

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country that there is no doubt in its existence. It is associated with its symbol as land with two holy mosques that refer to the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Both holy mosques are phenomenal in the process of the Hajj and Umrah worship pilgrimage.

The existence of the two holy mosques and several Islamic historical places there gives a positive impact on Saudi Arabia as a country with the most visitors every year. Even several news contributed a report that one of Saudi's priorities is the tourism sector, in this case, the cooperation between Muslim-majority countries on the program of Hajj and Umrah worship pilgrimage which will be improved by 2030 vision.

The increase of Saudi income from the tourism sector, in reality, does not automatically run smoothly. Several problems often characterize cooperation. Therefore, it is not infrequently required for Saudi Arabia to issue several policies. One of the most urgent examples in the past until now is still not fully resolved, that is the longest waiting queue for Hajj pilgrims which is almost experienced by several countries like Indonesia. Hence, it became a reference for the Saudi government to issue a policy of increasing quotas for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims in certain countries several times ago.

However, the success of Saudi Arabia in formulating various policies in overcoming some problems of its cooperation is certainly not a border that closes small gaps in the creation of new problems as happened in 2020.

In early 2020, it opened a new dilemma for the global world with the emergence of a viral disease caused by COVID-19 or more commonly referred

to as the Coronavirus that first came from China. The rapid spread of this virus has resulted in the global world experiencing obstacles in all sectors, especially the tourism sector, including Saudi Arabia, which annually carries out cooperation programs for the Hajj and Umrah worship.

Since February 2020, the level of the spread of the coronavirus has begun to spread across mainland China. The following data is the result of observation from WHO on March 19, 2020, as evidence that the spreading of the virus has spread to the East Mediterranean region.

Table 1. Results of the COVID-19 Observation Overview

Reporting Country/ Territory/ Area	Total confirmed cases	Total confirmed new cases	Total deaths	Total new deaths	Transmission classification	Days since last reported case
Iran	18407	1046	1284	149	Local transmission	0
Qatar	452	10	0	0	Local transmission	0
	302	61	2	2	Imported cases only	0
Bahrain	269	13	1	0	Local transmission	0
Saudi Arabia	238	0	0	0	Local transmission	1
Egypt	210	14	6	0	Local transmission	0
Iraq	177	13	12	0	Local transmission	0
Lebanon	149	29	4	0	Local transmission	0
Kuwait	148	6	0	0	Local transmission	0
UAE	140	27	0	0	Local transmission	0
Morocco	61	12	2	0	Local transmission	0
Jordan	56	4	0	0	Imported cases only	0
Oman	39	6	0	0	Imported cases only	0
Tunisia	39	10	0	0	Local transmission	0
Afghanistan	22	0	0	0	Imported cases only	2
Djibouti	1	0	0	0	Under investigation	1
Somalia	1	0	0	0	Imported cases only	3
Sudan	1	0	1	0	Imported cases only	5

Source: (WHO, 2020)

From the data, it can be observed that the starting of the spreading of the coronavirus in the region. As many people have been identified as infected with the virus and several have died. Even the results of observations every day always show different numbers. It indicates that the area is no longer in a safe

zone.

From several cases, that spread, not only to the Middle East but also all corners of the world, encourage every state to take anticipatory action. The best policies have been filtered and applied to inhibit the chain of the spread of the virus. A phenomenal policy implemented by several countries is the lockdown.

As happened in the European continent, according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said that countries and regions in Europe have imposed various levels of lockdown. It includes total motion control, while others have imposed time-based restrictions (ECDC, 2021). Like in other continents, in ASEAN countries, the COVID-19 response carried out by each ASEAN member countries are very diverse and ranges from conditions of strict lockdown in city-states (CSIS, 2020).

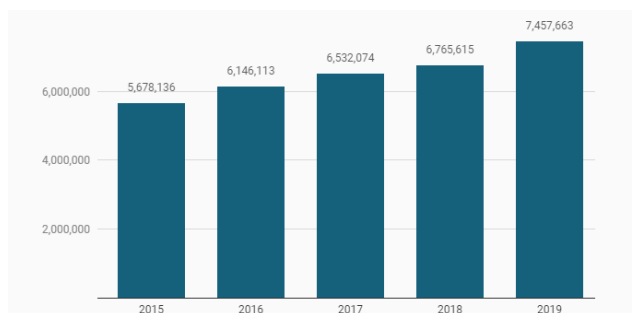
In the Cambridge Dictionary, the word "lockdown" itself means a situation where people are not allowed to enter or leave a building or area freely because of an emergency. The situation of the COVID-19 spread quickly and easily is considered an emergency that shocked the world.

Reflecting on the other countries that choose a lockdown as an anticipatory effort, Saudi Arabia also considered the matter. Therefore, last March the Saudi government decided to implement a lockdown which was marked by a temporary suspension of the visa for the Umrah pilgrims at that time (MoHU, 2020). In consequence, several collaborations must be canceled simultaneously following instructions from the Saudi government regarding the implementation of the lockdown policy. On June, 1st 2020, UNWTO reported that travel restrictions related to COVID-19 were enforced in all countries around the world, 156 governments have completely closed their borders to international tourism. (OECD, 2020)

However, the decision of the policy implemented by Saudi Arabia above has raised question marks. Considering that Saudi Arabia's largest source of income now depends more on the tourism sector, which is the cooperation in the Umrah and Hajj worship. The suspension of Umrah visas since last March which was followed by the cancellation of the prospective pilgrim's departure in July 2020 certainly has a significant impact on the economy of Saudi Arabia. (UN, 2020)

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, that depending on the duration of the crisis, potential shocks could range from a 60-80% decline in the international tourism economy by 2020 (OECD, 2020). As the impact felt by Saudi Arabia. In the following diagram, we can observe the increase in the number of Saudi pilgrims from year to year which has contributed greatly to the Saudi economy.

Graphic 1. Diagram of Saudi Arabia's Pilgrims from Religious Tourism



Source: Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2020

According to the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, the number of recent pilgrims is equivalent to 7,456,663 pilgrims during 2019. Over the past five years, there has been a growth of more than 1.7 million pilgrims. An annual comparison based on data collected from the previous five years (Graphic.1) shows that more Muslims are expected to participate in 2020 (MoHU, Statistical number of pilgrims for the last five years, 2020).

In fact, what happened in 2020 was not the previous expectation. The restrictions began in March and continued until the Hajj worship was recognized as having shaken the economy of Saudi Arabia. According to Dr. Abdullah Al Fozan, Chairman of KPMG in Saudi Arabia said the existence of a lockdown which includes restrictions on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage has made the Saudi economy worse and more burdensome to the state budget (KPMG, 2020).

The existence of this policy, not only weakened the economy of Saudi Arabia but also have a major impact on the parties which involved in the

cooperation process, such as airlines and travel companies. For example, travel companies in Indonesia which send around 80,000 pilgrims per month. This sudden suspension made Deputy Secretary-General of the Umrah and Hajj Organizing Union (SAPUHI) Adji Mubarok spoke up that the current travel condition suffered a deep loss of around 2 trillion rupiahs (Liputan6, 2020).

Several things above encourage the author to look for the reasons why did Saudi Arabia decided to choose its anticipation effort in dealing with COVID-19 by closing access to the Hajj and Umrah program. Considering that this policy threatens big losses felt by Saudi Arabia itself and various companies which work in islamic tourism and hospitality industry (hotels, guesthouses, gift shops, restaurants, jewelery shops, operators and transportation companies, etc.) are losing a lot of numbers.

According to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), in 2019, 2,489,406 pilgrims visited Saudi for Hajj. The following table illustrates the total number of pilgrims during the last ten years 2010-2020 (GASTAT, 2020).

Table 2. Number of Hajj Pilgrims during the last ten years

N	Year	Number of Pilgrims
1	2010	2,789,399
2	2011	2,927,717
3	2012	3,161,573
4	2013	1,980,249
5	2014	2,085,238
6	2015	1,952,817
7	2016	1,862,909
8	2017	2,352,122
9	2018	2,371,675
10	2019	2,489,406
Total		23,973,105

Source: Saudi General Authority for Statistic

Considering the cost of Hajj, which ranges from USD 5,000 to USD 15,000 per person (as announced on various websites around the world, with the availability of more expensive luxury Hajj packages up to USD 27,000), the hajj restriction for 2020 makes Saudi Arabia lose around USD 12 billion. It does not include the extra money that each pilgrims will spend in Saudi

Arabia, which can reach around USD 100 per day for each person. It calculates an extra loss of USD 250 million. If we also consider the Umrah program, which costs an average of IDR 3,000 per pilgrim, the Umrah losses between March and September could be in the range of IDR 6 billion. In adding up all these losses, the total possible losses for Saudi Arabia's Islamic tourism and hospitality sector would be in the range of USD 18 billion. Unfortunately, there are no official numbers for the total losses from stopping Hajj and Umrah. However, the author calculated a representative range of losses based on the data available in table above, and the data available from the Saudi General Authority for Statistics.

In support of this opinion, the authors added official data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in their press release said that the potential loss of revenue by airlines in the Middle East reached USD 19 billion. It means around 39% decline in industrial revenue for the Middle East for 2020 compared to 2019. Approximately 26.7 million fewer passengers resulted in a loss of USD 5.61 billion in revenue, risking 217,570 jobs and USD 13.6 billion in contribution to the economy of Saudi Arabia itself (IATA, 2020).

B. Research Question

From several important points in the explanation above, to continue this paper, the author wants to analyze further **"Why did Saudi Arabia decide to close access to Hajj and Umrah worship in dealing with COVID-19?"**

C. Research Purpose

In this research, the author wants to know the factors that influence Saudi government policy in closing access to Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage as an anticipatory effort in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

D. Research Scope

To provide a writing limitation of this research, the author limits the writing by starting from the early bird of this case that was March 2020 until

the Hajj period which was held in July 2020. Because this case is still fairly new, in the future discussion may arise new discussion beyond the scope of the research that has been determined to increase the validity of writing.

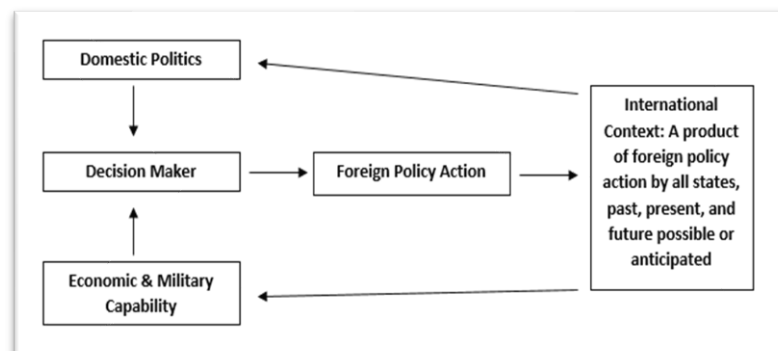
E. Theoretical Framework

Based on the background of the problems mentioned above, to continue this research, the author decided to use a foreign policy model which is generally understood that foreign policy plays an important role in the international affairs of a country. Therefore, to examine the problem that the author wrote, several theories can answer, one of them is the theory from William D. Coplin, who specifically stated what factors influence decision-making by the state. In his book, William D. Coplin (1974) stated that:

If we question why countries behave in this way, we must question why the leaders of these countries make such decisions. However, it would be a big mistake to assume that foreign policy decision-makers act carelessly. However, on the other hand, certain political actions may be seen as the result of three considerations affecting foreign policy decision-makers. First, domestic political conditions; second, economic and military capabilities; and third, the international context.

The following figure below is the model has already been described by Coplin in the decision making process.

Figure 1. Decision-making Process Model by William D. Coplin



Source: Coplin, 1974

From the table above, it can be understood that foreign decision-making is not only the personal interest of the decision-maker but also the result of a collaboration of three determinants that become the benchmark or basis for decision making.

1. Domestic Politics

In examining this section, the author underlines the important point that a part of foreign policy is the result of the relationship between political decision-makers and domestic political actors. In his book, Coplin (1974) mentioned domestic political actors as policy influencers. Policy influencers here are needed by policymakers to provide the support that strengthens the policies they issue. The relationship between both actors and decision-makers is called the policy influencer system. Furthermore, Coplin divides these policy influencers into 4 categories; those are bureaucratic influencers, partisan influencers, interest influencers, and mass influencers.

Bureaucratic influencers refer to individuals or organizations, in government agencies, and have direct access to decision-makers to assist in compiling or providing important information related to policies to be taken. Partisan influencers are political parties or political groups that bring aspirations from society to be finally taken into consideration for the issuance of a policy. Interest influencers are groups that have the same interests but do not have great power to be said as a political party. Most of the motives of this group are economic interests, but this is not always the basis for the gathering of these groups, it can be based on ethnic similarities. This group uses mediums such as financial funding, criticism, and criticism to influence foreign policymakers. Mass influencers are the public opinion formed by the mass media and used by decision-makers and policy influencers to lead opinion in support or criticism of decision making (Coplin, 1974).

In analyzing this problem, the author considers that the case of Saudi Arabia is more likely to be bureaucratic influencers, which is marked by the existence of several important institutions in Saudi Arabia that have direct access to decision-makers. In the executive branch of power, there is the Council of Senior Scholars formed in 1971 by King Faisal which is an important institution that advises the King and the Council of Minister, so that government policies are following Sharia law. (Rohim, 2013).

Thus, it can be concluded that the king's decision in this policy issued through a selection process by the Council of Senior Scholars as the king's advisors. Therefore, the policy issued did not violate and go far from sharia law and the constitution of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic state.

2. Economic and Military Capability

This section tries to emphasize that the economic and military strength of a country is very influential in the foreign policy of the country itself. The decision-makers are required to consider the economic and military conditions in making their foreign policy, as well as the weaknesses of their country when they formulate the foreign policy. Decision-makers must balance their commitment and capabilities with understanding their limitations, which result from economic and military conditions (Coplin, 1974).

In analyzing this case, the author does not place too much emphasis on military power. Military capability does not have too much influence on Saudi Arabia's decision-making. Therefore, the author decides to describe in more detail from the economic side only.

The following is Saudi Arabia's economic defense as a precautionary measure after the huge losses caused by its policies in dealing with COVID-19, that is, Saudi Arabia owns Saudi Aramco, its shares are

owned by the State, which is estimated to be \$ 1.7 trillion, equivalent to the combined value of shares of Google and Amazon. According to Sir William Patay, the former British ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 2007-2010, said that Saudi Arabia has a lot of support to help its economy (Dewi, 2020).

Besides, the Saudi government also issued a policy by increasing Value Added Tax (VAT) thrice. The Value Added Tax (VAT), which was previously 5%, has now been increased to 15%. This step was taken to protect the country's economy from the economic crisis caused by this pandemic (SPA, 2020).

In addition, the author decided to add a little analysis as a support reference. The author thinks that the decision of Saudi Arabia to close access to Hajj and Umrah pilgrims is a rational choice. Considering that if Saudi Arabia continues to allow prospective congregations to enter its territory, the chances of the virus spreading will be higher. It caused the economy of Saudi Arabia will be more threatened because they have to prepare more funds in medical handling for people infected with the virus. Meanwhile, the consideration of closing access is certainly contrary to the previous consequences. The existence of this policy will keep Saudi Arabia stable, even though there are still losses. Thus, to avoid a more fatal loss, it is fair for Saudi Arabia to close off its border access.

3. International Context

The international context explains why a country behaves in certain ways towards other countries. It is also included in international law and the influence of other relevant countries can be one of the considerations for attitudes and problems being faced by a country. The international context is often characterized as something or a

condition that must be faced or prevented and anticipated by a country at this time or in the future (Coplin, 1974).

The international context is closely related to the situation of a country which is the goal of foreign policy. It can be also the influence of other countries because each country has the same involvement and attention in the international system.

The international context of this theory becomes one of the important points in the decision-making process of Saudi Arabia to temporarily close access to the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage. The spread of the coronavirus has exceeded China's national borders, making WHO have to declare this as a pandemic of global concern (WHO, 2020).

As a result of the above considerations, there is pressure from WHO so that every country can understand the condition and immediately take anticipatory action. Besides, this policy is also the influence of some countries that previously closed access in and out of their territory.

F. Hypothesis

Based on the background stated above, the author provides a temporary answer regarding the factors that require Saudi Arabia to issue its policy.

- Domestic political factor: There is support from government agencies, namely the Council of Senior Scholars in providing religious statements which refer to the closure of Hajj and Umrah access.
- Economic and military factors: the existence of financial support from Saudi Aramco, there is a preventive step taken by Saudi Arabia by increasing the VAT by thrice, and as well rational choices if Saudi Arabia continues to allow prospective congregations to enter its territory, the chances of the virus spreading will be higher and the economy of Saudi Arabia will be more threatened which caused Saudi

must prepare more funds in medical handling for people infected with the virus.

- International Context factor: there is pressure from WHO and the influence from other countries in anticipating the spread of COVID-19.

G. Research Methods

According to Moleong (2004), qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and so forth. To know the factors that form the background of the Saudi Arabian policy in closing access to Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimage, library research is the research method that will be used for this paper. As George (2008) stated, library research “involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or expert opinion on a research question; a necessary component of every other research method at some point” (Chew Wai Keng, 2017). Information and data were extracted from various documents, mainly the official website, government report, thesis, and journals. By reviewing these, support from stakeholder statements and official documents from the Saudi Arabia government related to this research will be contributed to analyzing and concluding the thesis problem researched.

H. Outline

In this paper, the author divides into several chapters to facilitate the preparation of descriptions. The following is the systematics of writing which will be described in this research.

Chapter I contains the background of the problem, problem formulation, research objectives, theoretical framework, hypotheses, research methods, and writing system plans.

Chapter II discusses the phenomenon of the emergence of COVID-19, how Covid-19 was discovered, and how it spread to Saudi Arabia. This chapter

will also discuss Saudi Arabia's policy of closing Hajj and Umrah access as a step in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused huge losses to state income.

Chapter III discusses 3 important factors that influence Saudi Arabia's policy of closing Hajj and Umrah access, namely domestic political factors which are ongoing domestic politics in Saudi Arabia that intervene in various policies, economic capabilities which are the ability of Saudi Arabia to survive from the economic side after the existence of this policy, and the international context which is a global situation which also intervenes in policy formulation.

Chapter IV is the final chapter that will close this research, containing summaries from the previous chapter and arranged in the form of conclusions.