

SAUDI'S REGIME POLICY DELIVERS POLITICAL OPENNESS

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ABSTRACT

This journal discusses the open political system applied in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially in the era of King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud who was also supported by the presence of the Crown Prince, Prince Muhammad Bin Salman. The open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was born the author of an analysis using the political system theory proposed by David Easton and supported by the presentation of Gabriel Almond. The application of an open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stems from the demands of the community which is referred to as an Input Demand in a political system. In addition, the open political system was also supported by King Salman who was the highest authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The output of the open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the birth of a Saudi Vision 2030 policy, as a form of reform and change to a more open and modern form.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, Wahabi, Political Openness, Regime, Kingdom.

Background

The author will try to explain in advance about the system of government of Saudi Arabia itself, Saudi Arabia is a high state located in the Arabian Peninsula. Its territory is largely composed of deserts with the largest sand desert is Rub Al Khali. It can be said that the Arab position is very strategic because it borders on many countries and important locations, namely Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Persian Gulf, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, and the Red Sea. Although the history of the Arabian peninsula is in its teens, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia formed on September 23, 1932. King Abdul Aziz bin Abdurrahman Al-Sa'ud (Ibn Saud) proclaimed this sovereign state by uniting the territory of Riyadh, Najd (Nejed), Ha-a, Asir, and Hijaz.¹

The system of the government of Saudi Arabia is structured under state law, embodied in the rules of the kingdom, based on the teachings of Islam by following the provisions of Islamic Sharia law. The system of government used by this country is the Islamic state in which the Constitution of Saudi Arabia is the Qur'an and Sunnah. With the constitution, the King became the supreme authority for every political institution in Saudi Arabia, even for the judiciary. No wonder the King has the authority to interpret the law after undergoing some consultations.

There is no general election to elect the King and no political parties. If only to choose the legislative and judicial leaders who are also determined by the King. As a country with an absolute monarchical government system, the King of Saudi Arabia does have enormous power. His position can be said to be an absolute ruler, the King of Saudi Arabia also has a role as Head of State, Prime Minister, Commander of the Armed Forces, appoint and dismiss the Council of Ministers, and interpret the law of Saudi Arabia.

The highest political authority under the King is the crown prince appointed by the king and must be taken from the descendants of Abdul Aziz. The crown prince may rule on behalf of the king, while the Council of Ministers acts as the legislative and executive with authority based on the King's blessing. The King can only veto the law or law established by the Council of Ministers. The members of the Council of Ministers are also descendants of Abdul Aziz as the authors explain that the system is an absolute monarchy.

¹ Rinaldo. (2017, 2 28). *Raja Salman dan Uniknya Sistem Politik Arab Saudi*. Retrieved from Liputan 6: <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2871335/raja-salman-dan-uniknya-sistem-politik-arab-saud>

It is from such a system of government that son and successor Abdul Aziz follow in his footsteps in leading Saudi Arabia. They are King Saud, King Faisal, King Khalid, King Fahd, King Abdullah and now in power, King Salman. King Salman previously served as deputy governor and then Governor of Riyadh for 48 years from 1963 to 2011. He was then appointed to be Minister of Defense in 2011, as the Crown Prince in 2012 after the death of his brother Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. He was later appointed King of Saudi Arabia on January 23, 2015, after the death of his half-brother King Abdullah.

Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud is the seventh king who currently leads Saudi Arabia. King Salman is the king of Saudi Arabia to the Seven who succeeded his brother who died in 2015, King Abdullah. Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud was born on 31 December 1935 in the Murabba Palace of Riyadh city, was the 25th son of King Abdulaziz and his mother was named Hassa bint Ahmed Al Sudairi. His father was the first king of Saudi Arabia. Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud's first education was taken in Princess Scholl who is a school built by King Abdulaziz specifically for his children. At that school, King Salman studied religion and also studied modern science.

Since King Salman led the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he was aware of the various challenges being faced by the Kingdom. Moreover, when the previous king, King Abdullah, had felt how difficult it was to defend the country which was being hit by various problems both domestic and international issues. King Salman, felt the need to implement various specific strategies in order to deal with the challenges faced by Saudi Arabia. In 2015, it was the beginning of King Salman beginning to make various changes in the Kingdom. He began to design various kinds of policies which would later be able to become a solution for the continuity of the Kingdom. One of the main policies carried out by King Salman was to change the political system in the kingdom, to become a more open political system or what was known as an open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The open political system is simply a policy to open up the political system in the kingdom, by not changing the royal system. It should be underlined that King Salman implemented an open political system without changing the state system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

There are various factors, both internal factors and external factors that influence King Salman so that it applies an open political system. And of course, there was a process

that King Salman passed before implementing the policy. The author feels the need to analyze the open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by discovering the reasons underlying King Salman so as to implement an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the author will find out what challenges the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is facing so that King Salman feels the importance of the policy of the open political system. Of course the challenges being faced by the Kingdom will also be the reason why later King Salman implemented the policy

Research Question

Why did King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud implement an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Research Method

The type of research used in this study is descriptive, which the author tries to analyze Why the Saudi's regime conduct political openness. In using the method, the authors use data collection techniques such as document studies conducted by collecting secondary data, in this case, the information comes from some relevant publication materials such as books, journals, news, official sites, and the internet associated with the subject of research.

Theoretical Framework

The author uses the theory of the political system of David Easton, which is where this theory in a sharpening by Gabriel Abraham Almond. Almond asserted that the political system has four characteristics that are universal. The fourth characteristic is valid in any country, and consist of the premises, such as Every political system has political structures, functions (of any structure) the same can be found in any political system, each structure are multifunctional, every political system has been mixed with the political culture (which embraced citizen respectively).

- 1) Input Units (Demand and Support):** basically what is meant by the input is in the form of demands and support that make the political system or the making of existing policies.

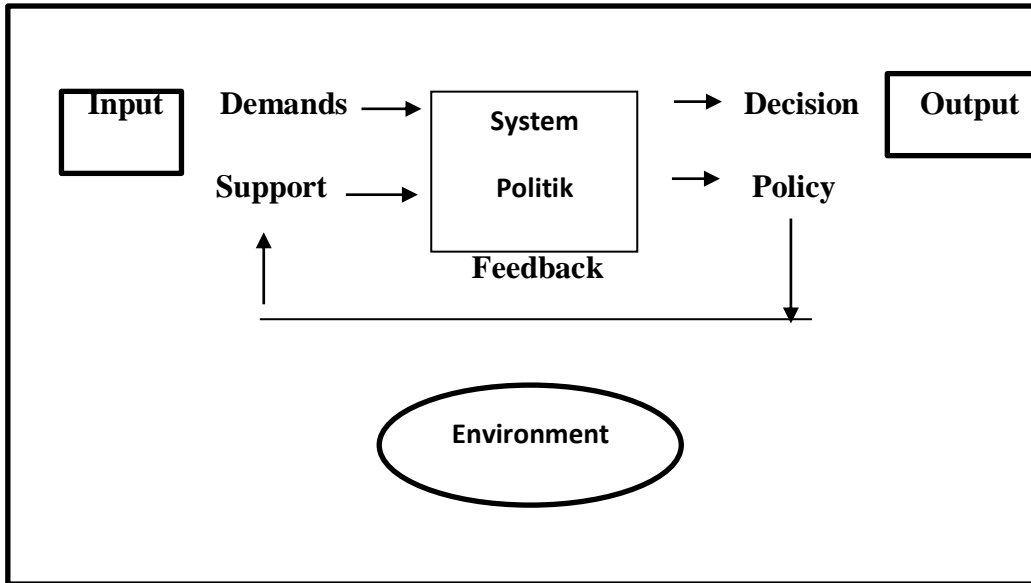
- a. Political outreach and recruitment. Almond then placed the function of socialization and political recruitment as a function of maintaining the political system.
- b. Articulation of interests. Structures that carry out the function of articulation of interests are organized interest groups which include the type of Institutional, Non-Associational, Anomic, Associational.
- c. Aggregation of interests. The course of this function is influenced by two things, namely the party system that applies in a country and the appearance of aggregative functions. Party systems such as authoritarian, dominant authoritarian, competitive, multi-party competitive, the appearance of aggregative functions such as pragmatic or secular bargaining.
- d. To compare the patterns of political communication between political systems, there are four parameters, namely the homogeneity of available political information, information mobility, information value, and direction of the information flow that develops.

2) Output Units: output is a reaction from input that has been entered, output in the form of decisions and actions.

- a. Regulation making. Based on the demands and support and the various influences of the societal intro and extra societal environments, the input attempted to be translated into public policy
- b. Application of regulations. When the policy has been formed, the thing that must be done is to take administrative action to implement it in the public sphere.
- c. Regulatory supervision. Particular institutions conduct supervision and resolve disputes concerning making and implementing regulations.

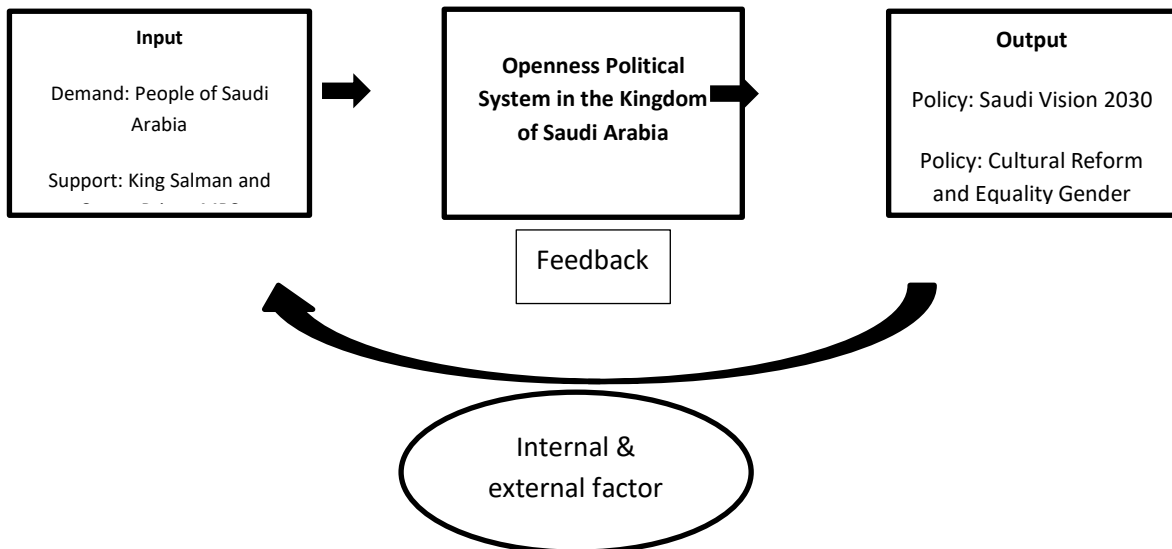
David Easton then discussed the political system environment, which according to him could be divided into two, namely intrasocietal environment and extrasocietal environment. Which includes the intrasocietal environment are ecological systems, biological systems, social and cultural systems. Whereas the extrasocietal environment can also be called an international environment, including international economic systems, international cultural systems, international social systems, and others.

Diagram 1.1 Input and Output Analyze



David Easton that input-output relations connect the political system and its environment. The political system itself is seen as a process of conversion or change in input into output. The ability to convert the input into output is what guarantees a government or political system will survive. It can also be said, that the influences that come from the environment, both domestically and internationally, can be a parameter to measure and assess the ability of a political system.

Diagram 1.2. Input and Output Analyze in case of Saudi’s Regime



Input which is a demand and support, is one of the factors, why the Saudi rulers Conduct political openness, here is the creation of new policies based on the wishes of King Salman and his crown prince, and the demands of the people who want changes in Saudi Arabia, not only demands from domestic but also demands from the international community. Demands and support concerning economic and social change, such as the demand to change Saudi Arabia from a country with a strong political influence to a more moderate Islamic country. Demands to reduce social inequalities that occur in Arabia, which in particular is a human rights gap between women and men. The international community also criticized the very conservative Islamic ideology of Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism. Also, one of the most numerous highlights of the world is the difference between the right of rights held between men and women.

Discussion

A. Input Units

1. Input Demand: Community Demand of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Input Unit is no less critical in the application of an open political system that the policy was born because of demands from the public. Gabriel A. Almond views that the political system is necessarily a mechanism for changing demands from the community (input) to policy (output) through the feedback channel which will become a new input candidate. According to him, in the process of being modern, a political society experiences a process of political secularization, namely the process of changing the attitude of members of society so that in understanding the world of life around them they are more based on critical thinking about causation. Secular cultured societies tend to believe in their ability to influence and shape their environment and to make changes.

The more capable a political system responds to input that comes from its environment, the more developed and advanced the political system is. The factors that influence the ability of the political system according to Gabriel Almond, among others:²

- 1) Responses or responses from elites to inputs coming from their community are from the international community. This response can be in the form of emphasis, neglect, replacement, or form of adjustment.

² *Ibid.*

- 2) Availability of material resources needs to run the political system. More and more material resources are available, increasingly enabling the development of political system capabilities.
- 3) It is Organizational officers from the political system or what is known as bureaucracy. The better and more powerful this bureaucracy carries out its functions, the more likely the political system to develop.
- 4) The level of support for the political system. Because, of course, the political system needs support to be able to carry out its activities. The high and low level of community support is directly proportional to the development of the ability of the political system.

The people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have long wanted more significant change, especially in the social and cultural fields. So far, the people of Saudi Arabia can be called a society that is far from freedom, because of the strict rules of the kingdom. They seemed to imprisoned in their own country, and it was difficult to make demands.

However, along with the development of globalization that hit the Middle East region, the people of Saudi Arabia began to be confronted with the current development and stronger modernization. Especially after the Arab Spring which hit the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia certainly has seen the condition of society which is increasingly influenced by western culture, especially democracy. Community demands are the essential ingredients used to make the final product. David Easton explained that the demands could be overt actions. A supportive atmosphere is a collection of strong attitudes or tendencies, or a willingness to act for others. A supportive atmosphere of thought is a vital input for the operation and maintenance of a political system.³

As a diversion from the oil sector, attention given to the more important quality of Human Resources (HR). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is working hard to welcome the post-oil era and prepare a clearer roadmap for the country's future. Preparations to reduce dependence on oil it accompanied by Saudi efforts to increase the diversification of state revenues. The new command map is believed to have a significant impact on the changes in Saudi Arabia's society in the modern era, including social, political and military changes.

³ *Ibid.*

Saudi society must now prepare for a transformation that will reduce their comfort rations. Many facilities from the country cut due to falling world oil prices. Although it has the largest oil reserves in the world of up to 267 billion barrels, the situation of declining oil prices due to the weakening world economy has made the Saudi budget deficit.⁴

To anticipate the emergence of popular movements that oppose the kingdom, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should have made various efforts to overcome them. One of them is by implementing an open political system that will not only have an impact on political life but also will reform the social life of the people in Saudi Arabia. So the writer found the fact that one of the input units that led to the emergence of an open political system policy was the demand of the people seen by the Royal Government, especially by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

2. Input Support - The policy of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

The author analyzes that the first input support in the implementation of an open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the role and authority of the central leader, King Salman, as the leading actor of policymakers. The policy of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud concerning realizing an open political system in his country is indeed inseparable from the policies of the previous king, King Abdullah who had previously carried out political reforms in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, King Salman was the king who began with a real process of change in Saudi Arabia, namely by giving birth to clear policies.

Easton states that political systems can recognize as a set of abstracted interactions from all social behaviors, in which values are allocated authoritatively to the community. Another opinion from Dahl that the political system is a permanent pattern of relations between humans that involves up to a certain level, namely: control, influence, power and

⁴ Suryo Ediyono. *Reformasi Sistem Kebudayaan di Arab Saudi Masa Pemerintahan Raja Abdullah*. Jurnal dalam <http://millati.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/millati/article/download/1084/738> Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2018, Pukul 21.54 WIB.

authority. The political system has a large share because it is authoritative in using the nature of coercion over the authority of the power that the government has to the people.⁵

With the understanding of David Easton and Dahl above, it can conclude that the application of an open political system policy cannot separate from the role of the ruler, namely the government. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the role of the ruler is indeed a King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The high power and authority possessed by a King in Saudi Arabia will be able to realize a policy even if the people do not agree. However, in the case of the implementation of an open political system, both the Government and the People in Saudi Arabia both supported the implementation of the policy.

Leaders in the Middle East are still happy to inherit the history of the Islamic world, which the Kings have full authority, as happened in some of the Kings in the Islamic world during the Umayyad and Abbasid years. Therefore, in this connection, Samuel Huntington and Fukuyama give their opinion that Islam is not in line with democracy. This opinion based on the empirical reality that some of the Kings in the Islamic world during the Umayyad and Abbasid years still showed an authoritarian attitude. No exception in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as we know that until now Saudi Arabia still adheres to an authoritarian culture in the government.

However, in an authoritarian system, changes cannot be made? The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia proves that they can initiate change by slowly realizing policies that are accepted both by the Royal Family and by the people of Saudi Arabia themselves. The policy is an open political system policy. In the Arab world where Muslims dominate countries with people, if they hope that democracy can be applied and sustainable in the country, then according to Bernard Lewis it needs to be carried out by means of gradual and non-coercive changes that take place in slow stages through reform from the autocracy become a more open and competitive political system.⁶ This method, which was then carried out by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was to begin changes slowly but surely.

⁵ Suryo Ediyono. *Reformasi Sistem Kebudayaan di Arab Saudi Masa Pemerintahan Raja Abdullah*. Jurnal dalam <http://millati.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/millati/article/download/1084/738> Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2018, Pukul 21.54 WIB.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The launch of the Saudi 2030 Vision is an ambitious royal plan to change the economy from the oil dependency enjoyed by the people so far. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) considers this plan an ambitious effort and is not easy to achieve. Therefore, the IMF also warns Saudi Arabia of the various challenges that will be faced. As a diversion from the oil sector, attention giving to the more important quality of Human Resources (HR).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is working hard to welcome the post-oil era and prepare a clearer roadmap for the country's future. Preparations to reduce dependence on oil accompanied by Saudi efforts to boost national income diversification. This new roadmap is believed to have a significant impact on the changes in Saudi Arabia's society in the modern era, including social, political and military changes. Saudi society must now prepare for a transformation that will reduce their comfort rations. Many facilities from the country cut due to falling world oil prices.

The author can conclude that the first Input Unit in the implementation of an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the policy was born from the role of the current Saudi ruler, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. As for some conditions seen by King Salman, among others:

- 1) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs a change that can adapt to globalization and the international world, in order to maintain the existence of the kingdom.
- 2) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began to realize that Oil could not rely on for a long time. What needs to prepared are advanced and competitive Human Resources.
- 3) The government must start planning a new program that can guarantee the continuity of the kingdom in the future.
- 4) The government must anticipate other Arab Spring, that the process of democratization must not avoid, but needs to be anticipated and faced.
- 5) The government must realize the demands of the people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who have been wanting change.

Thus, it is clear that the first Input Unit, namely the policy, was born from King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. King Salman's mission is to continue the previous King's

policy, King Abdullah, who had first realized the importance of reformation and change to a more advanced and modern Saudi Arabia.

3. The Influence of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS) in policymaking in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The author analyzes that the second Input support in implementing open political system policies is the role and influence of Crown Prince Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS) in policymaking. Since being appointed as crown prince on June 21, 2017, SBM has attracted international attention because of its enormous role in the dynamics of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is trusted to hold strategic positions in his father's government, including the Minister of Defense, Chair of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister.⁷

The emergence of MBS as the crown prince of Saudi Arabia has brought so many changes in the Saud family environment. Even though he is still a crown prince, he has led Saudi Arabia like a king. On April 25, 2016, he sparked Saudi Arabian economic reforms called Vision 2030. By Western media, because the power of MBS rule in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia included so many things, he was dubbed as "Mr. Everything." Thus, even though MBS is still a crown prince, he is very capable of influencing the King in various policies issued by King Salman.⁸

Some controversial actions carried out by SBM included holding eleven princes, four ministers, and dozens of former ministers on corruption charges. They were not only arrested, but also their assets were frozen, removed from their positions, and publicly humiliated.⁹ This case is the first such controversial case raised by MBS. The case proves that MBS has almost full strength and power in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Prince MBS anti-corruption campaign is quite popular among Saudis, especially the lower middle class who are fed up with elites who abuse their power and

⁷ Panji Haryadi. Peran Muhammad Bin Salman Terhadap Perubahan Pilar Kenegaraan Arab Saudi. Jurnal Dalam <https://ic-mes.org/jurnal/index.php/jurnallCMES/article/download/16/20/> Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2019, Pukul 17.08 WIB.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

enrich themselves. MBS has used an anti-corruption campaign to lift its position in the community of Saudi Arabia. However, at the same time, MBS shows a luxurious lifestyle and is not in line with the corruption eradication actions that it does.

Also, MBS once ordered Saudi Arabians to arrest more than 20 priests and intellectuals, including Salman Al Oudah and Oudh Al Qarni, Sahwa figures. MBS is not only targeting the Wahhabi Political realm, but MBS also attacks Wahhabi Social through a series of policies that can revolutionize the social order of the Saudi Arabian society. Previously, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was known to have an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic teachings about women, including the obligation to wear long and loose robes when in public; prohibition on associating with men who have no relationship; and the prohibition on driving a car. From some of these cases, the author considered that Prince Mohammed Bin Salman had a considerable influence on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Concerning the implementation of open political system policies, the second Input Unit is the role of SBM in the policy. The MBS Prince was well aware of the importance of bringing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to an advanced and modern Kingdom.

B. Output Units

1. Saudi Vision 2030

The first Output Unit or the result of implementing an open political system policy is the birth of a grand plan in the form of a program known as Saudi Vision 2030. On April 25, 2016, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced Vision 2030. Saudi Vision 2030 has 3 important pillars in it, namely, A Vibrant Society, Thriving Economy, and An Ambition Nation. A Vibrant Society or a dynamic society meant here is that Saudi Arabia wants to strengthen its human resources, based on the fact that the wealth of a country does not only lie in natural resources, but the real wealth of a country lies in human resources. The existence of Saudi Arabia as the heart of the Arab and Islamic world also encourages the royal government to strengthen the people of Saudi Arabia to remain in Islamic principles which become their national identity that has been rooted and must strengthen.¹⁰

¹⁰ B.A. Albassam, „Political Reform in Saudi Arabia: Necessity or Luxury?’Middle East Studies Online Journal, Vol. 3, No.6, 2011.

Thriving Economy or economic development is the focus of this vision. Oil and gas are essential pillars in the economy of Saudi Arabia, but in this case, Saudi Arabia will carry out economic development in the long term and sustainably by releasing its dependence on oil and gas and diversifying the economy. The need to diversify the economy in Saudi Arabia to expand investment as an additional sustainable sector.

The last pillar is the national ambition of the state, which is the awareness of the state that it is necessary to streamline all its ranks in a bureaucratic manner. The kingdom has clarity on high-value transparency and accountability. Transparency and accountability are felt to be indispensable in government control, especially control of projects that have a significant and high impact on the economy of Saudi Arabia. The main focus of the vision of Saudi Arabia in 2030 oriented to the economic development of Saudi Arabia.

In simple terms, there are four points that are the focus of the economic program contained in Saudi Vision 2030: opening up opportunities for developing economies in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector, opening economic opportunities in business, utilizing opportunities for strategic positions, and the last seen lately is investment in the long-term economy.¹¹

Goals of Vision 2030. For each of the three pillars of Vision 2030; a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. The Kingdom has charted 18 measurable goals to be achieved by the year 2030:¹²

- 1) More than double the number of Saudi heritage sites registered with UNESCO
- 2) Increase capacity to welcome Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million per year
- 3) Increase household spending on cultural and entertainment activities from 2.9 percent to 6 percent

¹¹ Artikel dalam “Arab Saudi Setop Kecanduan Minyak, Sudirman Said Lihat Peluang”, <http://ekbis.sindonews.com/read/1104380/34/arab-saudisetopkecanduan-minyak-sudirmansaid> Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2019, Pukul 19.53 WIB

¹² Saudi Embassy. Saudi Arabia : Political, Economic, And Social Development. 2017. On https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/WhitePaper_Development_May2017.pdf Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2019, Pukul 20.54 WIB.

- 4) Increase the share of individuals exercising at least once a week from 13 percent to 40 percent
- 5) Have three Saudi cities be recognized among the Top 100 cities in the world
- 6) Raise Saudi Arabia's ranking on the Social Capital Index from 26th to 10th
- 7) Increase in average life expectancy from 74 to 80 years
- 8) Increase private sector contributions to Gross Domestic Product from 40 percent to 65 percent
- 9) Raise Saudi Arabia's ranking on the Global Competitiveness Index from 25th to among the Top 10 nations
- 10) Increase foreign-direct investment from 3.8 percent of GDP to the international average of 5.7 percent of GDP
- 11) Rank Saudi Arabia among the Top 15 largest economies in the world from its current position of 19th
- 12) Increase the assets of the Public Investment Fund from SAR 600 billion to over SAR 7 trillion (\$160 billion to over \$2 trillion)
- 13) Increase localization of the oil and gas sectors from 40 percent to 75 percent
- 14) Increase women's participation in the workforce from 22 percent to 30 percent
- 15) A lower rate of unemployment from 11.6 percent to 7 percent
- 16) Increase contributions of small and medium enterprises from 20 percent to 35 percent of GDP
- 17) Increase share of non-oil exports from 16 percent to 50 percent of non-oil GDP

It could conclude that Saudi Vision 2030 is a result of the adoption of an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Vision 2030 is a real effort made by the government of Saudi Arabia in order to prepare Saudi Arabia to face the future. It hoped that both the Government and the Community would continue to be able to work together in maintaining the Kingdom at any time. Saudi Vision 2030 is also evidence that Saudi Arabia will not forever rely on the oil sector. Saudi Arabia will develop advanced human resources, a modern society, a strong economy, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that remains strong.

2. Cultural Reform and Gender Equality in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Another output unit that succeeded the analysis writer, Saudi Arabia, slowly began issuing policies that directly or indirectly changed the face of Saudi Arabia. Policies such as first Saudi Arabia's media, opening cinemas, providing scholarships, opening universities, etc. are forms of reform and change. Also, the most explicit policy is a policy to equalize gender, even though it has not fully implemented.

On Media sectors, Saudi Arabia will increase the number and variety of cultural and entertainment activities with the aim of opening dedicated venues to showcase our citizens' myriad talents. The Kingdom will review our regulations to simplify the establishment and registration of amateur, social, and cultural clubs. Saudi Arabia will launch and provide the necessary financial support for "Daem," a national program to enhance the quality of cultural activities and entertainment. The program will create a national network of clubs, encourage the exchange of knowledge and international experiences, and promote better awareness of a wide range of hobbies and leisure activities. By 2020, there will be more than 450 registered and professionally organized amateur clubs providing a variety of cultural activities and entertainment events.¹³

The politics of government are also experiencing developments in Saudi Arabia. It saw from the holding of the first general election for women in order to elect members who will sit in the City Government Council. Of course, is a sign of the continuation of political reform in one of the Gulf countries that have been considered conservative. The first election for women held in December 2015. Election organizers said that around 130,000 women are registering as voters. King Abdullah decided to allow women to take part in elections. He said women in Saudi Arabia had shown a position to express their opinions and suggestions adequately.¹⁴ The involvement of women in politics is not intended to bring down, reduce or seize power from the hands of men, but is intended to be equal partners of men.¹⁵

¹³ Saudi Embassy. *Saudi Arabia : Political, Economic, And Social Development*. 2017. On https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/WhitePaper_Development_May2017.pdf Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2019, Pukul 20.54 WIB.

¹⁴ Bbc. 2015. Perempuan Arab Saudi akan gunakan hak pilih untuk pertama kalinya. www.bbc.com

¹⁵ Siti Musdah Mulia, *Muslimah Reformis Perempuan Pembaru Keagamaan*. (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), h. 275.

Women in Saudi Arabia were first appointed Deputy Ministers. The woman is Dr. Noura Al-Fayez appointed as deputy minister for the education of girls, the first to hold ministerial appointments.¹⁶ Al-Fayez's appointment shows that he believes in women becoming partners in society and emphasizes that women will integrate into society. Then women will soon become members of the Shura Council.

Saudi Arabia also implements a scholarship program to send young Arabs to study abroad at different universities around the world, both undergraduate or postgraduate education. This program offers funds for tuition fees and lives up to four years. On September 26, 2017, the Saudi Arabian government issued a driving license for women. They are also permitted to join the military and intelligence services and come to the sports arena. Also, the Saudis also began to build cinemas throughout the country. The Saudis also plan to build an entertainment city in the style of Disney Land in Qiddiya, near Riyadh.¹⁷

Saudi scholars also relaxed Women's dress rules. The tradition of abaya and black hijab for Saudi women is a product of the fatwa of previous Wahhabi clerics who were members of the Sahwa. However, finally in February 2018, Sheikh Abdullah al-Mutlaq, a member of the Senior Ulama Council, said that Muslim women must dress modestly, but that does not mean having to wear an abaya.

Saudi women have experienced significant changes taking place regarding women's rights. Majelis Shura, one of the most respected advisory bodies in Saudi Arabia, consists of 20% of women. Saudi women are also entering a new world of work. In supporting and presenting professional skills, the pioneers exchange knowledge and tirelessly work to face the opening and development of SMEs (Small or Medium Enterprise Businesses) Combining technology, capability, information and bringing it to

¹⁶ Admon Y. dan Y. Carmon. "Reform in Saudi Arabia Under King Abdullah (part I)". The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Inquiry and Analysis Series Report, no. 519, 2009.h.3

¹⁷ Panji Haryadi. *Peran Muhammad Bin Salman Terhadap Perubahan Pilar Kenegaraan Arab Saudi*. Jurnal Dalam <https://ic-mes.org/jurnal/index.php/jurnalICMES/article/download/16/20/> Diakses pada tanggal 1 January 2019, Pukul 17.08 WIB.

success. Saudis, which reach 50% of all graduates at the university, have the right to achieve economic freedom and innovate in engineering.¹⁸

Thus, it is clear that another Output Unit or the result of an open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the emergence of various other policies which also contribute to reforming and changing social and political conditions in Saudi Arabia. The author can conclude that besides Saudi Vision 2030, there are other policies on a small scale that have succeeded in changing the face of Saudi Arabia as an output of open political system policies.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the reign of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud continued to make reforms in the political field. Continuing the policy of the previous leader, King Abdullah, who had previously carried out various reforms. The implementation of an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is inseparable from the various factors that influence it. The author uses the theory of political systems by David Easton in analyzing the policy of the open political system.

David Easton explains that there are units in the political system that have a relationship with the making and implementation of policies. Input in the political system can be in the form of demands and support which after going through the conversion process will turn into output (decision or policy). Also, Gabriel Almond views that the political system is necessarily a mechanism for changing demands from the community (input) to policy (output) through the feedback channel that will become a new input candidate. In the process from input to input again, the political system requires political structures and their respective functions. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself, the structure needed was the government, namely the Kingdom led by King Salam bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

The people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have long wanted a more open political and social life. During this time we know the people of Saudi Arabia so closed in various fields of life. Even the people in Saudi Arabia are still confined and imprisoned in their own country. The people of Saudi Arabia have long made demands both directly and

¹⁸ Samar Fatany, *Saudi Women Towards a New Era*, (Ghainaa: Publications, 2007), h.45.

indirectly. Of course, this is in order to make the government aware that they need a change. Especially when the Middle East hit by a democratization process known as the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia itself experienced and was hit by the Arab Spring even though it had no significant impact.

In simple terms, the author concludes that the application of an open political system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can be analyzed using political system theory by David Easton and Gabriel Almond. Based on this theory, what referred to as the input unit is the policy of the government, namely King Salman. Basically, since the era of King Abdullah's administration, Saudi Arabia has carried out reforms which marked the beginning of the change in Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah continued to strive to reform in order to maintain the existence of the kingdom. So the effort was continued by King Salman, who is currently in office. King Salman saw the importance of making changes in an increasingly massive era of globalization.

Also, the policy of the open political system was also born due to demands. The royal government then sees community demands and social conditions that are occurring in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian government certainly has careful consideration until finally the demands of the people are realized with policies to implement a more open political system. Government policy to implement an open political system is also inseparable from the role of Wahabi Ulema and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) who have such a significant influence on the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the output unit resulting from the adoption of an open political system policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the emergence of a program called Saudi Vision 2030. Saudi Vision 2030 has three critical pillars in it, namely; A Vibrant Society, Thriving Economy, and An Ambition Nation. In short, Saudi Vision 2030 is an excellent aspiration of Saudi Arabia to make changes in various fields. In the social field Saudi Arabia wants to strengthen its human resources, in the economic field Saudi Arabia does not want to fixate on natural resources in the form of oil, and finally, Saudi Arabia has the ambition to continue to build the country into an increasingly prosperous and modern country.

The Output Unit besides Saudi Vision 2030 is the emergence of various other policies on a small scale which indirectly have a significant impact and change the face of the

kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For example, policies in the form of gender equality by providing access for women in Saudi Arabia's politics and government. Also, there are more new policies such as opening cinemas, opening clubs, allowing women to drive, providing scholarships, etc..

Thus, it is clear that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia implements an open political system policy with the aim of building a country to become a more advanced and forward-looking country. King Salman saw the importance of maintaining the existence of the country and its descendants, namely the Al Saud family. The implementation of an open political system policy is believed to be able to bring the nation and state to adapt to globalization and the increasingly challenging world development.

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