

Saudi Vision 2030 As Political Policy to Maintain Ibn Saud's Regime

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Abstract Economic stability plays an important role in bringing political stability. Seeing from historical studies during the Arab Spring events in the Middle East Region, that economic instability has an impact on political instability which ultimately forces regimes in power to lay down their "crowns". The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was not directly affected by the Arab Spring events, seems to have learned a lesson from this incident. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which until now still relies heavily on state revenue from oil and natural gas, seems to be seriously thinking about economic diversification. The dependence of a nation state on just one economic sector makes the potential for failure to maintain economic stability very high, plus oil and natural gas are non-renewable natural resources. This condition causes oil and gas to gradually run out and if this happens it will greatly affect the economic stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, economic instability can also affect the position of Ibn Saud's regime as ruler. Saudi Vision 2030 is present in the principle of creating economic diversification that will result in a sustainable economy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and furthermore it is hoped that it can maintain the country's economic stability and ultimately secure the power of the Ibn Saud regime.

Keywords: Economic stability, Ibn Saud regime

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the exploration of petroleum in around 1938 was initiated by a collaboration between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States through the oil company ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has depended on the proceeds from the sale of petroleum. (Brown, 1999). All of the country's economic activities depend on the proceeds from the sale of petroleum starting from government subsidies to infrastructure development (Brown, 1999). One thing that will be of concern later is that petroleum is not a natural resource that can be renewed, so that over time the oil reserves in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will also run out. The Kingdom's excessive economic dependence on petroleum products can have an impact on the country's economic instability. An unstable economic situation can have an impact on political stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began to think seriously about economic diversification which had actually been launched since 1970 (Grand & Wolf, 2020). Economic diversification can be said to be an effort to diversify production which can have an impact on reducing dependence on certain products. The current King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz together with the Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman issued a reform policy to accelerate economic diversification in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the title Saudi Vision 2030 (Grand & Wolf, 2020).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's economic dependence on petroleum, which is an unrenewable natural resource, in the long term can have an impact on the country's economic stability which in turn can also affect the country's political stability. The stability of the political situation of a nation state can further maintain regime resilience. The Arabian Spring or Arab Spring also reflects how economic instability can affect political stability. Departing from the explanation above, this research will discuss how the Saudi Vision 2030 policy can become a political policy to maintain the ibn Saud regime in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

II. METHODS

This research uses qualitative research using exploratory analysis. Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry, in which researchers make interpretations of what they see, hear and understand. The strategy in conducting qualitative research is to focus on data collection, analysis, and author (Creswell, 2009). Considering that this research will discuss the efforts of the Saudi Arabian government to defend its regime, a qualitative research approach can be said to be appropriate to uncover the research problems.

The author uses a form of library research, where researchers observe the object of research through library materials in the form of books, journals, previous research reports, and internet media (Creswell,

2009). Meanwhile, the data used to analyze the above problems include the original transcript of Saudi Vision 2030, news about policies taken by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the framework of Saudi Vision 2030, related research such as research from Grand and Wolf entitled *Assessing Saudi Vision 2030: A 2020 Review*, as well as books such as the writings of Hubbard with the title *MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed bin Salman*.

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Transformation Plan to Implement Saudi Vision 2030

It can be said that 70% of the economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia depends on petroleum revenues since 1970 (Grand and Wolff, 2020). The great dependence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on petroleum makes economic stability very vulnerable. The economic stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is vulnerable because oil is a natural resource that cannot be renewed so that eventually the oil reserves will eventually run out. The Kingdom's excessive dependence on petroleum products has made the economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia begin to stagnate. In the last 5 years, the economic growth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can be said to have stagnated at an average position of 2% and even in 2017 the economic growth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was at a position of -0.9% (EIA, 2004).

In order to leave the economy's dependence on petroleum revenues, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issued a policy of Saudi Vision 2030. Saudi Vision 2030 is an accelerated effort to create economic diversification and ultimately create a sustainable economy. Economic diversification has actually been the goal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since the 1970s in its Development Plan policies, but Saudi Vision 2030 has more of a clear objective. The main vision of Saudi Vision 2030 is to make the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the heart of the Arab and Islamic world, as an investment powerhouse, and a connector between three continents (Saudi Vision, 2016). In order to realize this vision, Saudi Vision 2030 has three pillars, namely **A Vibrant Society, Thriving Economy, and An Ambition Nation** (Saudi Vision, 2016).

Under the leadership of the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Bin Salman, Saudi Vision 2030 was implemented in several government policies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Muhammad bin Salman, carried out a transformation of Religious Institutions in order to create a vibrant society. Muhammad bin Salman made changes to the *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar Institute* of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Efforts to moderate Islam in Saudi Arabia were later contained in the decision of the Saudi Council of Ministers, or a cabinet institution led directly by the Crown Prince or Prime Minister, to limit the authority of the Religious Police of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is under the *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar Institute* of the Arab Kingdom Arabia. The limitation of the powers of the Religious Police of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lies with their powers of arrest and detention. Based on the new regulation issued by the Saudi Council of Ministers, there are 12 articles but there are articles that limit the authority of the Religious Police of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regard to human rights. Among the articles that reduce the authority of the Religious Police of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are as follows:

"Neither the heads nor members of The Committee are to stop or arrest or chase people or ask for their IDs or follow them – that is considered the jurisdiction of the police or the drug unit." (Aljazeera, 2016).

In addition to reforming the religious institutions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Salman also took several policies to loosen religious rules and norms to encourage the creation of a vibrant society. The policy of loosening up the rules or Islamic norms that are enforced includes allowing women to drive, permitting music concerts, and opening cinemas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia without separation between men and women (Hubbard, 2020). These policies demonstrate the seriousness of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in realizing Saudi Vision 2030. With a dynamic society, it is hoped that it can create a social climate that supports Saudi Vision 2030.

In the second pillar manifestation, namely the thriving economy, several policies have also been taken. Some of the policies taken to manifest a thriving economy are the megaproject of the metropolitan city NEOM and an IPO for ARAMCO. In encouraging investment and tourism, a large new metropolitan city project called NEOM began to be built in 2017 (Saudi Vision, 2016). In addition, currently the opening of the road to invest in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also being implemented. One example of a policy to open roads to invest in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the enactment of an IPO for the Aramco oil company (Turak, 2019). In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the administration of Muhammad bin Salman also promotes the tourism sector. Several policies to boost the tourism sector are opening cinemas, bringing in international artists to hold concerts in Saudi Arabia, and promoting historical sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Hubbard, 2020).

The manifestation of the third pillar or an Ambitious Nation government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very firm in cracking down on corruption. In the spirit of fighting corruption, Muhammad bin Salman gave political instructions to arrest several senior Royal families on corruption charges. In May 2017

Muhammad bin Salman issued a statement that he would be very committed to cracking down on corruption cases regardless of the status of the perpetrators of corruption.

"I confirm to you, no one will survive in a corruption case—whoever he is, even if he's a prince or a minister" (Waldman & Carey, 2017).

In November 2017 Muhammad bin Salman ordered the detention of 200 businessmen as well as the prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in suspected corruption cases. The detention of 200 people included the names of one of the businessmen and Prince Al Waleed bin Talal (Dailysabah, 2017).

On another occasion, other officials of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who are also the Senior Family of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were also arrested on the same charges. Among those also arrested on charges of corruption were Mutaib bin Abdullah, head of the Saudi Arabian National Guard, Adel Fakeih, Minister of Economy and Planning, and Commander of the Saudi Navy, Admiral Abdullah bin Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Sultan (Kirkpatrick, 2017). This massive campaign of arrests appears to be the latest step towards consolidating the power of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Hubbard, 2020). After that this arrest operation was legitimized by the formation of the Anti-Corruption Committee which was chaired directly by Muhammad bin Salman.

3.2 Saudi Vision 2030 as Political Policy for Maintaining Ibn Saud Regime

Seeing the explanation above, it can be said that Saudi Vision 2030 is an effort to accelerate economic diversification and in the end it is hoped that it will create economic sustainability in Saudi Arabia and can maintain the country's economic stability. The economic stability of a nation state can have an impact on political stability.

To carry out an in-depth analysis of Saudi Vision 2030 as an effort to defend Ibn Saud's regime, this research will use the regime of security theory. The security regime theory emphasizes the role of internal security threats as a major factor in the state security strategy (Koblentz, 2013). In this case it can be said that the country's economic stability can be interpreted as a potential internal threat, so the economic stability of Saudi Arabia is a major factor in the country's security strategy. This theory also emphasizes that the unit of analysis is the regime not the state, whereas the regime itself is defined as a small group of people who hold the highest positions in the country or are elites who effectively lead the country (Koblentz, 2013). Meanwhile regime security can be defined as a condition in which the ruling elite is safe from domestic "challenges" to its government. Reflecting on the Arab Spring event where economic instability was one of the main factors in the occurrence of political instability that could bring down the regime, it can be said that the potential for shaking of economic stability in Saudi Arabia could be a threat to Ibn Saud's regime.

For regime rulers, concern for the survival of the regime translates into vigilance, oppression of rivals and potential challengers (Koblentz, 2013). This tactic has been used to neutralize political rivals, weaken groups that threaten the power of the rulers, or prevent the emergence of potential rival powerhouses (Koblentz, 2013). It can be said that Saudi Vision 2030 is a political step taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to be aware of the potential emergence of political rivals if Saudi Arabia is hit by economic instability because it is too dependent on revenues from oil and gas. In manifesting Saudi Vision 2030, the policies taken by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman have indications of oppressing political rivals and potential political challengers or weakening groups that threaten the power of the rulers, or prevent the emergence of powerhouses of potential competitors.

Regime security theory also predicts that regime leaders who face intense internal threats will choose the allies who are most capable or most willing to provide assistance in facing these domestic challenges (Koblentz, 2013). This explains why the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seems to side with the young citizens of Saudi Arabia because young citizens currently constitute the majority of the population in Saudi Arabia. Apart from the majority of the population in Saudi Arabia, young citizens of Saudi Arabia can be said to play an important role in the realization of Saudi Vision 2030. The important role of young Saudi Arabians in the realization of Saudi Vision 2030 is because young people are expected to become human resources who can bear the ideals of economic sustainability as a role. the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. Apart from that, young people also play an important role in creating a social climate that supports Saudi Vision 2030. Furthermore, youth groups have an important role in strengthening economic stability as the ultimate goal of Saudi Vision 2030.

In the end Saudi Vision could also be used as an instrument to protect Ibn Saud's regime. This can be explained from the logic of thinking that the ultimate goal of Saudi Vision 2030 is to strengthen economic stability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a result of the presence of a sustainable economy from economic diversification efforts. Economic stability can then create political stability. Every effort has

been made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to manifest Saudi Vision 2030 because in the end political stability can safeguard the security of Ibn Saud's regime to continue to rule in Saudi Arabia.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Saudi Vision 2030 is a policy to accelerate economic diversification so as to create a sustainable economy and maintain the country's economic stability. Saudi Vision 2030 has three main pillars, namely, A Vibrant Society, Thriving Economy, and An Ambition Nation. In order to realize these three pillars, several policies were taken by the Kingdom. It can be said that the policies of the Kingdom center on the social transformation of society, the transformation of religious institutions, the transformation of the bureaucracy and the enforcement of corruption.

The announcement of the Saudi Vision 2030 policy can be said to be an effort to securitize the economic sector carried out by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The securitization of the economic sector is due to the stagnant economic growth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because it is very dependent on oil and natural gas products. Furthermore, this economic securitization is also an effort to maintain economic stability from the creation of a sustainable economy which is the result of economic diversification. Stability Economic stability can then create political stability. All efforts have been made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to realize Saudi Vision 2030 because in the end political stability can safeguard the security of Ibn Saud's regime to continue to rule in Saudi Arab

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