

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of a great country located in the Middle East (ME). Riyadh as the capital of the city is the largest city in the Middle East with an area of 1600 km² and 6,125,180 million population in 2015 (Kemlu, 2017). As a whole, the area of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia noted is 2.24 million sq km (864,869 sq miles) with the whole population about 28,7 million people (BBC, 2017).

Beside being one of the largest country, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also placed as one of the richest country among the richest Arab countries. As noted by The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2005, Saudi Arabia has for about \$340.5 billion as its gross domestic product (GDP) which 45% of it comes from their oil production. This nation is a country that depends on its oil production that it about 75% of the production comes to government revenues (Encyclopedia, 2017).

Saudi Arabia declared its independence on September 23, 1932 by Abdul Aziz bin Abdurrahman Al Faisal Al Saud after unifying Riyadh, Najd, Ha'a, Asir and

Hijaz (Jatmika, 2014). The regime in Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, ruled by the house of Saud along the traditional Islamic lines. The dynasty's right shall be confined to the sons of the founder, and the sons of sons. The most eligible among them shall be recognized as a king to rule in accordance with the Holy Qur'an and Prophet's Sunnah (Saudi Government, 2011).

The official religion in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is Islam with Sunni Wahabism. Sunni is an Islamic ideology based on Al Qur'an and Hadith, shahih or correct with understanding of the companions, Tabi'in and Tabi'ut Tabi'in. Wahabism is a purification movement in Islam led by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab from Nejd, Arab Peninsula (Jatmika, 2014). Saudi Arabia has become a major Sunni country in the Middle East and an important state in the Islamic world, not only because it was the birthplace of Islam but also because there lies two Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina which make Saudi Arabia become the heart of Islam.

In the Middle East, there is such a thing as loyalty, which is an understanding that promotes loyalty towards something. One of them is called Ashabiyah meaning when someone gives the highest solidarity/special loyalty to the family, religion-sectarianism, in which no group is better than them (Jatmika, 2014). Then, one of the countries that hold this loyalty is Saudi Arabia which is adapted by Sunni-Wahabism in the country. However, the loyalty that belongs to Saudi Arabia is not only practiced to its people but the nation also commit to be loyal to other Muslim countries in the region. Thus, Saudi Arabia has a key role in the Middle East.

The nation spends for about \$56.7 billion for its military budget, the fourth largest military spender in the world after United States, China and Russia (Haaretz, 2014). Then, due to its wide area, big population, strong economy and military capabilities which are the power of the nation, Saudi Arabia has important role to stabilize the region (Morgenthau, 1985).

Since Saudi Arabia commits to promote peace among the region, the nation feels the need to help Yemen in overcoming the conflicts existing in their country in 2015. It was after a rebel group titled as Houthi which attacked Yemen's government. The conflict happened in Yemen was basically an ideology conflict, which was between separatist movement in the southern Yemen and the Houthi in the North in which, Sunni sect located in the south and Shiah sect located in the north (Nugroho, 2016).

This rebel group was named by their former leader, Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi who was died in the battle with Yemeni government forces. After him, the position was taken by Abdul Malik Al Houthi, who had relation with Hussein Al-Houthi. This group which the majority followers came from Zaidiyah Shiite group (one of Shiah sect) dedicated to fight with Al-Houthi to the government was not entirely because of their basic ideological closeness (Shiah), but also the unfairness of the government in South Yemen causing the poverty in the North Yemen.

To maintain the chaos in Yemen, Saudi Arabia was willing to help by giving for about \$2 billion money to the country. Also, the involvement of Saudi Arabia

was more intense because of the issue saying that Iran was also involved to assist Al-Houthi by supplying weapons for attacking the government (Kholidi, 2014).

Thus, the writer would like to elaborate the reason from Saudi Arabia by their involvement in Yemeni Conflict (2010-2016).

B. Research Question

Based on the background, the research question of this undergraduate thesis would be “Why did Saudi Arabia take part in Yemeni Conflict in 2010-2016?”

C. Theoretical Framework

Theory is the form of explanation to analyze the phenomenon in which answers the question of “why” in the International Relations phenomenon. In order to analyze that phenomenon, the writer used the Decision-making theory by William D. Coplin.

Decision-making Theory

The decision-making theory proposed by William D. Coplin is capable in examining the problem indicated above. This theory will explain how a series of foreign decision-making process was formulated along things that affected it. When

describing the nature of foreign politics, Coplin (2003) classified it into three types: general foreign policy, administrative decisions, and critical decisions.

A general foreign policy consists of a series of decisions expressed through direct statements and actions. *Administrative decisions* are made by members of the government bureaucracy in charge of carrying out their foreign relations concerning the specific conditions limited by space, scope, and time. The last, *critical decisions* are a combination of the two previous types of foreign policy. Crisis decisions are usually limited to only a few countries directly involved and carrying long-term consequences that participants feel threatened (pp. 32-35).

If viewed from this understanding, the involvement of Saudi Arabia in Yemeni conflict is a foreign policy critical decisions. Saudi Arabia was directly involved in Yemen's war by deploying their military aid to help the Yemeni government in the fight against the Houthi attacks.

In the view of the fact that the decision makers put many considerations prior to the implementation of decision-making process. According to Coplin, foreign policy can be regarded as an outcome of three influencing factor. These include domestic politics, economy and military capabilities, and international context. Coplin argues that international context is the product of other states foreign policies, in which international context will unequivocally influence the domestic politics, as well as the economy and military of particular state. Under such condition, these factors finally influence decision makers to formulate foreign policy (2003).

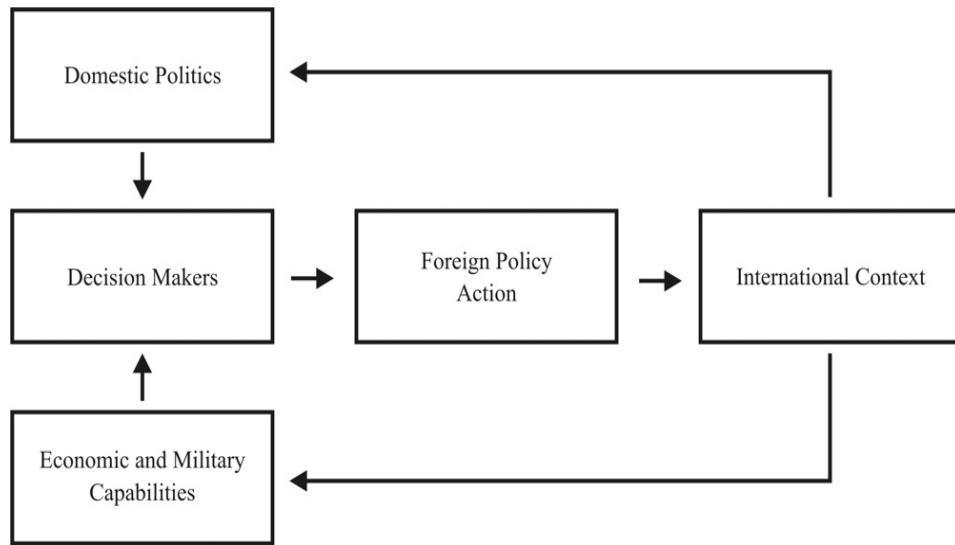


Figure 1. 1 How four determinants influence foreign policy action
(Coplin, 2003)

a. Domestic Politics

Domestic political conditions of a country may influence the preparation of domestic politics. There are differences in systems adopting such autocratic or democratic political system and open or closed which greatly affect the preparation of foreign policy (Coplin, 2003). However, this cannot be separated from the relationships between foreign policy makers and domestic actors, who seek to influence their foreign policy behavior. The actors who influence the policy or decision-making are named as policy influencers. While the relationship between

domestic political actors with foreign decision makers is called as policy influence system.

Furthermore, Coplin added that in the policy influence system occurs reciprocity between decision makers and policy influencers. Policy influencers are the sources of support for strengthening a particular regime within a country. This applies to all systems of government, both democratic and autocratic. The leaders of the state heavily depend on the willingness of their people to provide support. Support can be the loyalty of the armed forces, the finances of the employers, the support of the people in election, etc. The regime desperately needs that support to make its position more certain and to strengthen its legitimacy by adopting the policies on the target (2003).

The domestic politic is seen as the principal factor in determining the foreign policy of a state. The domestic politic could be referred to the behavior of a state or the national interest of state which wanted to be implemented on their foreign policy. According to Coplin (2003), the domestic politics are determined by four types of policy influencer which are:

1. Bureaucratic influencers: They are the individuals or organizations that take a part in the executive institution in government that helps the decision makers in formulating and implementing the policy.
2. Partisan influencers: The political parties that exist in the country contributed much on decision making process, because the political parties could be the bridge between the people to the government. The political parties are expected to deliver the people arguments, demands or suggestions to the country.

3. Interest influencers: The group of people who shared the same based interest. The interest of the states might be economic, non-economic or political motive. In order to precisely predict that interest influencer is influence the decision maker, we have to understanding the dynamic situation from many aspects such as the background and the particular interest of a person or a group.
4. Mass influencers: The mass communication drives much the public opinion or mass opinion of people. They provide the government the other perspective from most of the people (pp. 82-90).

If we elaborate the explanation above, it can be described that Saudi Arabia is led by a king who is fully supported by the royal family in deciding foreign decisions and certainly they have an interest in taking actions including the involvement in the Yemeni conflict. As an absolute monarchi state based on Islam Law and having their spirit of putting forward their ideology perspective, this is the reason they are helping the Yemeni government in fighting the Houthis.

b. Economy and Military Capabilities

Economic and military capabilities of a state greatly influence the result of the foreign policy decision-making. Economic conditions of a state is also able to become a depiction of the domestic condition of the state. As previously explained, the international position of a country is strongly influenced by its internal political and economic conditions (Milner, 1997, p. 3).

Coplin, however, sees the economic and military capabilities as the influential factors in the process of foreign policy decision-making, regardless the long debate

about which one is more important between both economic and military capabilities. Strong economy and military capabilities could build certain countries to be more active in the “stage” of international politics. Especially in military, Coplin explained that there were three main criteria namely the number of troops, the level of training, and the nature of its military equipment (2003).

These three criteria are the defining factors of the military power of a country. With reference to these three criteria, foreign decision makers can see how effective it will be. In other words, a country's economic and military capabilities can influence bargaining positions in other countries. Thus, it will determine the attitude of other countries to the foreign policy of a country. Economic and military capabilities are two important elements that influence the capability of the state to put pressure on other countries. Economy and military are the capabilities needed by the state to ensure the realization of national interests. In short, the better the economy and military of a country, the more it will be able to balance the national interest with its capabilities.

Saudi Arabia’s economy focuses on the country's gigantic petroleum resources. Saudi Arabia has the biggest economy in the Arab world. This country turned into the world's biggest exporter of unrefined petroleum since the 1970s, along these lines being known as the 'swing maker' in the world (Chronicle, 2009). With that income, Saudi Arabia is surely capable of fulfilling their military arsenal.

c. International Context

In international context, the situation in the country becomes the consideration of action would be taken by a state in responding the emerging issues. International context tells about the position of the relations with other states in international system. In his book, Coplin discussed three basic elements in explaining the impact of the international context on the foreign policy in a country. They are geographical, economic, and political context (2003).

The international environment of each country is the territory it occupies with regard to location and its relation to other countries in an international political system. Such linkages are in the economic and political spheres. However, geography plays a more important role, though not the most important. Wide area is one of the national power of a nation as a country that has a wider area raises the tendency to intervene in a narrower country. For example, there is Iraq to Kuwait (1990-2003), Saudi Arabia to Yemen (1960), and Libya to Chad (2000) (Jatmika, 2014).

The political crisis that happened in Yemen, crisis of continuity, the circumstances under which the rulers of the Middle East were threatened to be overthrown in an undemocratic manner both from the threat of revolution, both domestic and foreign. This intervention can be undertaken by other Middle East countries (intra-regional) and by countries outside the Middle East (extra-regional) (Jatmika, 2014). As the supporting factor, the crisis of loyalty called Ashabiyah

occurred in some groups of people based on religious allegiance. For example, Al Houthi, a rebel group in the northern Yemen is more politically oriented to Iran rather than its country because of different loyalty.

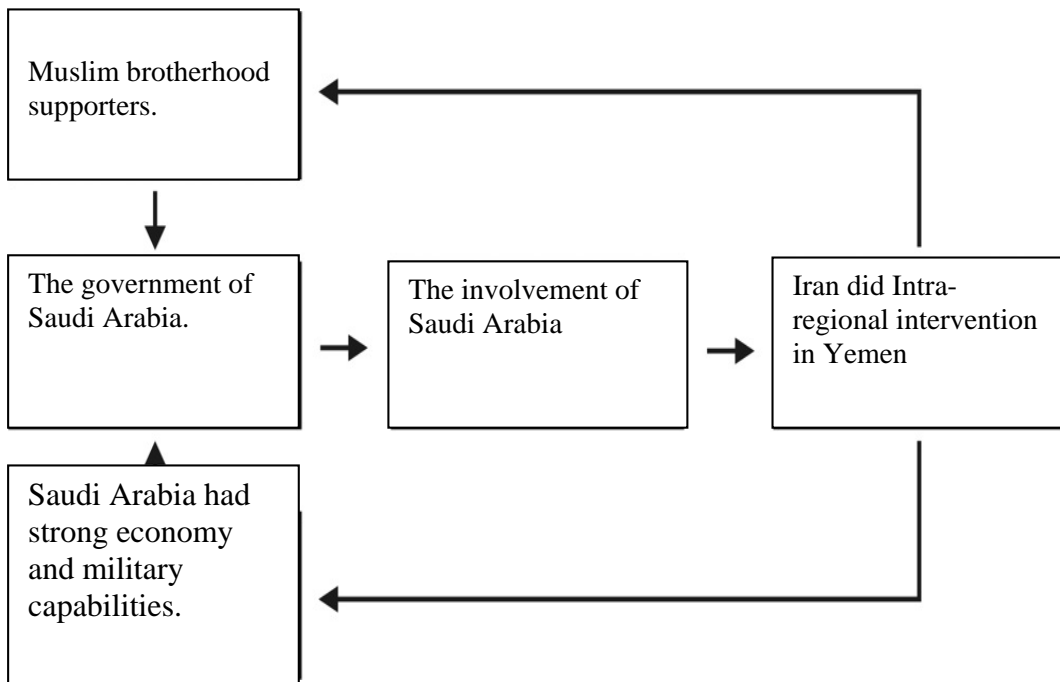


Figure 1. 2 The implementation of theory

D. Hypothesis

The involvement of Saudi Arabia in Yemeni Conflict because of three factors, namely domestic politic, economy and military capabilities and international context.

E. Methodology

In this research, writer used the explanative analysis and qualitative method to answer the question. The data used in this research were secondary data by collecting information from books and media including online or internet research such as publications, journals, articles, reports, and/or news. After collecting data from books or relevant online sources, these data were used as the information to help the writer writes this research.

F. Scope of Research

Scope of research is necessary for the researcher to limit the analysis and to accommodate the data information. Thus, the writer will make a limitation in this undergraduate thesis regarding to the scope of time from 2010 when the uprising rebellion by Houthi as the impact of Arab Spring until 2016 when the battle of Yemen's government to Houthi had been continued. In 2015, the escalation of Saudi Arabia's involvement occurred, and the research tends to focus on Yemen and its surroundings. This research might be calculated to give a better consideration in finding the real factors behind the ending of such successful operation.

G. Outline of Writing

This undergraduate thesis consists of five chapters and each chapter describes more details divided into several sub-chapters. The descriptions among chapters are connected until the end which will create a coherent and systematic writing.

Chapter I Describe the Introduction consisting of Background, Research Question, Theoretical Framework, Hypothesis, Methodology, Scope of Research, and Outline of Writing.

Chapter II Describe the bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. This chapter will be divided into several sub chapters. It starts with the basis of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy and the political dynamic between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Chapter III Describe about the Yemen Conflict. This chapter will discuss about Yemeni Conflict and the contribution of Iran. Yemen Conflict is caused by two factors; the emergence of rebellion movement (internal factor) and the contribution of Iran (external factor).

Chapter IV Explain the factors of Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemeni Conflict. In this chapter, the author will explain the reasons why Saudi Arabia was involved in the conflict. By using the theory of William D. Coplin, the writer will

analyze the involvement of Saudi Arabia based on 3 categories namely domestic politics, economy and military capabilities, and international context.

Chapter V Describe the last chapter as the conclusion and the result of the analysis of the undergraduate thesis.