

**SAUDI ARABIA'S REFORMATION UNDER CROWN PRINCE SALMAN
ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS WOMEN'S RIGHTS (2017-2018)**

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Abstract

Saudi Arabia is a country that adheres to the strict sharia law system or Wahhabism. In Wahhabism perspectives, the women must have male guardianship to consent a variety of actions. However, in 2017, the Kingdom announced the policy about women's right. The paper aims to answer the question about why did Saudi Arabia under Crown Prince Salman make a policy reformation towards Women's Rights in the year of 2017-2018. The method used is descriptive qualitative method by utilizing secondary data. While the technique of collecting data through library research. The theory used in this study are Regime and Constructivism theory. The study found out that the actions from Saudi Arabia to make policy towards Women's Rights because there was intention to shape the state became moderate state.

Keyword(s) : Saudi Arabia's Reformation, Women's Right,

Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is known as one of the main players in the Arab World. The land of Saudi Arabia is double that of Germany and France combined. Thus, it made Saudi Arabia become the largest state in the Middle East then followed by Iran. The state is also known as the birthplace of Islam and its colossal status as the highest oil producer and exporter in the world with a quarter of the world's proven reserves under its desert (News, 2018).

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy state that applies a strict form of sharia law that enforces a form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism. (Hubbard, 2017) For more detail, Wahhabism is a movement in Islam that aimed at "purification" and the return to Islam that the Prophet Muhammad taught. The two main points are the Qur'an and Sunnah. There are also hadith stories that are not included in the Quran that describe about how the Prophet and the four pious Caliphs dealt with the issues in the public and private spheres. These, together with the Qur'an, form the basis of Sharia Law. It also concerns everyday value and moral behaviour including gender segregation, subordination for women that every woman must have "male guardianship" and dress codes. Therefore, women will not be able to travel, drive, work or even access healthcare and other actions without receiving written permission from a male guardian or accompanied by them (Conversation, 2015).

Recently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is entering a new stage of administration. It all started with the death of the previous King that was King Abdullah in late January 2015 which brought a transition of power to the previous Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, he is Salman bin Abdul Aziz that has placed the position became a King of Saudi Arabia. After King Salman became a king, in 2017, he moved his eldest son to elevate to replace him as a crown prince. He is Mohammed bin Salman, the first as the second-in-line to the throne. Crown Prince Salman who was 32 years old who acceded to the throne and continued the King Abdullah journey in leading the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BBC, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, power behind the throne, 2018).

The youngest defence minister in the world, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, he is Mohammed bin Salman also the Chairman of Council of Economic and Development Affairs, which oversees the kingdom's economic affairs, ultimately shaping its political and security policies. Prior to his latest arrangements, Prince

Salman spent various years as his father's personal aide. He was previously president of his father's Royal Court with the rank of minister when King Salman was crown prince (Al-Jazeera, 2017).

Under the Leadership era of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, He has brought the year 2017 transformational for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Previously, Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world where a woman could get to prison because of driving. In 2014, Loujain Hathloul was arrested after trying to cross the border from the United Arab Emirates into Saudi Arabia and detained for 73 days. However, in September 2017 he announced that Saudi Arabia's Government finally agrees to lifting ban on woman driver that will take action in June 2018 (Hvdit, 2018).

Other than that, In January 2018, Saudi Arabia allowed women to spectate at a football match for the first time, and the following month the kingdom opened applications for women to join its military. This reformation that is being done by Prince Mohamad bin Salman has brought significant change for "how the world see" Saudi Arabia (Hvdit, 2018).

The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia also alleviate the restrictions on how women in Saudi Arabia were dressed and an expansion of their role in the work force. The women in Saudi Arabia can choose themselves whether they want to wear face covering and black robes. It can be said that women can decide what type of decent and respectful attire she chooses to wear.

The reformation was very remarkable for people in Saudi Arabia especially for the women, because Saudi Arabia is known as an ultra-conservative country that has more "rules" for women to act and a very large gender gap between women and men. However, in the era of Crown Prince Salman, he strongly supported and directed his country that is Saudi Arabia towards women's rights. This is evidenced by policies that has changed to achieve the goals of equalizing gender.

Therefore, with the policy reforms carried out by Saudi Arabia in reducing the level of discrimination against women, it is important to find out and discussed about the reason behind the issue of women rights that being uplifted during the new administration under Crown Prince Salman of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Theoretical Framework

1. Regime Theory

Regime theory develops from a realist perspective in the study of international relations. Regime theory is the effort of researchers with a realist perspective to adjust the current conditions in the phenomenon of international relations, especially the decreasing hegemonic influence. Many scholars define the regime theory, one of them is Stephen D. Krasner.

According to Stephen D. Krasner, the regime is “ a set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.

1. Principles; are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude.
2. Norms; are standards of behavior defined in term of rights and obligation.
3. Rules; are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action.

4. Decision-making procedures; are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice” (Krasner, 1982) .

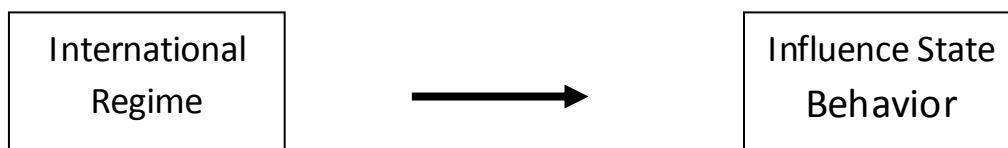
It can be simplified that the regime in general is the principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures are relating to the expectations of the actors and their various interests on an issue.

Other than that, according to survey from Marc Levy, Oran Young, and Michael Ziirn, Regime is social institutions that influence the behavior of the state and its people. They consist of informal and formal principles and norms, as well as special rules and procedures and programs. This term is explicitly broad and captures unwritten understanding and relationships, as well as formal legal agreements, which affect how countries and individuals behave in certain issues areas. Oran Young also explain that there are four things that cause the formation of an international regime, namely: 1) the results of bargaining between two or more countries; 2) the result of coercion from the

dominant actor (hegemon); 3) formed spontaneously in response to mutual interests; 4) the results of an agreement or contract between countries that have the same interests. (Marc A. Levy, 1995). Meanwhile, John Ruggie states that the international regime as a set of or shared expectations, rules, plans, organizational and financial commitments that have been accepted and agreed upon by a group of countries.

It can be concluded that, International Regime share understanding of desirable that requiring states to behave in accordance with certain principles, norms and rules. This understanding have to approved by the other states. The form of regime could be convention, organization, treaty and etc.

Chart 1.1 International Regime Theory

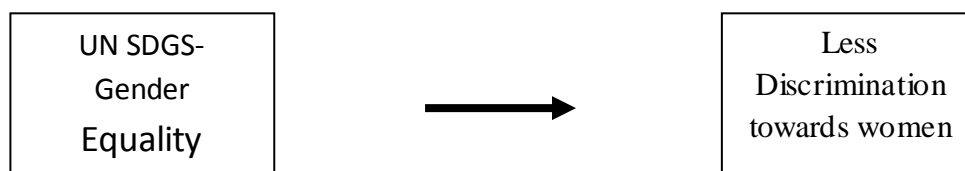


The theory is in line with what happened in Saudi Arabia, where the idea or issue of Gender Equality that already adopted in almost all country around the world made Saudi Arabia affected and took a stand from it. In nowadays era, almost all of the country agreed with the idea of equality. This representing the decreasing of discrimination, widen up the door of opportunities and one of the way to achieve prosperity. This can be said as the global ideas, where most of the countries share the common thought toward this issue. In the implementation, this idea has different approaches in influencing the state, depends on the situation and identity of the state itself.

In Saudi Arabia, This theory works in such way where Saudi Arabia as one of 193 members states of the United Nations has ratified The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by the United Nations. There are 17 points in Sustainable Development Goals

Specifically number five (5) is about the Gender Equality. The idea of Gender Equality is actually contradictive with the value that already being implemented in Saudi Arabia for a long time, or it is well known as Wahabbism. However from this thing, it can be seen that the global values which being delivered through SDGs could have the impact and change the idea that eventually will shaped a state behavior. A state that used to have a strong value in its country, now could replaced and adopted the new values. The United Nations has a role as an international support structure that influence Saudi Arabia to make a policy that friendly or less discrimination to women.

Chart 1. 2. The Implementation of the Theory



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically point no 5 about Gender Equality is the key role in the implementation of this theory. In this point, it is explaining about the importance of equality between man and women in nowadays era. It is also about giving the women the same opportunity as the man as well as to reduce the number of discrimination among them. The idea of gender equality is categorized as the international regime idea that eventually could affect the state behavior. The changing of state behavior here is in the scope of the decreasing level of discrimination towards women in Saudi Arabia.

2. Constructivism

Critical Theory in the science of International Relations, is not a single theory but consists of various groups of theories namely; Feminist, Neo-Marxist, Postmodernist and Constructivism. The similarity that unites them is that all theories believe that "world politics is socially constructed". The main arguments for critical theory are: The main structure of international politics is social, not material. This structure forms the identity and interests of the actor.

The concept of identity began to emerge as an approach to foreign policy analysis in the early 1990s, along with the rise in popularity of constructivism theory in the science of international relations. In the philosophical sense an identity is whatever makes a thing what it is. According to Wendt " Identity is at base a subjective or unit-level quality, rooted in an actor's self-understandings". However, Wendt emphasized that this understanding will depend on other actors who have or represent the perspectives of the actor. In other words, ideas that will become identities can enter if those held by the Self and those held by the Other. Identities are constituted by both internal and external structures (Wendt, 1999). In this research of thesis, the actor that involved is Saudi Arabia. However, there are also structures that influence Saudi Arabia such as the international organization.

Constructivist believe that state identity is formed from the normative aspects that exist in life. Identity that is formed from these norms will later shape and influence the interests of what the country wants to achieve, because norms that shape a country's identity, and norms continue to change, the interests of a country will continue to change. It emphasizes that understanding how international relations actors build their interests is very important. By understanding how these interests are formed, we will be able to explain the international political phenomena that occur. By means of the change in the interests of a country, the country's policies will also change. This indicates a linear relationship between norms, identities, interests and policies set by a country (Khairnar, 2014). in this case, many international relations researchers use constructivism theory in analyzing international phenomena. Most of them highlight how identity has a significant influence on their foreign policy, this is accordance with what Alexander Wendt said in his book, "Identities are the basis of interest". So it can be concluded that identity is a source that influences interests, and interests are a basic source of foreign policy.

To facilitate the discussion of the theory, we can see the picture below;

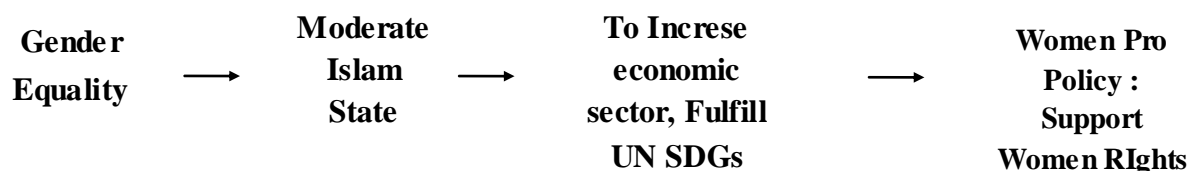
Chart 1. 3. Analysis of Foreign Policy Constructivism Theory



In an identity-based analysis approach from constructivism theory, this theory explains the root or origin of an interest where the identity is dynamic and formed through social interaction. With the result, it can be concluded that function of interest is to connecting variable between identity and national interest.

By using the formula, the researcher will analyze about how the Saudi Arabia's identity which is known as the state that did not support the gender equality were changing because the ideas or thoughts were changing as well. The Changing of ideas or norms cause the state's identity from ultra-conservative state become less conservative. In other words, the changing of idea generate the action or policy of the state regarding to the ideas.

Chart 1.4. Implementation of the Theory the theory



Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the discussion in previous chapters, Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy state that applies a strict of sharia law that enforces a form of Sunni Islam known

as Wahhabism and it concerned on everyday value and moral behaviour including gender segregation, subordination for women that every women must have “male guardianship” and dress codes. Therefore, women will not be able to travel, drive, work or even access healthcare and other actions without receive written permission from a male guardian or accompanied by them.

However, in 2017 under the leadership of Crown Prince Salman after ascending to the throne, he made significant changes to the Saudi Arabian community, especially towards women. Such as the lift the driving ban on women, women can enter the stadium, women able to open their own businesses without male permission and many more.

The research and observation which has been studied through deep analysis and understanding by using the relevant theories it was founded that there are so many variables and aspect that could make Saudi Arabia willing to change its identity specifically in terms of women rights. This is something that considered as a huge and tremendous change by the global world, for such a country which has ultra-conservative values could change and adopt the global values which one of them is Gender Equality.

All of the arguments and statements lead to the reason why Saudi Arabia under the Prince Salman administration do the reformation towards women's rights is because the country adopts the global values and realize the importance of equality in gender that was being done through the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Later, after this realization, Saudi Arabia also adopt this values into its own way by making Saudi Vision 2030 that the values inside it contain the same value as SDGs, but more specifically was to achieve the Saudi Arabia’s personal interests and goals.

A dynamic and maneuver change is not something new in International Relations world. Saudi Arabia realized the importance of adjusting its values and direction towards the global world. It is considered one of Saudi Arabia’s strategy to create a new image building in the global world but also to increase the economy level in a moderate way. All of the variables are in line with the goals that owned by Saudi Arabia. The collaboration and adoption between United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Saudi Vision 2030 is the absolute prove where Saudi Arabia want to create a new stage of its country in order to keep on track with other countries in the world as well as one of the way to make a betterment in economy sector by giving women same rights with opportunities and chances.

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