National Identity Analysis of Saudi Arabia in Iran's Nuclear Agreement

Nizzah Amalia Subchan and Siti Rokhmawati Susanto

International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Airlangga

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Abstract: Each country in the international system must have an identity that shapes its behavior. Saudi Arabia's negative response to the signing of Iran's nuclear deal in 2015 is seen as having a strong association with Saudi Arabia's national identity. This is because the government of Saudi Arabia is a Salafi country and follows Sunni Islam. One of their beliefs is that any religion that does not fit their ideology becomes a threat. This is what then underlies Saudi Arabia's hatred towards Shi'ite groups. Sectarianism was then formed in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy especially to Iran. In addition, Saudi Arabia uses legitimacy as a custodian of the two Islamic holy sites to become a leader of the Islamic world. So the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal is supposed to have strengthened its position as a Shiite axis in the Middle East and intensified Saudi Arabia's intention to dismantle the agreement. Therefore, in this paper the author seeks to analyze the extent of the influence of identity through Anne Clunan's aspirational constructisim and explain how the identity is formed and how to incorporate it in foreign policy.

1 SAUDI ARABIA RESPONSE TO IRAN'S NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

Iran's Nuclear Agreement between Iran and six other world powers, namely the United States, Britain, Russia, France, China and Germany, is said to be a significant foreign policy achievement from President Barack Obama's administration. In broad outline, the initial framework of the agreement states that the international community will lift the oil and financial sanctions imposed on Iran, with Iran's reply to limit its nuclear energy program. This then realized by turning its nuclear plant at Fordo into a science research center, while at Natanz is deprived of its uranium production. The existence of other nuclear support components such as the nuclear reactor in Arak is then converted and designed to not produce plutonium for weapons manufacture. In order to ensure that Iran is subject to the terms of the treaty, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is granted permission to gain access and information to harmful nuclear sites and conduct monitoring, verification and inspection (Broad and Pecanha, 2015).

Although the initiative received a positive response from the majority of other countries, an unexpected but important consequence was a negative response by Saudi Arabia. This agreement is considered to aggravated and raised Saudi Arabia's concerns about Iran's purpose in the Middle East region. Riedel (2016) stated that Riyadh's previous fears had never been too focused on Iraq's nuclear capabilities, this is because Iran's risk of using its weapons is low and that there is a protective umbrella from the United States. However, the main concern lies in the belief that Iran has ambitions to become a regional hegemony through terrorism and subversion in order to achieve that desire. The existence of this agreement through Saudi perspective will have some impact. One of them is Iran will have the ability to improve its economic position, and indirectly increase the capability of the creation of nuclear weapons because of the sustainability of the agreement that only 15 years and not destroy the full Iranian engineering capabilities. Therefore, lifting the sanctions will provide Iran with the resources to strengthen Iran and its allies in the region. The context that the growing influence of Iran on weak central government and sectarian instability, as seen in the case of Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen, is what ISIS terrorist groups use as a capital to recruit soldiers based on Saudi Arabia's views (Al Jazeera, 2015).

The direction of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy can't be separated from its national identity. Joseph Nevo (1998) in his article Religion and National Identity in Saudi Arabia states that as a country, Saudi Arabia uses its religion of Islam as a source of its legitimacy. Therefore, Saudi Arabian policy close with the construction of its identity namely Salafism. Salafism is understood as a form of Sunni Islamic purification that is back to religion when the Prophet Muhammad without any modification of teachings or beliefs, and becomes a desire possessed by the Arab monarchy to unite the Middle East (Anjum, 2017). It is important to know that the division of Islam into Sunni and Shiite also play a significant role in the dynamics of the Middle East and the establishment of Saudi Arabia's national identity that is because the Saudis have negative sentiments to countries that has Shiite dominance, and one of them is Iran. So the construction of this identity must have an effect on the formation of its main foreign policy in the denial of Iran's Nuclear Agreement. Based on the background of the matter, the author will analyze Saudi Arabia's policy that refuse Iran's Nuclear Agreement and support President Trump's remarks to renegotiate the agreement, using the national identity level of analysis with a focus on the influence of Islam that contributes to shaping political relations between the two countries.

2 NATIONAL IDENTITY AS AN EXPLANATORY VARIABLE IN FOREIGN POLICY

National identity certainly influences the direction of foreign policy that taken by a country (Campbell, 1992). In the policy-making process, national identity becomes the main instrument used to know the policy objectives. According to Wendt (1999) each country in the international system has an identity that shapes its behavior. He also said that the identity then will determine the interests. This is in accordance with the perspective of the Clunan's constructivism which will use by the author to explain the national identity of Saudi Arabia itself. Clunan's statement is not much different from Wendt and emphasizes the correlation between how a national identity is formed and its influence in constructing a political view of national interests. Clunan (2009) said history has an important role in the formation of aspirations. This aspiration then becomes the central standard for comparing national self-image and choosing the most dominant decision. In this case, history plays an important role in shaping the Saudi national identity that is attached to Salafism.

National identity is a collective identity that constitutes a certain number of actors as a state. While collective identity is set of ideas that are generally accepted by other actors and used to define what values and norms it has. For a nation, national identity consists of the idea of the country's political objectives and its international status. Political objectives include the belief in the economic and political system appropriate to government and universal acceptance of it. This includes the idea of the national mission (Clunan, 2009). In this case, Saudi Arabia has a political purpose to "unite the Middle East under Pan-Arabism" while Iran "through Pan-Islamism". While international status is the status of a country in an imaginary international hierarchy based on economic, military, social and political power. This is also based on the opinion of other countries on the national identity of a country, one of which is an example of Iran is labeled as "state sponsor of terrorism".

The term of national identity will only be used for a dominant national self-image. If one self-image succeeds in influencing intense political discourse, the image will be institutionalized in domestic law and regulation, government structure, up to expectations of people's rights, jurisdiction, bonds, and behavioral norms when dealing with other countries or actors domestic. If the majority of the political elite also believe in the continuity of a self-image with a historical aspiration, and the reality of the country, the self-image will define the national interest (Clunan, 2009). Aspirational constructivism hopes that the political elite will form a behavioral orientation to cooperate, compete, as well as confrontation with a country based on a self-image context, which also consists of in group and out group construction (Clunan, 2009).

Mabon (2013) also says in establishing collective identity, regardless of the cultural and religious identity of a nation, the state's ruling elite also has an identity that serves as the base of the state's ruler over their legitimacy. That then regarded as a political identity. Then elements like culture and religion can be politicized and used as political tools. Like Islam that has an important role in Saudi Arabia and then the ruling elite uses religion as a tool to consolidate their legitimacy. This is also assumed because religion has a system of moral authority that rationalizes and prioritizes certain interests while rejecting others. Religion can also be said to have an

effect on foreign policy if its causal impact is represented in the intentions and beliefs of the policy agent itself. It investigates the role of religion as an attribute of an individual or a community, an organized interest, and an institutional connection within a country, let alone Saudi Arabia (Warner and Walker, 2011).

The implications of Salafism then can be seen in the policies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia both national and international, i.e. anti-Shia sentiments. Internally, Saudi Arabia's treatment of Islam is very oppressive. This is seen in the general norms that have been established by limiting Shiite people's access to politics, economics, and freedom. This form of Shiite and Sunni conflicts is instilled into the easy generation through textbooks of elementary and junior high schools, and promotes the ideology of hatred against people, including Muslims, who do not belong to Wahhabi sects to Islam. At the international level, Saudi Arabia to ban the Iranian state to perform Hajj in his country (Constantin, 2016).

3 SAUDI ARABIA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

Saudi Arabia has made Islam a major foundation in its foreign policy. The evident of this statement can be seen through its national identity contained in the basic law of the Saudi government which states that,

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its constitution is Almighty God's Book, The Holy Qur'an, and the Sunna (Traditions) of the Prophet (PBUH)"

Through the passage above that point Islam as the main reference of the law, Saudi Arabia clearly states that Islam is a value and a norm and then incorporates it explicitly into its behavior towards the international world (United States Institute of Peace, 2016). This is officially verified through the website of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry which states that "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its core values from the Islamic social and professional principles as its key elements in its organizational philosophy, and inculcate the values in employees and organizational units at all levels." The orientation towards religion said to be scrutinized in the history of the formation of Saudi Arabia which represents their national identity of Salafism (MOFA Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2013).

The Islamic rhetoric in Saudi Arabia comes from Muslim fundamentalist Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. At that time, the teachings he was carrying were used by Muhammad bin Saud, who then brought the genealogy of the Saudi leader's monarchy, to expand. Through Wahhabism or called Salafism, the interests of the territorial expansionist bin Saud with the expansionist interests of the Wahhab religion were successfully unified over the structures of the already present tribes. Wahhab who put forward the ideology of Islam according to the Qur'an then institutionalize religion into the political and administrative organization of the country (Rasheed, 1992). Most of the process of the formation of Saudi Arabia is also based on Wahhabism creations. This flow is deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia because of its close connection with Al Saud's family and the indivisible bond between the two. Al Saud promoted Wahhabism, and the Wahhabis would give the Al Saud family a circle of legitimacy. In addition, the adoption of Syar'i law is used to promote the religious narrative that exists within the country (Sindi, 2014).

Some components of thought from Wahhab emphasize that the need for purity of faith to Allah SWT is through the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad without additional or modified. Therefore, other groups such as Christianity, Judaism, until the flow of Islam that is deemed incompatible with the content of the Qur'an will threaten Muslims (Doran, 2004). In addition, the hatred towards Shiite groups can be traced specifically in Wahhabism. Shi'ites are considered impure by Sunnis due to their differing views on caliphate after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and other factors. So at the beginning of the formation of the Saudi state the scholars declared the degenerative Shi'a. This became even more intense when Iran, a Shiite-led state, declared a revolution to be carried out in 1979, by overthrowing its pro-Western leader and replacing it with Shiite authority. Along with the implementation of the revolution Tehran then began to support Shiite militants and political parties outside the country. The change in Iran's foreign policy direction was quickly responded by Saudi Arabia, which was concerned by strengthening connections between other Sunni governments, thus forming a regional organization called the Gulf Co-operation Council (Poole, 2016).

Increased intensity of anti-Shiite sentiments then brought up to the foreign policy, especially in the region. For example the Arab support to opposition groups in Syria to military intervention carried out against Bahrain as well as human persecution in

Yemen (Fisher, 2016). The execution of prominent Shi'ite political activists and clerics in Saudi also, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, exemplifies the reactionary response to political anxieties that turned attention towards the hostility toward Saudi-owned Shi'ite. When then the Arab Spring event dropped many governments in the Middle East, the Saudis feared that Iran would try to fill that void. So Saudi immediately tried to stem it with power and promised billions of aid money to Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt to expel the influence of Iran. It is these actions that show the real evidence of Saudi's sentiments (Lynch, 2016).

One of the groups that contributed to strengthening Shiite sentiments in Saudi Arabia was the religious leaders of the Salafi clerics. They have strong perceptions and suspicion that Shiite groups are conspiring to undermine the Sunni population. The support for the preposition was seen in 1993, when Sheikh Nassar al-Omar wrote a treatise entitled, "Reality of Rafidah (Shi'i) in the land of Tahwid", and argued that Shiites are liars, untrustworthy, and planning a scheme to rise up against the Sunni in his country (Ismail, 2012). In addition, scholars such as Muhammad Al-Arifi and Yusif Al-Ahmad also criticize the Shiite population spread through mosques and local lectures, public lectures, to use Youtube (Al Rasheed, 2011). Although only a few Sunni scholars who are anti-Shiite, their deep opinions are hard to distinguish from other scholars because they do not criticize the treatment of the Saudi Arabian government in the oppression of the Shiite group (Ismail, 2012).

National self-image owned by Saudi Arabia is portrayed by its leadership through domestic and international legitimacy to be the keeper of the two most sacred sites in Islam, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, and the Nabawi Mosque in Medina. The Hijaz area which is the birthplace of Islam and a witness to the early development of the religion has also become an integral part of the territory of Saudi Arabia because of Mecca and Medina which lie within it. Seeing this fact, Saudi leadership makes it the basis as a claim to be the leader of the Islamic world. In addition, Saudi Arabia's role became increasingly central as King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz influenced the establishment of the 1969 Conference of Islamic Organizations which later became the seed of the current Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The operations center of the OIC is also located in Jeddah (Rieger, 2016). Until 1979, no country challenged the role of Saudi leader in the world of Islam. However, this changed after the Islamic revolution in Iran. Under Ayatollah

Khomeini's new regime, he declares Saudi Arabia's leadership status untenable, with justification criticizing Saudi leaders who oppose Islamic teachings in private life and in domestic and foreign policy, to question Riyadh's competence in overseeing the Hajj procedure. In response to Iran's insult, King Fahd changed his name from "His Majesty" to "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques". This then became his international status in Saudi Arabia's national identity (Rieger, 2016).

Looking at the dynamics of history and Saudi Arabia's behavior norm which until now still has a high anti-Shi'i sentiment. It is believed to be a dominant national self-image of Saudi Arabia that is identical to national identity. Based on that identity, Saudi foreign policy can be seen to have distinguished characteristics that are also influenced by the dynamics of regional political shifts that have threatened the prior identity of their kingdom. Formerly before the Iranian Revolution was echoed, Saudi Arabia described itself as the sole and legitimate leader of the Islamic world. But after 1979, the Kingdom of Arabia needed to adopt a strict self-identity of its Sunni doctrine to remain distinct from Iran while retaining its role as a political negotiator in the region and seen as the true leader of the Islamic world. This dynamics continues in 2012 with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which succeeded in overthrowing Saudi allies and challenging the Kingdom's claim as Sunni ruler. This incident caused the Kingdom to face another identity crisis and reform its international status from the rulers of the Islamic world into the champions of the Salafi-Wahabbi school, thus counteracting the Muslim Brotherhood's claim to replace the Sunni Muslim world representation. These two political shifts then erode the distinctive features of Arabia and lead to increased conservatism in the country. In addition to maintaining its position Saudi Arabia also raised the intensity of Wahhabism's da'wah abroad (Darwich, 2016). Therefore, sectarianism for Saudi Arabia is used as a tool to create a distinct narration so that the Kingdom can secure the dominant presence of their country in the Middle East.

4 ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IMPLICATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA'S FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

In this section the author discusses the implications of national identity on Saudi Arabia's foreign policy

towards Iran's nuclear agreement. In previous years, Iran's progress in nuclear technology and its apparent experiments to develop it as well as trying to achieve its minimal capability in order to launch it have become the single most significant international developer in the eyes of Saudi leadership. Despite the signing of a nuclear agreement in 2015, the Saudis have fears that Iran will remain a nuclear weapons state. If Iran later succeeds in achieving that goal, then Tehran can expand its strength in the Gulf and the Middle East in a wider scope. Moreover, the capabilities of Iran's nuclear weapons will reduce US forces in the Middle East and the protection of the United States against Saudi interests themselves. Saudi Arabia is also fearful of a nuclear arms race in a region that has traditionally been prone to conflict (Black, 2013).

However, Saudi Arabia's concerns actually outweigh the ambitions of Iran as a nuclear country, this is because of the deeper fears that geopolitical trends in the Middle East are allying against them, threatening regional or domestic security from Saudi Arabia itself. The Saudi government sees the dominant image of Iran intensified every day, be it from its influence in Iraq and Lebanon, helping its allies in Syria, until now in a relationship with Washington, a rival for the Saudis. In short, however, it removes obstacles to achieving desirable regional dominance and favors other Shiite populations in Gulf states in the form of a monarchy including the Saudis to oppose their Sunni rulers (Gause, 2013). In addition, Saudi Arabia stressed that by uplifting sanctions, it would release Iran from isolation and allows Iran to take advantage of its financial revenues and allocate it to support the Lebanese Shi'ite and Houthi movements in Yemen (Haaretz and Reuters, 2017).

Saudi Arabia is concerned that Iranss growing confidence will allow it to intervene more easily in various situations and recruit additional players to its regional axis. In this context, Iran has been tried to create a gap between the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia. This is increasingly seen with the tendency of Qatar and Oman to start opening alliances with Iran. This is also the background of increasing Saudi activism aimed at strengthening Sunnis, using religious ideas to fight Iran and recruiting additional actor such as Turkey and Hamas (Guzansky, 2015). Saudi foreign minister Abed al-Jubeir stated that the track record of Iran has been proven to consist of war, destruction, terrorism, destabilization, interference in the affairs of other countries, and the concern is that the funds received will be used to

improve the condition of "its people". Hostilities between the two also have deep roots in view of Hezbollah's support in Lebanon, for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and the dominant Shiite government in Baghdad, Iraq. This has led to the assumption that Tehran controls three Arab capitals and also uses its subversive influence in a predominantly Shiite state but is controlled by Sunnis, such as Bahrain and Yemen. So in broad outline, the government in Riyadh accused Iran of pushing for disputes in the region, and expanding its influence among the Shiite community in the Middle East. Thus the Saudis believe that its history as a "guardian of Sunni Islam" has an obligation to prevent expansionism (Fakude, 2017).

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, it can be conclude that the explanation of national identity can be used to explain the policy of Iran's nuclear agreement rejection by Saudi Arabia. This rejection is clearly visible with Saudi Arabia's vowel against Obama's initiative which is also considered as rapproachment effort with Iran after 30 years of exile. Also in 2017 when President Trump expressed his desire to withdraw from the agreement, Saudi Arabia became one of the first countries to give support to the decision. If using the process of establishing a Clunan national identity, a red thread could be exposed to Saudi Arabia's hatred with Iran up to now, and clearly visible in its foreign policy.

First, as Clunan claims, the history of Saudi Arabia has an important role in shaping its anti-Shiite aspirations. The history is closely linked with the teachings of Wahhabism embedded in the establishment of Saudi Arabia into a state. In Wahhabism itself, the doctrine to purify Islam is emphasized so that other religions as well as the flow of Islam that do not fit their ideology, threaten the survival of Muslims. In Wahhabism, hatred against Shiites is also specified. Yet such aspirations can only become national identity if it is a collective identity. So the second point is illustrated by a collective group which then incorporates it into a country, the descendants of Al Saud, the monarchy of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A set of ideas from Wahhabism itself then generally accepted as the values and norms it possesses. Thirdly, the anti-Shiite sentiments embedded in Wahhabism then form the two components of the national identity, the political objective of being the leader of the Islamic world and the international status that

supports that goal as "the keepers of the two holy mosques of Islam". The purpose and status is not separated from the history where the Prophet Muhammad built the Kaaba and the Nabawi Mosque in the land of Saudi Arabia. Looking at these factors a national self-image for Saudi Arabia was formed as a Salafi/Wahhabi state.

Even so, as Clunan claims only the dominant self-image will be chosen as its national identity. This dominant criterion seen from the time period of self-image can survive and be viewed by the international world. Seeing that the Saudi self-image as a Salafi state was then accepted by the international community and attached with no change since the establishment of the country in 1932. In addition, because it also influences intense Saudi Arabian political discourse, the Salafi image is institutionalized into its domestic laws and regulations, visible in his country's constitution and the purpose of his foreign ministry. Self-image upon receipt defines the country's national interests, and helps construct in groups along with their out group, which also affects the behavioral orientation to the cooperation and the confrontation made by it. In this case Saudi Arabia, has defined a Sunni country as well as their Sunni friends who lead the Shiite state as an alliance that needs to be preserved and defended. While countries that do not fit their Shii states self-image like Iran, Lebanon, and Syria later categorized as their out group.

The anti-Shia rhetoric that has long been implanted both domestically, then extends and integrates with its foreign policy in the Middle East. Iran's rivalry with Saudi Arabia has served as a proxy for the wars that hit the Middle East. Although sectarianism is not the only stimulus for such political action, sectarianism allows for "othering" and can be used by chauvinistic actors to build collective sentiments, one thing which Saudi Arabia then did through the establishment of the GCC. It can be said that Saudi Arabia implements its repressive and skeptical pattern of domestic policy towards Shi'ites into its foreign policy. This stems from the fear of widespread Shi'i values and can be traced to the history of the kingdom who had bad experiences of Shiite rebellions in his country. Therefore, Saudi Arabia's national identity which is a Salafi state and upholding the anti-Shiite sentiments can be used to explain Saudi Arabia's policy towards Iran's nuclear pact.

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