

The Hidden Winner: How Saudi Arabia Benefits from Trump's Iran Strikes and the Constitutional Questions It Raises

Executive Summary

On June 21, 2025, President Trump ordered devastating U.S. airstrikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities, fundamentally altering Middle Eastern power dynamics. While Saudi Arabia publicly condemned the attacks, a deeper strategic analysis reveals the Kingdom emerged as the primary beneficiary—achieving critical security objectives without cost or risk. This outcome raises serious constitutional questions given Trump's extensive financial entanglements with Saudi Arabia, potentially violating the Constitution's Foreign Emoluments Clause.

The Strategic Calculus: What Really Happened

The Nuclear Threat Eliminated

The U.S. strikes targeted Iran's most critical nuclear infrastructure: the Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan facilities. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth declared that Iran's "nuclear ambitions have been obliterated," using 14 bunker-buster bombs, over two dozen Tomahawk missiles, and more than 125 military aircraft in "Operation Midnight."

For Saudi Arabia, this represents the resolution of its greatest existential threat. The Kingdom has never viewed Iran's nuclear program as civilian, consistently assuming Tehran's ultimate goal was nuclear weaponization. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 2018 warning that "If Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit" reflected genuine Saudi fears about regional nuclear proliferation.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been locked in a decades-long competition for regional influence, intensified since the Arab Spring. Iran's potential nuclear capability represented an unacceptable shift in the regional balance of power that Saudi Arabia was prepared to counter with its own nuclear program—a development that would have shattered the global non-proliferation regime.

The Perfect Strategic Outcome

The U.S. strikes delivered Saudi Arabia an optimal result: the elimination of Iran's nuclear threat without any Saudi fingerprints on the operation. This represents a masterclass in strategic positioning:

Risk Avoidance: Saudi Arabia avoided the massive risks of direct military confrontation with Iran, which could have triggered attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure, including the world's largest oil processing facilities. Iranian capabilities include thousands of missiles capable of reaching Saudi territory, cyber warfare capabilities, and proxy forces throughout the region.

Cost Avoidance: The Kingdom avoided the enormous financial and political costs of developing its own nuclear deterrent, which would have invited international sanctions, damaged its modernization ambitions, and potentially triggered a regional arms race.

Plausible Deniability: By publicly condemning the strikes, Saudi Arabia maintains its diplomatic relationships while privately celebrating the outcome. This allows the Kingdom to position itself as a responsible regional mediator while reaping the security benefits.

Saudi Arabia's Enhanced Strategic Position

Regional Leadership Through Mediation

The strikes have paradoxically enhanced Saudi Arabia's diplomatic influence. Intelligence reports indicate that Iran has asked Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Oman to press President Trump for an immediate ceasefire in exchange for Tehran's flexibility in nuclear negotiations. This positions Saudi Arabia as an indispensable broker between the United States and Iran.

This mediating role serves multiple Saudi interests:

- **Diplomatic Prestige:** Establishing the Kingdom as the premier Gulf power capable of influencing both Washington and Tehran
- **Economic Protection:** Ensuring any resolution protects Saudi economic interests and investment projects
- **Strategic Hedging:** Maintaining relationships with all parties while serving Saudi interests first

Oil Market Advantages

The conflict has created significant advantages for Saudi Arabia in global energy markets:

Price Benefits: Oil prices spiked following the conflict, with analysts warning prices could reach \$120 per barrel if the Strait of Hormuz is disrupted. Saudi Arabia, with its massive spare capacity of approximately 3 million barrels per day (representing 60% of global spare capacity), is perfectly positioned to benefit from higher prices.

Market Share: Any disruption to Iranian oil exports (currently around 1.7 million barrels per day) can be quickly replaced by Saudi production, allowing the Kingdom to capture market share while commanding premium prices.

Strategic Leverage: The Kingdom's unique position as the holder of the world's largest spare capacity buffer gives it enormous influence over global energy markets, particularly during times of crisis.

Trump's Saudi Financial Web

Current Business Entanglements

President Trump's financial relationships with Saudi Arabia have expanded significantly during his second term, creating a complex web of potential conflicts:

Real Estate Projects: The Trump Organization currently has three major projects underway in Saudi Arabia, including:

- A \$530 million Trump Tower in Jeddah
- Two additional residential projects in Riyadh
- Golf course developments

These projects are developed in partnership with Dar Global, a firm with close ties to the Saudi government.

Investment Relationships: The broader Trump family business ecosystem includes:

- Jared Kushner's Affinity Partners, which secured \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund
- World Liberty Financial's cryptocurrency ventures receiving Emirati backing
- The Saudi-backed LIV Golf tournaments hosted at Trump properties

Historical Ties: Trump's financial relationship with Saudi Arabia spans decades:

- 1991: Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal purchased Trump's yacht when Trump was \$900 million in debt
- 2001: Saudi Arabia purchased the entire 45th floor of Trump World Tower for its UN mission
- Multiple Saudi stays at Trump hotels generating hundreds of thousands in revenue

The \$600 Billion Framework

During Trump's May 2025 visit to Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom announced a \$600 billion investment commitment in the United States, including:

- \$20 billion in AI data centers and energy infrastructure
- \$142 billion in defense sales agreements
- Various technology and infrastructure partnerships

This massive financial framework creates ongoing relationships between the Trump administration and Saudi economic interests.

Constitutional Implications: The Emoluments Problem

The Foreign Emoluments Clause

The Constitution's Foreign Emoluments Clause (Article I, Section 9, Clause 8) states that no person holding any "Office of Profit or Trust" under the United States shall "accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State" without Congressional consent.

Federal courts have interpreted "emolument" broadly to encompass "any profit, gain, or advantage" received from foreign governments. The clause was designed as "a broad prophylactic rule to prevent foreign governments from essentially purchasing undue influence."

The Constitutional Violation Framework

Trump's situation presents several concerning elements:

Ongoing Financial Benefits: Unlike his first term, Trump has not divested from his business empire and continues to profit from foreign government transactions. The Trump Organization has revised its ethics policy to explicitly allow transactions with foreign partners.

No Congressional Consent: Trump has never sought or received Congressional consent for these foreign financial relationships, despite constitutional requirements.

Decision-Making Influence: The timing and strategic benefits of the Iran strikes to Saudi Arabia raise questions about whether Trump's foreign policy decisions are influenced by financial considerations rather than pure national security interests.

Historical Context

During Trump's first presidency, Congressional Democrats documented that Trump "accepted at least \$7.8 million from at least 20 foreign governments, including China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait" without Congressional approval. The current situation represents a significant escalation in both the scale of financial relationships and the potential for policy influence.

The Broader Constitutional Crisis

Precedent and Future Implications

The Supreme Court's decision to dismiss emoluments cases against Trump during his first term as "moot" created a dangerous precedent. As one constitutional scholar noted: "Any future president can use the Trump experience as a guide to avoid the constitutional prohibition on foreign emoluments. So long as foreign governments' political spending is laundered through a future president's business, he or she can make the argument that this is perfectly fine since Trump did it."

The Framers' Intent

The Framers included the Foreign Emoluments Clause because they recognized that foreign financial influence represented one of the gravest threats to American independence. Alexander Hamilton warned about the "corruption of foreign force and influence" as "one of the most baneful foes of republican government."

The Iran strikes scenario represents exactly what the Framers feared: major foreign policy decisions that strategically benefit a foreign government with which the President has substantial financial relationships.

Implications and Recommendations

Immediate Concerns

1. **Policy Integrity:** Whether U.S. foreign policy decisions are being made based on national security interests or financial considerations affecting the President's business empire.
2. **Allied Relationships:** How other regional partners and allies view U.S. decision-making when they perceive financial conflicts of interest.
3. **Constitutional Governance:** The erosion of constitutional guardrails against foreign influence on American officials.

Systemic Reforms Needed

1. **Congressional Action:** Congress should clarify and strengthen emoluments enforcement mechanisms, including:
 - Mandatory divestiture requirements for presidents with significant business interests
 - Real-time reporting requirements for foreign financial relationships
 - Explicit enforcement mechanisms with meaningful penalties
2. **Judicial Clarity:** Courts should provide clear guidance on the scope and application of the Emoluments Clauses to prevent future constitutional violations.
3. **Executive Branch Ethics:** Strengthened ethics enforcement within the executive branch, including independent oversight of presidential business relationships.

Conclusion

The U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities represent a case study in how financial entanglements can create constitutional crises. While the military action may serve legitimate national security objectives, the strategic benefits to Saudi Arabia—combined with Trump's extensive financial relationships with the Kingdom—raise profound questions about the integrity of American decision-making.

Saudi Arabia achieved its optimal outcome: the elimination of Iran's nuclear threat without cost, risk, or responsibility. The Kingdom's enhanced regional position and oil market advantages represent a geopolitical windfall that directly benefits Trump's business partner.

The Framers designed the Foreign Emoluments Clause to prevent exactly this scenario—where foreign financial relationships could compromise presidential judgment and undermine loyalty to the United States. The current situation demonstrates that these 18th-century concerns remain devastatingly relevant in the 21st century.

Without serious constitutional reforms and enforcement mechanisms, future presidents will continue to exploit the precedent set by the Trump administration, potentially subordinating American foreign policy to personal financial interests. The stakes could not be higher for American democracy and constitutional governance.

This analysis is based on public reporting and constitutional interpretation. The author calls for full transparency regarding all financial relationships between the Trump administration and foreign governments to ensure constitutional compliance and public accountability.