

THE INTERVENTION OF SAUDI ARABIA IN YEMEN CIVIL WAR IN 2014-2017

CAMPUR TANGAN ARAB SAUDI TERHADAP PERANG SAUDARA DI YAMAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to answer the question about Why did Saudi Arabia Intervene in Yemen Civil War from 2014-2017? The intervention that was interfered by Arab Saudi who supported the government in Yemen against with the rebel Houthi's group. To puzzle out the question, this paper utilized strategy, and "Foreign Policy" concept by K. J. Holsti. This research found out that Saudi Arabia foreign policy strategy in the access of Strait of Bab el Mandeb and separated the hegemony power in the Middle East Region, Saudi Arabia tried to utilize its military intervention by fight with Houthi rebels. Those actions were taken by the government of Saudi Arabia in order to reduce the civil war and to create the stabilization within the region without eliminate the previous foreign policy objective.

Keyword(s): *Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy, Civil War, Houthi's Group*

Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by the Al-Saud (Saud Family/House of Saud) by using an absolute monarchy government system since its founding in 1932. Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula, in the western part bordering the red sea and in the East bordering with Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is directly borders the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar in the East, Oman and Yemen in the South. The country has an area of approximately 2,150,000 kilometres with a population of 31.7 million, the capital is Riyadh also the largest city in Saudi. Saudi Arabia is the fifth largest country in Asia and the largest country in the Middle East after Iran. Saudi Arabia is a country with a population of 100% Muslim, Sunni Islam conservative form of 85-95% of Sunni Muslim and Shia is 15-5%. (Dowley, 1998-2018)

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state, which has a close relationship with Islam, whether in ideology, religion and culture. Although Saudi Arabia is using religious guidelines and a form of absolute monarchy government, this does not make Saudi Arabia turn a blind eye to international relations. Saudi Arabia actively establish bilateral relations with several international organizations such as the UN, OIC, Arab League, GCC and other international organizations. Saudi Arabia foreign policy is divided into several phases which appropriate with its development and its power. The foreign politics of a country cannot be removed from the political situation in its country. The ideology of Saudi Arabia which contra radicalism and combination of the characteristic of Wahhabis which makes foreign policy have several phases. These phases have a relationship and are elements of the policies and ideals of Islam is Saudi Arabia.

These phases are:

1. Dynastic Alliance (1932-1956)

2. Arab Cold War (1956-1967)

3. Aid and Oil Politics (1967- present) (Ayyub, 1982)

Conflict, is the right word to describe the condition that occurs in Middle East region. The conflict happened not far from the problems of the authoritarian state leader, the opposition between Sunni and Shia, terrorism and political of oil. Yemen, is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East since 2004 until now is currently facing an internal conflict between the government of Yemen with a rebel group namely *Al-Houthi* (Sothern Yemen and Northern Yemen). As time goes by, this conflict becoming complex with the emergence of new parties involved in the conflict.

Historically, the conflict that occurred in Yemen is already happened before the existence of Arab Spring. In 1962, the military coup took place in Northern Yemen that ended the era of empires and initiated the new era which is republic. After the government of republic establish that was dominated by the Sunni, Sa'ada region that located in Northern Yemen which is the main base of the Shia camp already isolated to prevent them. Yemen was led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh did improved their relation with Saudi Arabia because the Wahhabis regime and also because they have the same interest to ensure that Yemen is never governed by the Shia.

At the moment, Yemen can be said as a new nation that was born from a conflict of civil war where the people in Yemen they still live below the poverty line. The government of Yemen also now face new conflict on the right against the Houthi rebels that based in Northern Yemen to against the government, and trying to occupy Yemen. Saudi Arabia had already actively contributed in the Yemen conflict, as well as now participated to help the government of Yemen.

Theoretical Framework

In order to explain this research, there are one theory and one concept that will be applied. In addition, the theory and concept that are applied have relations or connection with the rational actor and the decision making process units. This as an analysis because the problems occurred are very complete and not only can be explained by using one single part analysis. The theory of Foreign Policy Objectives by K.J. Holsti will be helpful in analyze the Saudi intervention to Yemen.

Foreign Policy, according to K.J. Holsti, Foreign Policy is an action or idea designed to solve problems or make changes in environment (Holsti, 1981). Generally, the function of foreign policy of each country is to ensure the national interest of the country and maintain the national security, prestige, as well as the benefit for the sake of the country.

K.J. Holsti divides the objectives to be 3 main criteria as followed:

1. Value, which is placed on the state's objective, as the main facts to encourage policy makers, it is done based on the resources who owned by the states in order to achieve the goal.

Saudi Arabia in maintaining its influence in the Middle East region, trying to do some policies that can expand its influence, as a goal to defend the value and interest such as ethnic, religious or linguistic unit (Holsti, 1981, pp. 145-146).

2. Element of time, this is a time period where the state needs to set in order to achieve the objective of the state.

In the second criteria, Holsti split two objectives that are more dominant in the state are:

a. Medium term objectives, is to increase the prestige of the country in that system, this indicator is assessed based on industry, technology, funds and military assistance. (Holsti, 1981, pp. 148-149)

As it known that Saudi Arabia maintaining its influence has a lot of help to Yemen, in terms of increased economic and sending military aid. This demanding Saudi Arabia to make immediate limitation of time in order for the goal to be achieved could be efficient.

b. Long term goals, is a plans, dream and view on political organization in the international system. The goal is for peace, power and balancing security. (Holsti, 1981, pp. 151-152)

In this case no one knows for sure what long term goals of Saudi Arabia to intervene the civil war in Yemen, this section further analysis will be used to know it. Clearly, here Saudi Arabia will act in accordance with the foreign policy that has been accepted. The ideology that adopted by two sect in Yemen make Saudi Arabia want to take a step to solve the problems. This section also the existence of Saudi Arabia countries will be at stake, and Saudi Arabia with other Arab peninsula decided to help Yemen to fight with the rebels in the country.

C. The type of goals demand, this criteria include the objective that would be brought by the state to other states due to its foreign policy.

On this last criteria, Holsti try to combined both criteria which is value and element of time. This will affect the image of this Saudi Arabia country on the future and the future conditions of its country, by expanding the influence of the country with changing or maintain the behaviour of other countries, through individual policy makers under the influence of King Salman.

Foreign policy can be defined as the strategy or action plan which is designed by the policy makers in one particular country in order to face other country or as a respond to the international politics, and also contain a specific national objective which was existed in its national interest terminology. Foreign policy made by one country as a respond to the action made by other country.

Saudi Arabia, with using their stability and influence, plays an important regional and international role. Working diligently to many address of its major international and domestic concerns, the Kingdom is a confident participant in world affairs and keeps an ever vigilant eye toward its own internal safeguarding. (Saud, 2017)

Methodology of Research

The research method that the writer uses in this undergraduate thesis is the qualitative method. It is used to explain the problems of the thesis and to verify hypothesis based on the empirical reality. The sources or information are collected in the forms of books. Meanwhile, there are some literature and data from the internet such as journals, e-book, articles, e-news, report and others reliable sources. The level of analysis of this undergraduate thesis is a state; Yemen and Saudi Arabia, where the writer will limit the discussion to the scope of Saudi Arabia intervention in Yemen civil war 2014-2017.

Scope of Research

In writing this research, the writer will limit the scope of research. This aims to simplify the research process and have more concern on Saudi Arabia in Yemen Civil War and Saudi Arabia's existence in the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab World. Other hand, this research also describe about the reason behind Saudi's intervention's towards Yemen Civil War, and the policies that are taken by Saudi Arabia towards its intervention on this civil war. Meanwhile, this research will use the previous data from 2014-2017 to know how big the intervention done by Saudi Arabia in the Yemen Civil War.

Result of Research

Saudi Arabia in Maintaining the Existence as the Hegemonic Power in the ME Region

Saudi Arabia in order to maintain the stability of the country, looking for allies who may be able to assist it's in accomplishing its mission. The country that adheres to this absolute monarchy is very influential towards the security situations in the Middle East country. Especially in terms of political stability, economy and security in the Middle East is highly dependent on Saudi Arabia, especially in Yemen, since the year 2010, Yemen is in a situation of war between Shia Houthi group and a group of government which presenting Sunni. Saudi Arabia which is a neighboring country with Yemen, feel they need to protect Yemen because Saudi Arabia has considerable interest with Yemen.

Looking back on the history of Middle East, it is true that the existence of a confrontation between the Sunni sects and Shia sects, all of whom follow Islam have dragged on throughout the history of this region, especially in Yemen. It is known the most adherents of Shia doctrine after Iran in the Middle East is the country of Yemen. The Group of adherents of Shia sect that most were in Iran and this is the causes of the contradictions present in the region. The battle is going on between the Houthi rebel's members of the Shia Muslim minority who are to be supported by Iran and Yemen government forces backed by a coalition of 10 countries from a majority Sunni Muslim country was led by Saudi Arabia.

The civil war that existed in Yemen is seen as an appropriate reference to see who is the actual owner of the power of the Arab world, the government of Yemen that Houthi separatist hostile groups supported by the government of Saudi Arabia, while the Houthi group also has its own supporters, namely the state of Iran. Yemen, a country that has a very long history of civilization and their remarkable, is now trapped in a war and violent conflict. The deadlock and there is no consensus in the political strife of words has led Yemen became a battleground and prey for the capture of a larger influence in the geopolitical map of the region. The foreign forces involved

have been accused of exploiting the crisis to expand the scope of their respective interests in the region.

The war happens in Yemen is also indicated to a show of strength between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has the ambition to become a hegemon in the Middle East region. Two series of this power has been going on for a long time.

Some of the factors behind Saudi Arabia to intervene against the civil war in Yemen:

1. The Factor of Maintaining the Security, is a major factor driving force Saudi Arabia to intervene
2. The Second Factor, Yemen's Strategic Position: Interventions are carried out for the political interests of Saudi Arabia.
3. Sunni VS Shia: Camouflage parties who have interests, this factor to see battle in seizing sect domination of the strongest Sunni and Shia in Yemen.

The relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are always tinged variety of various tensions. The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia originated from the differences in views about a leader which then led to the "war" in order to fulfil the ambition to expand power. Saudi Arabia and Iran relations begins to heat up in 1979. The Iranian revolution, also known as Islamic revolution, that replaced Iran change from the Monarchy under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlevi to become the Islamic Republic led by the Supreme Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, the monarchy is not in accordance with Islam. While Saudi Arabia is ruled by a king and its form of government is Islamic conservatives. After the Iranian revolution, the country began to send support for Shia interests in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East. This was later seen as an opposition to the conservative Sunni regime. Arab

countries are also suspect Iran efforts related to spread its revolution to neighboring countries. This revolution made Iran increasingly show its strength. Iran strongly supported Palestinian efforts against Israel and accuses countries like Saudi Arabia are not paying attention to the fate of Palestinians. Saudi Arabia only represents the interests of the West. Iran is increasingly outspoken against in opposing Saudi allies such as the United States under the leadership of Ahmadinejad.

As has been said by KJ. Holsti about one of three foreign policy, namely the element of time, which is medium term objective, is to increase the prestige of the country in that system, this indicator is assessed based on industry, technology, funds and military assistance, including spreading the power. In this case, of course either Saudi Arabia or Iran saw both of them can be whose will be the leader in the Arab World. The identity of Sunni and Shia ideology here must be as a positioned instrument for determining interests. Parties with an interest in this conflict can be said to make ideology an instrument for their ambitions to achieve their respective interests. It is very ironic to see how an ideology that has sacred values is mocked for the ambition to reach the interests of certain parties.

Saudi Arabia Strategy to Control the Access of Bab El-Mandeb

The strategy that has been designed would become guidance to the policymakers in order to achieve the objective and a national interest of the state. There are two components in the strategy; they are the offensive component and defensive component. These two components have different purpose and objective in the implementation. The offensive component is used in order to get the benefit while a defensive component is used in order to prevent the disadvantages that might become from the policy that has been designed (Sukmawardani, 2016).

In the other context, a strategy is categorized as problem-solving or conflict resolution. A strategy emphasizes the problem solving rather than becoming the winner of the conflict.

Saudi Arabia economy condition characterized by the presence of progress or improvement of the economy and prosperity of peoples (among others, driven by increase in world crude oil prices up to mid of the year 2008). But the condition is still considered insufficient by the leaders of the country and a directive was issued that Saudi Arabia must be able to become a country that is one of the best investment destinations in the world. The policy taken is to conducting economic reforms, improvement of investment conditions, and the most important, is so called “ambitious project” called the (10x10) program or make Saudi Arabia one of the Top 10 Most Competitive Nations in the World by 2010.

Saudi Arabia is the largest manufacturer and exporter of petroleum results. The economy of Saudi Arabia which is associated with the petroleum results, namely the petrochemical and petroleum. The State Company Saudi Aramco, the world's largest listed oil company has supplies and produce Hydrocarbon, the result of a rich oil which then became the main source of wealth of Saudi Arabia.

Picture 4.3: Map of Bab El-Mandeb

YEMEN STRIKES AGAINST ISLAMIST MILITANTS



This strategic line became the motive for Saudi Arabia to intervene in Yemen, because the Bab El Mandeb route that existed in Yemen is very influential on the Saudi Arabian trade route which is due every ship that departing or arrives from Saudi Arabia will pass through the strait, thus the controlled the strategic lines is the main motive of Saudi Arabia to intervention against Yemen.

Bab el Mandeb ever since it used to be a center of history and civilization that is able to control or stop the shortest trade routes between Europe, North Africa, India and East Asia. However, a series of recent events in Yemen, including the capture of a number of ports on the Red Sea coast by Houthi rebels, Saudi Arabia and Yemen bombings by making the future of this increasingly dreary straits. According to U.S. Energy Information Administration, around 3.8 million b/d of crude oil and distilled waters across the Bab El-Mandeb in 2013. Therefore, Bab El-Mandeb is an important post on the world trade route.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia is a country that has many roles in the Arabian Peninsula as well as the global environment. The country that still has the Kingdom was supported by reserves and abundant oil production as the main backers, the economy of the country, causing the country to be respected by the international community. Regardless of these reason, Saudi Arabia also became the Qibla for Muslims around the world because there are two Holy cities Mecca and Medina as one of the sanctified places as well as the birth of Muslim civilization in the era of Prophet Muhammad. The Middle East has never been separated from the conflict. Saudi Arabia and Iran often become actors involved in conflict. Their involvement is due to national interests, as was the case happened in Yemen.

The establishment of a foreign policy cannot be separated from the existence of national interests that contained in it. Conflict happens in Yemen is very potentially to pose a threat to the stability of political security and the economy of Saudi Arabia is worth serious attention. Therefore, Saudi Arabia immediately intervened against Yemen to prevent the possibility of the threats entering their country. Iran as a rival Saudi Arabia certainly responded to the actions of Saudi Arabia. This is caused by the ambitions of each country to become a hegemon in the Middle East region.

In the case of Yemen, Saudi Arabia wants to dominate overall power in the Arabian Peninsula. This is according to the author, is one way to keep maintaining existence both in the Middle East as well as in the international world. Then the second is full control over the access to the Bab el Mandeb line. This line is included in the source of the wealth of Saudi Arabia, in addition to the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of *Bab el Mandeb* is also an important asset in maintaining the economic stability of the State of Saudi Arabia.

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