers under its new economic blueprint 'Vision 2030'. How can we understand this new development?