



THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF SAUDI ARABIA IN RESPONSE TO UYGHURS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN XINJIANG (2017-2019)

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Abstract

Studi ini menjelaskan pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia Uyghur di Xinjiang, dimana Arab Saudi sebagai negara Islam dunia telah merespon secara pasif dengan tidak melakukan tindakan berani untuk membela sesama muslim Uyghur. Sementara itu, hubungan antara Arab Saudi dan Cina menjadi lebih kuat karena negara-negara ini menjadi saling bergantung, spesifiknya dengan hubungan kerjasama ekonomi, khususnya di bawah Belt and Road Initiatives. Dengan metode kualitatif, terdapat hasil temuan bahwa tinggi kemungkinannya China membawa respon pasif dari Arab Saudi ketika Arab Saudi menandatangani surat bersama untuk mengapresiasi tindakan China terkait isu terhadap Muslim Uyghur. Hal ini akan mengarah pada kepentingan ekonomi Arab Saudi sebagai alasan di balik tindakan pasifnya dalam menghadapi masalah HAM di Xinjiang seiring dengan upaya Arab Saudi untuk menjaga kenormalannya dengan China demi hubungan bilateralnya

Kata kunci: Arab Saudi, kepentingan ekonomi, pelanggaran hak asasi manusia, Uyghurs

Abstract

This study explains Uyghurs human rights violation in Xinjiang, where Saudi Arabia as world Islamic country has responded in passive way by not doing bold actions to defend the fellow Uyghurs Muslims. In the meantime, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and China have become stronger as these countries become dependent towards each other, specifically with its economic cooperation especially under Belt and Road Initiatives. With the qualitative method, there is a high possibility that China utilizes passive response from Saudi Arabia as signed a joint statement to appreciate China's action on the issue against Uyghurs Muslims. This will lead to the Saudi Arabia's economic interests as the reason behind its passive action in facing the human rights issue in Xinjiang as Saudi Arabia is trying to maintain its normality with China for the sake of its bilateral relationship.

Keywords: economic interests, human rights violation, Saudi Arabia, Uyghurs

Introduction

In interdependence relationship between countries, the countries involved will tend to avoid interfering in the domestic affairs of its partners, especially if their economic relations are very crucial and the national interests are at stake. This phenomenon can be seen from the relationship between Saudi Arabia and China in dealing with domestic problems related to the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang. In short, the countries involved should be able to uphold its mutual trust and respect as the countries involved should not interfere each other's internal affairs to maintain the stability or normality between countries. By doing so, both countries will be in good terms as the partnership continues and grows, which later this situation will give benefit and advantages that can improve the country's development.

Saudi Arabia, known with its Islamic historical side, is expected to be a sensitive country, considerate as well as to have a strong understanding on the issue of fellow Muslims in the world (Taylor, 2015). Saudi Arabia became one of the countries that could be expected by the fellow Uyghurs Muslims-minority in Xinjiang where the Uyghurs Muslims expect to get a defense or a sense of sympathy from the country that upholds the Islamic religion and its Muslim community. However, it is very contrary to what happen on the current situation where Saudi Arabia did not show a sensitive response to the fellow Uyghurs Muslims in Xinjiang, China. On this situation, it is believed in several facts that Saudi Arabia seems to have a triggering factor that causes this country to be indifferent on the Uyghurs current issue, which incidentally the Muslim communities become the victims of Chinese violence. With the indifference given by this country, Saudi Arabia indirectly allowed and will worsen the situation of human rights violence of Uyghurs Muslims by the Chinese government in Xinjiang.

In fact, that in Xinjiang, more than 10 million population of Uyghurs ethnic and other Turkic Muslims minority have been subjected to high religious restrictions, mass surveillance, political indoctrination, mass punishment, and restrictions of communication and movement. In the year 2019, the Human Rights Watch organization had reported various cases of mass persecution, torture, mistreatment, and detention by the Chinese government on Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, People's Republic of China (PRC, commonly known as China). It is reported that since the 1990s until now, the Turkic Muslims have been experiencing mistreatment by the Chinese government with

many root causes, starting from the historical cause, ethnic, domestic military, and including its religion cause (Castets, 2007).

However, the problem between the Chinese government and the Turkic Muslims has arisen again in 2017 and it has reached its point in 2019, where the Chinese government had started to impose new religion restriction as Turkic Muslims were held in the “political education” or “political camps”. On this restriction, these Muslims were forced to learn Mandarin language and sing praise songs for Chinese Communist Party (or CCP) and President Xi Jinping. These Uyghurs Muslims had experienced some unlimited detention, poor conditions, psychological abuses, physical abuses, and even deaths, as it was reported that around 1 million or even more of Turkic Muslims have become the victims of mistreatment by the Chinese government (Roth, 2019).

The Chinese government has been monitoring Turkic Muslims through several disruptive programs and has put these Muslims under strict surveillance. The Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been deprived from their freedom in human rights, specifically in the freedom of religion, where they are not allowed to do their religion practices as Muslim’s people and not able to communicate with their families. Not to mention that the children were also become the subject of this indoctrination when these poor and innocent children had to face ideological training in school. With this humanitarian issues, it is believed that the Chinese government under President Xi Jinping has gathered support from the Muslims-majority countries around the world to “clean up” or to cover up the human rights records in Xinjiang. It is reported that more than 10 countries of Muslims majority countries (specifically under the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) have signed a statement in appreciating China to indirectly let the repression of Turkic Muslims happened in Xinjiang, including Saudi Arabia (Human Rights Watch Organization, 2019). By this term, it also shows that the Chinese government has been trying to maintain its argument to defend its country by saying that China needs to take actions to eliminate what they consider as “extremism” or “terrorism” in the region. However, Saudi Arabia as one of the countries that have Muslims as its majority of population have signed a statement that appreciate China’s action towards Uyghurs Muslims. Even the Chinese authorities have made foreign ties with some other Islamic countries in the world.

On this case, there are several things that bring confusion and seem to attract attention between the Chinese government and Saudi Arabia. The “suspicious” thing in this case is when the Muslims-majority countries, especially Saudi Arabia decided to accept Chinese official’s statement and “put aside” the human rights violations that has happened in Xinjiang as this violation is not the main center that needs attention. As it is reported by *Newsweek*, international news in 2019, that Saudi Arabia has signed a joint-letter statement with the other countries as Saudi Arabia has indirectly ignored the widespread of Xinjiang violation on July 12th, 2019, which the letter was signed by Mr. Abdulaziz Alwasil as the Permanent Representative or the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Geneva. Moreover, according to *Newsweek*, the Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohamed bin Salman has signed an agreement that relates with its economic ties with China. During Saudi Arabia’s visit to China in February 2019, it is also reported that Saudi Arabia’s prince is believed to support China as he mentioned on Chinese Television that *“China has the right to carry out anti-terrorism and de-extremization work for its national security”* (Maza, 2019).

With this concern, there is a possibility that from the perspective of Saudi Arabia, the government has been trying to prioritize its national interests to save the interests of its economic cooperation with China behind Saudi Arabia’s passive action response to the case of violence against Uyghurs Muslims in terms of the freedom of religion in China. Knowing that China has Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that provides cooperation or economic assistance to Muslims-majority countries, specifically Saudi Arabia, such as by providing huge investments and becoming trade partners, and with Saudi Arabia becomes a strategic partner for China to develop its country. From this situation, both Saudi Arabia and China have become dependent on each other in terms of economic under its mutual benefit cooperation.

Therefore, with these, there is a high possibility that Saudi Arabia cannot be against China regarding the human rights issues in Xinjiang as Saudi Arabia is trying to maintain its normality with China for the sake of its bilateral relationship. With this writing, I dedicate this research to the fellow Muslims in Xinjiang and wish them the best to get a proper treatment by the Chinese government. May God’s blessings bring peace and happiness, as well as to wipe away their tears and anger, and live harmoniously for all the Uyghurs Muslims in Xinjiang.

Interdependence Theory

Relating with the interdependence relationship between Saudi Arabia and China, the “interdependence theory”, has been established in the late 1970s by Nye and Keohane regarding the changes of international politics due to the emerge of various interaction as well as the interdependence between two states or more. In the globalization era, the word “interdependence” has been frequently used in this contemporary world. The term of “interdependence” can be used in a situation of the global political world where all actors, either non state actors or actors, are very dependent to each other. In general, Nye and Keohane mentioned that: *“Dependence means a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces. Interdependence, most simply defined, means mutual dependence. Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries”* (Nye, 1977).

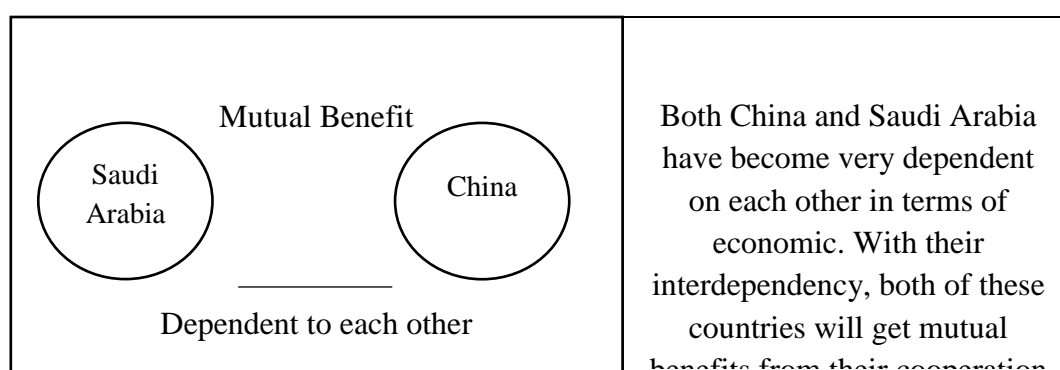
On the approach of interdependence perspective, the relationship under this mutual dependence involves all actors, including the transnational and state actors. It is characterized by the existence of competition and cooperation. In the perspective of interdependence, there is a reciprocal relationship among all the involved actors, which the policy or the actions made by the actors will also affect the policies or actions that will be made by the other actors, and vice versa. The perspective of interdependence does not only refer to cooperation and peace among the involved actors, but also refers to the relationship among actors that is characterized by the existence of dependence, various kind of interactions in certain area, and even conflict.

In this approach, Nye and Keohane identify the aspect of “sensitivity” and “vulnerability, which “sensitivity” can be seen as the sense of sensitivity of the response towards a certain issue or even the policy given from the other actor. Meanwhile, the aspect of “vulnerability” means how a change from one country can give impact or influence to the other countries. With this situation, the sense of sensitivity can become the foundation of a certain political influence from one country. Under the theory of interdependence, the countries will cooperate due to its own common interests that will result in stability and prosperity in the international system (Rana, 2015).

From another side of neorealism view, Waltz argues that the relationship of interdependence between actors would require something “costly” or “expensive” to be

broken. Under the approach of neorealism, Waltz defines the term of “interdependence” as a mutual positive relationship between actors then the actors involved will be suffer if the relationship is harmed. On the other side, the relationship which one actor is affected by what the other one does is not always be interdependent since the impact may not be “costly”. In addition, Waltz also mentioned that the theory of interdependence does exist when there is a specialization or division of function. With this, the actors involved will be interdependent since the actor will rely on a certain specialization from the other actor or need to do service for each other. On this term, the situation of interdependence will be high when the actors involved have different units but are equal in capacity, and in the contrary, the interdependence will be low when both actors involved have same units with unequal or different capacity (Stein, 1973).

Under the concept of interdependence, if the actors involved have a direct interest, it would be very hard to understand that a high level of interdependence could cause a conflict. If the relationship between actors would be costly to break, then the relationship between the actors involved could be a great factor of international cooperation. With this situation, the relationship will be costly to break. On the other side, the concept of interdependence theory from a realism perspective can be said that what happens in one country will affect the fate or the future development of the other countries. In this case, under the framework of economic cooperation among countries, the countries involved will need a political stability to maintain the economy and productivity of the society itself (Nobel, 1988).



Research Methodology

This research will use the technique of qualitative method from the perspective of Saudi Arabia to China as its main subject on this issue. The reason why the author decided to use the “Qualitative Method” is because it is believed that by using the qualitative method, it will support the author in analyzing the actions of a country in responding to a certain issue through primary and secondary sources as the literature study or library research. This research will use the help of article, official websites, journals, official documents, official website news, and books in the process of writing. In specific, this method will lead to the response from Saudi Arabia in facing the issue, which is the Uyghurs Muslims violation issue that has been happening in Xinjiang. By using this method, this approach is expected to ease the process in discovering certain behaviors of a state under international influences on a specific issue. Moreover, it will also help the author to analyze deeply about a state’s strategy within its response to a certain issue.

Result and Discussion

The Engagement between Saudi Arabia and China on BRI under Saudi Vision 2030 and GCC

Over the years, Saudi Arabia and People’s Republic of China have been enjoying its close-friendly relation and share their common interests despite their differences in terms of ideological aspect. With the existence of China’s Belt and Road Initiatives, purposing to improve its infrastructure and develop its cross-border trade between China and other countries, Saudi Arabia has become an important part of China’s project to connect the link and become trading partner for China. Especially when both Saudi Arabia and China see each other as a huge opportunity and potential in realizing BRI, Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries that have responded in positive ways towards this project. After knowing the existence and spread of China’s BRI, Saudi Arabia has also announced its economic reformation to focus on non-oil sector as a state plan on Vision 2030, which was formally announced in 2016, presented at G20 summit in China (Chen Juan S. M., 2018). With Saudi Arabia has also become much closer with China, China’s BRI has offered many benefits for Saudi Arabia’s economic, infrastructure, and cultural experience. China also decided to create a cooperation with Saudi Arabia to promote both

of their projects of BRI and Vision 2030. With the amount of cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia, the relationship between these countries could be deeper as it has brightened in realizing the Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 (Alqahtani, 2019).

Within Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, it is aimed to capitalize and improve its investment sector, boost its economic aspect, as well as to take advantage on its strategic location to create a global business as well as to connect big continents in the world, such as Asia, Africa, and Europe. With Saudi Vision 2030 focuses on connectivity and economic aspect, the project of Saudi Arabia could create benefits for China's BRI by entering Saudi Arabia's market. On the other hand, the government of Saudi Arabia could take advantage of China's role in developing their infrastructure. With this situation, Saudi Arabia can take advantage of China's BRI to realize its Saudi Vision 2030 in terms of infrastructure, economy, technology, and energy cooperation (Mohammed, 2017).

It is also reported that the Saudi Arabia's international market for oil and gas, as its main economic development, has experienced its upheaval since 2016 when the oil prices had a major decreased. With this situation, if Saudi Arabia does not take a huge action for its country, it will create a serious impact for Saudi Arabia in the economic aspect. With its upheaval in the economic sector of Saudi Arabia, the demand of oil market has increased from China as China becomes the largest trading partner as well as the largest for the oil export market for Saudi Arabia. From this situation, it is seen that China is contributed to developing Saudi Arabia's economy as it is reciprocal to each other, and the role of China for Saudi Arabia has arisen back in 2016. Not to mention that the change of Saudi Arabia's revenue from oil to non-oil market, Saudi Arabia's budget was so dependent on its oil market. Therefore, with this situation, Saudi Arabia sees China as a great opportunity to improve Saudi Arabia in developing its economy knowing that China's BRI could be a good long-term potential cooperation for Saudi Arabia to develop its own economic sector by achieving its own national interests (Chen, 2018).

With China's BRI focuses on energy, trade, and infrastructure, BRI is a great potential for Saudi Arabia as it shares the same interests in realizing Saudi Vision 2030. In short, Saudi Arabia with its interests on China's BRI can take benefits from their cooperation together. It is also proven that the exchange of interest and bilateral cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China have given mutual benefit for these countries, such as expanding its energy cooperation, developing their industrial sector,

and building strength by capturing new potential of construction market. With combining both Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and China's Belt and Road Initiatives, this cooperation could help these countries in achieving their development interests together, as both Saudi Vision 2013 and China's BRI have shared common interests and cooperate to achieve their goals (Han, 2019).

Both cooperation between Saudi Vision 2030 and Belt and Road Initiatives has similarities in several aspect. Combining the partnership between Saudi Arabia and China within its own cooperation, both countries could get mutual benefit as these countries could help each other in achieving its similar goals. By having a similar interests among each other, it is believed that their cooperation could carry out a positive impact that will improve the countries' development in certain sector as these countries could implement their bilateral agreement together in order to meet their economic goals under BRI and Saudi Vision 2030, such as in their education, cultural and tourism exchange as Saudi Arabia promotes Chinese language in its education curriculum as well as in the export-import trade sector (Chen Juan S. M., 2018).

Aside from Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia among with the Arab countries in Persian Gulf and China also have a project together under BRI, namely Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which focuses on energy sector. This regional intergovernmental organization is a part of BRI's projects which focuses on its economic and political aspect. Along with its common interests under BRI project, both China and Saudi Arabia have agreed to promote GCC Free Trade Agreement in facilitating their investment and their bilateral cooperation as China becomes an important partner for GCC. China sees this organization as an opportunity to invest US\$90 billion between 2005 and 2018 as China also becomes one of the largest trading partners of oil with GCC countries, specifically Saudi Arabia. The Chinese companies have taken advantage of GCC as they decided to put FDI on GCC to develop the infrastructure under BRI. With both China and Saudi Arabia decided to take advantage of BRI and GCC, this will create a win-win situation as well as mutual benefit for both countries (Fulton J. , 2019).

With the energy sector has been the focus on China-GCC partnership, East Asian countries have become the largest importers for natural gas and oil from the Middle East countries. It is proven in the fact that in the past years, China has been the world's largest of oil importer and it is estimated to surpass United States in oil consumption by 2034 as

the oil consumption in China has continued to grow. Meanwhile the Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, have become a major role for China's energy sector as it is proven in 2015 that three GCC countries have become the largest suppliers for China in energy sector with Saudi Arabia holds its highest position as the largest supplier for China in 2015 (Fulton X. Q., 2017). Not to mention that China has also been the largest export destination for Saudi Arabia in 2019 followed by UAE and Singapore.

Table 1 - Saudi Arabia's Export Destination 2015-2019

Commodity	Partner	Trade flow	2017	2018	2019
All Commodities	World	Exports	\$ 221,8 billion	\$ 294,5 billion	\$ 251,8 billion
Countries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
China	\$ 5,60 billion	\$ 4,136 billion	\$ 5,97 billion	\$ 9,724 billion	\$ 9,33 billion
United Arab Emirates	\$ 6,77 billion	\$ 6,56 billion	\$ 7,687 billion	\$ 8,13 billion	\$ 4,37 billion
India	\$ 3 billion	\$ 2,45 billion	\$ 2,60 billion	\$ 3,56 billion	\$ 3,77 billion
Singapore	\$ 2,35 billion	\$ 2,21 billion	\$ 3,06 billion	\$ 4,02 billion	\$ 3,41 billion
Turkey	\$ 1,72 billion	\$ 1,50 billion	\$ 1,73 billion	\$ 2,276 billion	\$ 1,99 billion

Source: <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/SaudiArabia/TOTAL>

With its growing trade between China and Arab states, GCC was represented as Chinese large trade proportion in the Middle East world with Saudi Arabia becomes China's most important partners among the other Arab states in trading. With the growing interdependence between China and GCC, the GCC countries have become very dependent on China's export as all of the GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, are very dependent on its energy sector to improve its economic development, as it is seen on table 1 that the trade sector since 2015 until 2019 with China has become the main destination with the total value of export of \$251 billion worth in 2019 (including its total area of 80% share worth \$202 billion), which is decreased from 2018 with \$294 billion. Nevertheless, China still becomes Saudi Arabia's top trading partner (Trade Economy, 2021).

Meanwhile as on table 2 for the import of Saudi Arabia, China has become the largest importer in 2019 with the total worth of \$144 billion as it has increased from the previous year with \$135 billion in 2018 and \$134 billion in 2017.

Table 2 - Saudi Arabia's Importers

Commodity	Partner	Trade flow	2017	2018	2019
All Commodities	World	Import	\$ 134,5 billion	\$ 135,2 billion	\$ 144,3 billion
Countries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
China	\$ 23 billion	\$ 19,7 billion	\$ 20 billion	\$ 22 billion	\$ 27 billion
United States of America	\$ 21 billion	\$ 18,3 billion	\$ 18,1 billion	\$ 18 billion	\$ 17 billion
United Arab Emirates	\$ 8,58 billion	\$ 7,56 billion	\$ 8,75 billion	\$ 12 billion	\$ 10,3 billion
Germany	\$ 11,7 billion	\$ 9,01 billion	\$ 7,86 billion	\$ 7,29 billion	\$ 7 billion
Japan	\$ 9,71 billion	\$ 7,37 billion	\$ 5,48 billion	\$ 5,47 billion	\$ 6,54 billion

Source: <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/SaudiArabia/TOTAL>

Emphasizing on the energy sector, trade, infrastructure, the GCC countries play an important role in increasing a huge potential for China-Arab cooperation. Considering with an important role of GCC under BRI, China has decided to participate in the development of GCC countries by investing on GCC, increasing the trade in energy sector as well as join infrastructure construction within GCC and BRI. Knowing its important role of GCC under BRI, both China and Saudi Arabia have both agreed in continuing and developing their cooperation together in GCC. In addition, the Free Trade Agreement between China's BRI and Saudi Arabia's GCC is important to maintain its energy security of state, important as China's source of energy import, as well as to protect China's diplomatic influence and political-economic cooperation (Burton, 2020), as it is supported by the report that in 2019 that the Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohamed bin Salman has visited China in February to sign 35 memorandums of USD 28 billion in the sector

of energy, transportation, mining, and trade, including USD 10 billions of an oil deal as a realization of mutual trust (Fulton J. , 2019).

The Reciprocity between Saudi Arabia-China under its Interdependence Relationship With both Saudi Arabia and China established a high level of partnership in promoting both BRI and Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia visited China in 2017 to respect Saudi Arabia's support on BRI and welcome Saudi Arabia in the participation of BRI. Reciprocally, China then expressed its support for Saudi Arabia to achieve and contribute to Saudi Vision 2030 (Chen Juan S. M., 2018). Moreover, marking its third session of *High-Level Joint Committee* between Saudi Arabia and China in 2019, Saudi Arabia is reported to be willing to enhance its development with China under BRI as well as Saudi Vision 2030 that will benefit both countries. After the meeting, both Saudi Arabia and China have signed a series of discussion or agreements or Memorandums of Understandings (MoU), such as: MoU on the renewable energy; MoU on the intellectual property rights; MoU to construct or rehabilitate the affected areas from earthquake; MoU on the maritime transport; MoU on the trade facilitation; MoU on the loan agreement for Saudi Fund Development to build hospitals; Meeting on combating terrorism; MoU to fight cybercrime; MoU to integrate petrochemical or refining; Agreements on the silk road program, as the MoU of Belt and Road Initiatives has been signed in 2016 (Arab News, 2019).

Not to mention that under its economy sector, it is reported that in 2019 the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman have strengthened its economic ties by investing \$10 billion deal to China in petrochemical and refining through a meeting with President Xi Jinping, as in total Saudi Arabia has invested \$28 billion for a joint investment with China within 35 agreements in economic bilateral relation. With its ongoing partnership, it is believed that the Chinese president mentioned that Saudi Arabia has been a great partner and friend to China and the strong bilateral relation has been proven with the effort that Saudi Arabia has made as the crown prince of Saudi Arabia also argued that the relationship between China and Saudi Arabia has been going on since a very long period and never had a problem with China. It is also seen with the strategic partnership under China's BRI and Saudi Vision 2030 that shares a common interest in the economic sector as the trade between China-Saudi Arabia has been increased throughout the year (Blanchard, 2019)

According to China-Arab states Cooperation Forum, within its wide cooperation, both Saudi Arabia and China have also made its declaration of action under Belt and Road Initiatives program in Beijing 2018. Under the declaration of action, both countries have agreed to continue in supporting Sino-Arab to fight terrorism and eradicate extremism in all kinds of forms. In other words, both countries have agreed to support each other and deepen its cooperation on the civilization. Another guarantees that has been highlighted in the declaration of action is both Saudi Arabia and China under BRI project will help each other in removing all barriers and enhance its regional integration, as both countries should also uphold the fundamental human rights in order to create a sense of prosperity and establish a healthy cooperation under its BRI partnership (Gao, 2019).

In addition, the two parties, Saudi Arabia, and China, should be able to advance its cooperation by upholding the principle of international law and United Nations Charter, improve its standards and development, as well as to promote peace and create a win-win situation. The Chinese government also mentioned that China supports Saudi Arabia in maintaining its security, sovereignty, stability, and national dignity, while also oppose to interfere any Saudi Arabia's internal affairs under any circumstances. In addition, China's diplomat also mentioned its support for Saudi Arabia to explore and find a strategic development that suitable for its country as China is ready to help Saudi Arabia in integrating its strategies under its economic partnership. The government of China appreciates Saudi Arabia's support as both countries need to strengthen the relationship in promote peace and stability under its international system based on international law for not interfering each other's domestic issue (Huaxia, 2021).

The interdependence relationship between China and Saudi Arabia is proven by the reciprocity between both countries in trade (export-import). The term of interdependency is higher when both countries have a high value of exchange, either in terms of goods or services. China has a high demand on Saudi Arabia as the export activities from Saudi Arabia to China is increasing since 2017 until 2019, which in return China's export to Saudi Arabia also holds a high value as both countries have a high value of exchange activities. It is reported that in 2019 Saudi Arabia has exported around \$45 billion to China while in return, China exported around \$26 billion to Saudi Arabia, as the trading activities between both countries keep increasing since 2017 although there was a decrease between year 2016 and 2016 (DFH Global Logistics, 2020).

Saudi Arabia and International Countries in Responding the Uyghurs Violation

Saudi Arabia has officially signed a statement to appreciate China's action for "countering terrorism" and praise China's actions for its contribution on human rights. Regarding the Uyghurs violation in Xinjiang, Saudi Arabia has acted the opposite of what is expected as the face of its Islamic state. Saudi Arabia has decided to sign a defending letter, together with the other 36 countries to agree and appreciate China's policies on Uyghurs Muslims-minority in Xinjiang, where it is reported by the United Nations that there is at least 1 million of Uyghurs Muslims have been mistreated (Nichols, 2019). In responding the Uyghurs violation, Saudi Arabia along with Russia and the other 35 states (Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, DPRK, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Gabon, Laos, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Egypt, Togo, Cambodia, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Cameroon, Bolivia, and Kuwait) have written a letter which commending and praising China's actions to what it is called as "China's remarkable achievements" in the aspect of human rights. Mentioned in the letter that with China facing the challenge of terrorism and extremism, China has done a series of "deradicalization" and "counter-terrorism" in Xinjiang. Although Abdallah Al-Mouallimi, a Saudi U.N. Ambassador, mentioned that the letter did not intend to address a specific issue and only talk about China's development, but the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, mentioned on Chinese television that China's government has the right to protect its own national security by carrying out the action of "anti-terrorism" and "de-extremization". With this, it is also believed that Mohammed bin Salman has followed Chinese government to cover up the action of human rights violation towards the Uyghurs minority in Xinjiang (Palumbo-Liu, 2019).

With the support coming from Muslims-majority countries for China, it has also questioned its Muslims-countries solidarity. As countries with its Islamic side and Muslims-majority population, this issue has brought 2 different perspectives and has divided the solidarity of the Islamic world. In addition, it is also believed that with the "silent response" or "silent action" on the Uyghurs Muslims in Xinjiang, portrays China's great influence on other countries which led to the joint signing-statement. It is also seen that with a great influence of China, specifically in economic, China had succeeded to

“bail” its country on several issue. On the other hand, the efforts from the international community to support China and turn “a blind eye” on the evidence of Uyghurs Muslims harassment, the letter signatories, including Saudi Arabia, have been accused for indirectly committing their own part of human rights violations. By defending China over the Uyghur issue, the Muslim signatories have given a valuable credibility to China for its human rights record. Hereby, Saudi Arabia and the other Muslim countries that signed the letter, are also believed to have provided protection for China on this Uyghurs violation case (Qiblawi, 2019).

Regarding to the Uyghurs mistreatment, China has also responded threat as China has sent a letter to the ambassadors in Geneva to warn the other countries for not interfering China’s domestic issue for the sake of their bilateral relations and cooperation, as there was a panel session of United Nations Human Rights Council about the Uyghurs human rights violation on March 13th, 2019, in Geneva. During that session, China did not provide credible response on the concerns raised about the violations in Xinjiang. Not to mention that it is reported by some delegates that the Chinese diplomats had warned the international countries not to co-sponsor, be present or participate on the event, which was hosted by Germany, US, UK, Netherlands, and Canada. (Human Rights Watch Organization, 2019). With its own opinion and perspective, there are 22 countries that decided to create a sign-statement to the Human Rights Council to call upon China’s actions to uphold a high standard of the human rights protection as well as to cooperate regarding the investigation on Uyghur’s violation. The statement was also meant to remind China in respecting the human rights existed for the freedom of Uyghurs community and abstain the restriction movements on the minority in Xinjiang (Human Rights Watch Organization, 2019).

With the existence of Uyghurs human rights violation, it is believed in several facts that some of the Western countries have condemned the action of China’s policy towards Uyghurs. It is believed that 22 Western countries as the member of United Nations Human Rights Council have made a joint-move concerning the reports of “unlawful” mistreatments in a large scale of detention which targets the Turkic ethnic minority, specifically the Uyghurs Muslims in Xinjiang, with the countries list are: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden,

Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Austria, Ireland, and Spain (Osborne, 2019).

The Influence of Saudi Arabia's Economic Interests to its Political Aspects

With the existence of the partnership between Saudi Arabia and China under BRI (specifically in Saudi Vision 2030 and GCC) that could create benefit for both nations.

With the issue of Uyghurs violation arises, the response of Saudi Arabia has created a disappointment for some people as Saudi Arabia's government decided to put a silent response of Muslims oppression by Chinese government. Along with other Muslim countries, from a general perspective and based on the humanitarian sensitive perspective, Saudi Arabia and the other Muslim countries are expected to vocalize their voices as a part of Muslim communities through Islamic organization, such as OIC, to address a certain issue. With its silent response, the Muslim world was disappointed with Saudi Arabia, as one of the important roles in the Muslim communities, has reluctance to demand Uyghurs' human rights in China. However, with Saudi Arabia trying to maintain its potential benefit from China, Saudi Arabia has a right to achieve its own interest, without the true explanation or justification by not interfering China on Uyghurs issue that will harm their strong relationship with China.

In addition, with their win-win situation between these countries, it can be a bit disappointment that the most popular country with its Islamic side has chosen to be with China's side as both China and Saudi Arabia are tied in many agreements, particularly in economic sector where both countries have become partner in trade and investment. With Saudi Arabia's argument that China has the right to protect its national security by countering terrorism, Saudi Arabia has chosen to prioritize its relationship with China and strengthen its cooperation together for national interest. With Saudi Arabia picking a side on China, Saudi Arabia might save itself from any economic, political, military, and social problems with China. In short, with the strengthen partnership between China and Saudi Arabia, specifically in the economic sector (trade and huge investment), it can be portrayed that Saudi Arabia is doing its best to establish its global reputation and develop its international image with China as Saudi Arabia has chosen to be on China's side in terms of addressing a human rights issue. With its strong bilateral ties, such as in export-import trade, investment, military, and political, it is no longer a surprise that Saudi

Arabia might not be in the same position with the other Muslim countries to defend, stand up, and speak up for the Uyghurs Muslims human rights' violation (Guler, 2019).

Under the partnership of BRI between Saudi Arabia and China, it can be analyzed that the economic interest of Saudi Arabia plays a huge role and gives a crucial influence on the response of Saudi Arabia towards China's policy. Belt and Road Initiatives is an important matter for Saudi Arabia and China as both countries are related to this partnership under investment, trade, and other sectors. It is seen during the issue of Uyghurs violation; Saudi Arabia has visited China in continuing its partnership together under BRI for Saudi Vision 2030 and GCC as this cooperation are engaged and aligned with China's BRI for their economic stability. China's BRI holds an important role for Saudi Arabia as this cooperation is beneficial and able to open a huge opportunity for Saudi's investment and oil market. The significance of BRI's importance for Saudi Arabia can be seen under the high worth-value of trading activities (export-import), investment fund, infrastructure, connectivity, renewable energy, and many others (Chang, 2019). The circumstances under BRI can create a mutual benefit for both countries in many sectors as both countries also agree in continuing and deepening its partnership, which the economic cooperation and its alignment has been mentioned in several sections of this research.

With this situation, China's Belt and Road Initiatives is an important factor as it creates a large influence on Saudi Arabia's economic sector, which Saudi Arabia can achieve and fulfill its economic interests through China's help under Belt and Road Initiatives. Although there are many other possibilities that could affect Saudi Arabia, such as the political factor, on this situation within the Uyghurs issue, it can be seen and analyzed based on the results of elaboration, that the economic factors play a crucial role in helping Saudi Arabia develop its economy. In other words, China's BRI brings a positive influence in Saudi Arabia's economy as it increases the national income. Even though Saudi Arabia is already considered as a rich country with its large economic income, still China's BRI can help Saudi Arabia to further diversify its dependence on oil and able to help Saudi Arabia in growing and improving its economy in other sectors other than oil (Halawi, 2019). With these reasons, hence, China's BRI holds an important aspect as it has a huge effect for Saudi Arabia's decision in responding to the Uyghurs current issue compared to the other factors.

Conclusion

With the existence of Uyghurs issue, Saudi Arabia must maintain its normality with China to keep its economic cooperation stable. As it has been in the agreement between Saudi Arabia and China, both countries are not allowed to be involved in each other's domestic affairs since it is mentioned in the guarantee matters on declaration of action that China upholds the policy of "non-interference". As China is experiencing a political turmoil in Uyghurs case, there is a possibility that Saudi Arabia would be affected if Saudi Arabia decided to interfere on China's policy, such as there will be a possibility that Saudi Arabia will experience losses in the economic sector, obstacles in their cooperation (Saudi Vision 2030 and BRI), and it will damage its strategic bilateral relation that have been going on since a long time ago (Hayes, 2020).

In addition, if Saudi is involved, it would also damage China's friendship and trust in political and economic aspect. As it is known that China has invested a lot of money on Saudi Arabia, such as \$20 billion investment, technology transfer, and \$45 billion in export-import. This situation is also supported by the fact that the two leaders of Saudi Arabia and China hold back its criticism and try not to intervene in domestic matters, such as when China remained silent on the Khashoggi issue and when Mohammed bin Salman does not encourage Beijing to change its policy on China's Muslim minority. Instead, Saudi Arabia supported China's counter-terrorism efforts and put its trust for believing China's action as both countries have a sense of mutual trust. Therefore, if China continues to argue that Xinjiang camp is a response to separatism and terrorism, Saudi Arabia will allow it to happen, as it is mentioned in their agreement to support each other in anti-terrorism and extremism efforts (Marsh, 2019).

On the other side, the concept of interdependence within the neo-realism perspective has also matched when the issue of Uyghurs violation happens in China and it affects or influences the development from both political and economic factors of another country, which is Saudi Arabia. With this situation, Saudi Arabia needs to stabilize the development as well as the economic aspect and maintain its productivity (Masterson, 2014). With the situation of interdependence relationship between Saudi Arabia and China, the international economic situation can affect the stability of Saudi Arabia so that Saudi Arabia chooses to maintain its normality of its relationship with China. In other words, the issue of Xinjiang human rights' violation as well as China's

policy on “countering terrorism” on Uyghurs will create a turmoil or tension in the international level both in politics and economic aspect, which then later the whole situation and decision of each country will affect each other.

On this situation, there is a fear that if Saudi Arabia chooses not to support or act against China, there will be a high probability that Saudi Arabia’s decision will adversely affect its cooperation with China. Knowing that Saudi Arabia has a strong interdependent relationship with China in its positive relationship, Saudi Arabia as the country involved, could be affected (Kivimäki, 2017). Thus, the relationship with China could be damaged if Saudi Arabia takes an opposite action and react contrary towards China. In addition, as it is mentioned on the declaration of action between Saudi Arabia and China, both countries involved should be able to work together in peace as these countries agreed to fight terrorism and extremism together. Not to mention that both Saudi Arabia and China should uphold the principle of non-interference regarding the domestic affair of a country as well as maintain its sense of mutual trust and respect to improve their partnership along with its win-win cooperation.

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