

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE FACTORS OF SAUDI ARABIA OPERATES MILITARY INTERVENTION IN YEMEN**

The military intervention by Saudi Arabia in Yemen's internal power struggle in March 2015 has brought southern Arabia to the attention of a global public once more. The situation in Yemen had begun to unravel in the summer of 2014. With the resignation and flight of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the internal dispute finally escalated into a military confrontation at the beginning of 2015. Subsequently, the Shi'ite Houthi rebels took over power in the capital Sana'a and large swathes of northern and central Yemen. The Saudi-led military alliance aims to reinstate Hadi as president and to put down the Houthi rebellion. However, after several weeks of air strikes, the military balance remains largely unchanged. A ground offensive, an option that remains on the table, could have severe consequences for Yemen, but also for the stability of Saudi Arabia. Only a ceasefire and support for a negotiated solution can put an end to the violent clashes and prevent a disintegration of the state and a further increase of the terrorist threat from jihadist groups.

This chapter will explain the factors Saudi did operate military intervention in Yemen. As what has stated in Chapter I the reasoning will be explained using the Coplin's Decision Making Process, especially the international context factor and the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), especially Responsibility to Prevent and Responsibility to React.

#### **A. The Intervention of Saudi-led Coalition**

After President Hadi asked the Arab League to help him protect and restore his authority over Yemen against the Houthi rebel in 2015, Saudi agreed to give support for the Hadi government. Previously, President Hadi went to Saudi Arabia to meet the Foreign Minister to gain support in fighting the Houthi. Also, in a joint statement of GCC member states

on March 2015, the member states agreed to intervene against Houthi rebels.

The coalition formed by Saudi Arabia conducted the Operation Decisive Storm ('Amaliyyat 'Asifat al-Hazm). At first, the campaign was only to bomb Houthi's position via air combat, but soon the coalition also enacted naval blockade and deployed ground army. This coalition marked some dilemmas faced by the Saudi government because the intervention was something unusual in Saudi foreign policy. As stated in Chapter II, Saudi foreign policy was conducted "... under the framework of good-neighbor policy, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, strengthen relations with the Gulf States and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, strengthen relations with Arab and Islamic countries for the benefit of common interests of these countries."<sup>103</sup> The idea of 'good-neighbor policy' and 'noninterference of internal affairs' means that the intervention of Saudi to Yemeni internal affairs is violating their own principals of foreign policy.

Moreover, in Article 2 (7) of United Nations Charter, it is stated that "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter...". However, Saudi insisted that Saudi act under article 51 of United Nations Charter, stating that Saudi only helped the government of Yemen in defending the country from armed conflict done by the rebels (Houthi). This is legal because the Hadi government is internationally recognized although internally challenged by the Houthi forces. On the other hand, some believed that although it is legal, the action was too political and ignoring the reality of humanitarian condition; Saudi ignored the human rights violation done by Yemeni government for the past several

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<sup>103</sup> See Chapter II.

years and the expression of Houthi's interest for a struggle for welfare.<sup>104</sup>

Plus, under the policy of Arab League, Saudi Arabia established the coalition by harvesting the use of collective self-defense based on Article 6 of Arab League Charter, emphasized in the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Co-operation Between the State of The Arab League. The member of the League perceived Houthi as the threat to Yemen and the Arab region.<sup>105</sup>

Another dilemma is that the coalition also caused the continuing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. As what will elaborate in the next section, Saudi's reasoning in conducting intervention is to stop the humanitarian crisis done by Houthi and to defend the people of Yemen. However, some suggested that the coalition caused an even more humanitarian crisis. Saudi-led coalition enacted a de facto blockade of ports in Yemen, making the imports flowing into Yemen difficult and resulted in more hunger. Food stocks depleted, and commodity prices of basic needs were beyond for average Yemeni people to purchase. Food security was considered in a state of "emergency" in west and south regions of Shabwa, Abyan, Lahj, and Saada and was critical in highlands of Sana'a and northern region. The air strikes and embargo also increased the price of fuel (used to pump water and run electricity) and medicine.

The countries in the coalition besides Saudi Arabia are United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan. Each country has supported in some various ways. Saudi Arabia itself deployed 100 fighter jets and 150 thousand soldiers, UAE supported with 30 jets, and both are the active countries to strike on the Houthi. Kuwait offered 15 fighter jets, Bahrain 12, Qatar 10, Sudan 4, and Egypt also offered but the number is officially

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<sup>104</sup> Ibrahim, "Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring", *BPC Policy Brief*, 2016., p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> Renny Januar Dini, I Made Pasek Diantha, & A.A Sri Utari, "Tinjauan Yuridis Intervensi Militer Koalisi Saudi Arabia Dalam Konflik Bersenjata di Yaman", *Thesis*, Universitas Udayana., p. 8.

unknown.<sup>106</sup> Jordan and Morocco were also supported but did not mention specific action of the support, while Pakistan and Somalia voiced their support via a public statement. Other non-Arab states also supported the coalition, mainly from the US as Saudi's ally and therefore other Western powers as US allies. The US supported intelligence, training, and logistics, as well as Turkey, Canada, and the United Kingdom.



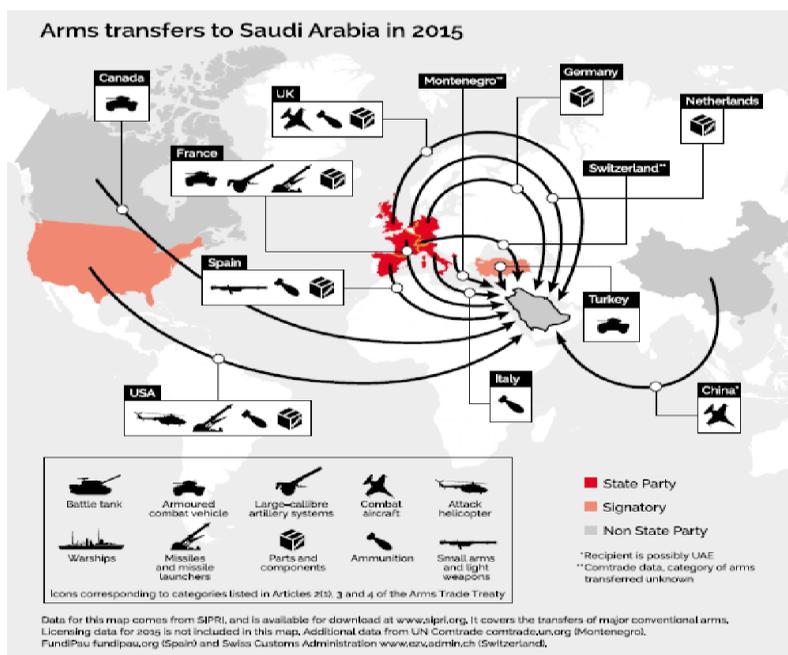
**Figure 4.1**  
**Major Countries of Saudi-led Coalition in Operation**  
**“Decisive Storm”**

Source: Jon Gambrell, “Here are the members of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and what they're contributing” (30 March 2015), retrieved 10 August 2018 from Business Insider: <https://www.businessinsider.com/members-of-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen-their-contributions-2015-3/?IR=T>

Many countries also supported by licensing and exporting weapons to Saudi Arabia. Those countries are France, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Spain,

<sup>106</sup> Jon Gambrell, “Here are the members of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and what they're contributing” (30 March 2015), retrieved 10 August 2018 from *Business Insider*: <https://www.businessinsider.com/members-of-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen-their-contributions-2015-3/?IR=T>.

Sweden, and Switzerland. The arms sale criticized for violating the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) article 6, 7, and 11



which stated that parties must not provide arms to support combat which violates the humanitarian law; and the Saudi intervention in Yemen seen as a humanitarian violation.<sup>107</sup>

### Figure 4.2 Arms Trade to Saudi Arabia in 2016

Source: “Dealing in Double Standards: How Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia are Causing Human Suffering in Yemen”, *ATT Monitor - Case Study 2*, 2016, p. 4.

The first strike of the coalition happened on 26 March 2015 when an air strike attacked the Houthi base in Lahij Governorate. The airstrike continued daily up until late April

<sup>107</sup> “Dealing in Double Standards: How Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia are Causing Human Suffering in Yemen”, *ATT Monitor - Case Study 2*, 2016., pp. 4-7.

2015 and targeting various Houthi bases in many governorates, mostly in northern Yemen. Besides airstrike, the operation also carried out naval and ground attack. Saudi and Egypt mostly did the naval activity (engaged in an active blockade, monitoring, and water patrol), United States (preventing Iranian ships bringing weapons and reinforcement to reach Yemen), and Somalia (allowing the coalition to use its air and naval territory). On the ground, both Saudi and Houthi forces exchanged rocket and artillery attacks from March to April 2015.

On 21 April 2015, the Operation Decisive Storm ended, and Saudi started Operation Renewal of Hope. The coalition believed that the Operation Decisive Storm had met its achievement of protecting Yemeni people, preventing weapons from outside Yemen, and legitimizing the government of Hadi. The new operation would now be a focus on supporting the development, preventing Houthi to do more humanitarian violation, supporting humanitarian work, and guarding the Yemen-Saudi border and the relation with the surrounding region.<sup>108</sup> However, this does not mean that military action would stop because it could still conduct if necessary. In fact, up until May 2017, there were about 90,000 air strikes by coalition forces, meaning an average of one air strike every 12 minutes, resulted in 10,000 becoming a victim.<sup>109</sup>

## **B. The Close Relation of Saudi-Yemen in Geographic and Political Element**

According to Coplin, three factors influence the decision-making process of foreign policy, which are: domestic politics, economy-military capability, and

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<sup>108</sup> Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C, "Operation Decisive Storm Ends, Operation Renewal of Hope Begins" (2016), retrieved 10 August 2018 from *Operation Renewal of Hope*: <http://www.operationrenewalofhope.com/operation-decisive-storm-ends-operation-renewal-of-hope-begins/#sthash.RrLgXxVN.dpbs>.

<sup>109</sup> Moosa Elayah, Lau Schulpen, Bilqis Abu-osba, & Bakeel Al-zandani, "Yemen: a Forgotten War and an Unforgotten Country", *Analytical Report*, Center for International Development Issues, 2017., p. 2.

international context.<sup>110</sup> In this elaboration, the writer will focus on the international context, analyzing from the perspective of the Saudi government to respond to issues in the surrounding region regarding this crisis in Yemen. However, it is not impossible that the elaboration will also include other aspects from both domestic politics and economy-military factors as well.

### **1. Geographic Element**

As what has stated in Chapter I, the international context can be analyzed through two elements; geographic and politics element. Regarding geography, Yemen and Saudi are close. They even share a border and had past armed crisis regarding border issue, for example, the Saudi-Yemeni War in 1934 and the building of Saudi-Yemen Barrier in 2003.<sup>111</sup> The geographic condition will influence the states condition, welfare, and development. This is called the concept of geopolitics. Furthermore, according to Griffiths and O'Callaghan:

Geopolitics the study of the influence of geographical factors on state behaviour – how location, climate, natural resources, population, and physical terrain determine a state's foreign policy options and its position in the hierarchy of states.

At the heart of the geopolitical analysis is a belief that states' economic and military capability, their position in the hierarchy of states, and how they relate to their neighbors are the consequence of geographical factors.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>111</sup> Ginny Hill and Gerd Nonneman, "Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States: Elite Politics, Street Protests and Regional Diplomacy", *Briefing Paper*, Chatam House, 2011., p. 10.

<sup>112</sup> Martin Griffiths and Terry O'Callaghan, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2002., p. 120.

The location of one state will influence the others as well. Saudi Arabia understands this, and it can be seen from their foreign policy where Saudi Arabia categorizes their foreign policy scope based on geopolitics.<sup>113</sup> For Saudi Arabia, Yemen is under its Arab Circle and Islamic Circle. Yemen and Saudi Arabia have a close relationship because they both are a member of the Arab League and OIC. In Chapter II, regarding the Arab Spring, Saudi tried to defend the monarchy and other monarchies in the region by supporting the regime and denying the Arab Spring.<sup>114</sup> The situation in Yemen was the result of the Arab Spring and will cause instability which leads to more security threat.

*First*, Saudi perceived Houthi condition as a threat to Saudi's regime. By letting Houthi win, therefore, Saudi is giving a sign that a people can win in the fight against the government. This would ignite more similar actions, fueling even more from the previous Arab Spring revolts in 2011. Not only that, but Saudi also perceived Houthi as the immediate threat. For years, Saudi has stood firm against the threat of losing its hold over a country that has been a Saudi zone of power for many years.<sup>115</sup> Previously Saudi tried to establish a good relationship with President Saleh but then turned into Hadi after President Saleh lost his power in Yemen. Saudi would not try to maintain relationships with Houthi, a group that tries to liberate themselves from Saudi influence.

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<sup>113</sup> See Chapter II.

<sup>114</sup> Gelvin, "Why is Saudi Arabia suddenly so paranoid?" The Conversation.

<sup>115</sup> Talal Al-Matter, "Saudi Arabia And The Arab Spring: Five Years Of Influence And Action", *Third Asia Pacific Conference on Advanced Research*, Asia Pacific Institute of Advanced Research, 2016., p. 453.

According to Wyllie, a threat can be measured by looking at the capability and intention.<sup>116</sup> Clearly, for Saudi, Houthi would not stand a chance to ever defeat the Saudi army due to the sophistication of Saudi's military equipment and personnel. During the era of President Obama, in 2009, US and Saudi had 42 deals worth \$115 million, which was the highest of both states' history. The United States also received billions of dollars in training the Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG) which played a key role in Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. However, regarding intention, Houthi is dangerous. It is because Houthi saw Saudi and other powers as an enemy by aiding the Hadi government and not recognizing the Houthi government.

Moreover, most Yemeni also believed that the current crisis is a playground for foreign powers and elites to pursue their interest. Therefore Houthi and Yemeni people try to fight them as hard as they could. "Yemenis widely believe that the current political crisis presents a growing opportunity for an external "selectorate" to try to influence the outcome of the elite competition."<sup>117</sup>

*Second*, instability will create a safe heaven for terrorist groups to reside in Yemen. AQAP and ISIS will take advantage of the instability and try to pursue their own agenda in controlling region in Yemen. Eliminating terrorist groups—or at least preventing them from going further into Saudi Arabia—was not only the interest of Saudi government but also the interest of the international community as well. *Third*, Saudi Arabia also has an interest in safeguarding the geopolitical importance of Yemen, especially in oil. The

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<sup>116</sup> James Wyllie, "Force and Security", in Trevor C. Salmon & Mark F. Imber (ed.) *Issues in International Relations*, New York, Routledge, 2008., p. 76.

<sup>117</sup> Hill and Nonneman, "Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States: Elite Politics, Street Protests and Regional Diplomacy", *Briefing Paper*, Chatam House, 2011., p. 5.

country, with its 1,184-mile coastline, is strategically located next to the Bab al Mandab strait, through which commercial oil tankers carry an estimated 3.4 million barrels per day (3.5% to 4% of the global oil supply).

## **2. Political Element**

In April 2017 Report of Saudi Arabia And the Yemen Conflict by the Saudi government, the Saudi government made three clear strategic political interests of why they operated the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. *First*, because Saudi saw themselves as the protector of the legitimate government of Hadi. Indeed, the Hadi government is the legitimate ruler of Yemen and recognized by the international community.

*Second, the* Saudi government was also protecting Hadi as their Sunni ally in Yemen. Moreover, Saudi believed that this intervention is necessary to contain the influence of Shia in the region, either of Shia from the Houthi and from Iran. Saudi Arabia accused Iran of supporting the Houthi (both Shia) to fight against Hadi and Saudi, which are Sunni. Both Saudi and the US believed that Yemen is another ground for Saudi-Iran proxy war, like what happened in Badr Brigade in Iraq, Al-Quds Brigade and President Assad regime in Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. According to the US Department of State:

Iran actively supported members of the Houthi tribe in northern Yemen, including activities intended to build military capabilities, which could pose a greater threat to security and stability in Yemen and the surrounding region. In July 2012, the Yemeni Interior Ministry arrested members of an alleged Iranian spy ring...<sup>118</sup>

On the other hand, according to an Iranian official stated by Reuters:

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<sup>118</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, 2017 Report, 2017., p. 16.

“Yemen is where the real proxy war is going on, and winning the battle in Yemen will help define the balance of power in the Middle East.”<sup>119</sup>

Therefore, it can conclude that Iran did give support to Houthi because both are Shia and are against Sunni powers. The Iranian support to Houthi dated back as early as 2005 when Houthi was still growing in northern Yemen in the form of weapon trade and personnel training by Iran in Sa'da. When Houthi got de facto power in Yemen, they signed a military, political, and economic agreement with Iran; in 2015 Houthi government opened a direct flight from Sana'a to Teheran 28 times per week. From February to May 2015, the coalition forces successfully stopped several ships from Iran carrying weapons, logistics, and food supply to Yemen.<sup>120</sup> These proved that Iranian support to Yemen was real and it became a threat of influence for Saudi Arabia.

*Third*, Saudi-led intervention is in-line with the interest of US—Saudi's oldest and closest ally—to be the guardian of the region. US believed that Saudi should take a similar role as the US, becoming the superpower in the Middle East and bringing stability and order. As stated by Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir in remarks to the Munich Security Conference on 19 February 2017:

“[President Trump] believes in destroying Daesh; so do we. He believes in containing Iran; so do we. He believes in working with traditional allies; so do we. And when we look at the composition of the Cabinet

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Rizky Octa Putri Charin, “Kepentingan Iran Melakukan Intervensi Terhadap Konflik Internal Yaman Tahun 2014-2015”, JOM FISIP Vol. 3 No. 2, Oktober 2016., pp. 6-9.

and the personalities that he appointed: Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Secretary of Homeland Security, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Treasury. These are very experienced, highly skilled, highly capable individuals who share that worldview.”<sup>121</sup>

## **C. The Encourage of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) to Maintaining Arab League Principle**

### **1. Saudi-led Intervention to Respond Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen**

Besides influenced by materialistic factors such as security and politics, Saudi intervention in Yemen also motivated by a normative factor of humanitarian value. “Combating Iran-backed Houthi violence directed against the Yemeni population and, by extension, against Saudi Arabia is the first strategic priority of the Kingdom.”<sup>122</sup> Although never mentioned directly, humanitarian reason can be analyzed from the conformity of the concept of RtoP to the real actions that Saudi Arabia had conducted. First, from the pillar of RtoP according to ICISS.<sup>123</sup>

The first pillar stated that the population is the responsibility of the state itself. This is true to Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The crisis in Yemen has been starting since 2004, and the government of Yemen has tried so hard to protect the population and maintain peace and the rule of law. However, in 2011 due to the massive influence of the Arab Spring that the crisis became widespread and gained international attention. Even during this period, Saudi Arabia did not recklessly use its power to intervene in Yemeni internal political turmoil. From this pillar, it can see that Saudi Arabia did

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<sup>121</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, *2017 Report*, 2017., p. 15.

<sup>122</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, *2017 Report*, 2017., p. 13.

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter I.

not use intervention to follow its own interest, but it is done properly according to this Pillar 1.

Pillar 2 stated that other states have a responsibility to assist if the said state failed to do so. This is also true to Saudi Arabia which did not take any action until the government of Yemen requested it by themselves. This is also in-line with the Pillar 3 which states that the response must be quick and avoided using military power. The early respond coming from Saudi Arabia was through GCC to hold a GCC Initiative 2011 to mediate President Saleh to hand over the power of the presidency to President Hadi peacefully.

However, the response by the military strike in 2015 deemed necessary because President Hadi requested so. Previously, he had met with Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, member states of UN, and member states of Arab League to help him restore his legitimacy as the leader in Yemen. Despite that, the Saudi-led Coalition is not always about the military; Saudi also responded diplomatically through GCC, through Operation Renewal of Hope, and by giving aid through Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO).

Also, according to ICISS, some conditions make the intervention (RtoP) possible. Again, these conditions were fulfilled by Saudi Arabia before conducting intervention:

- 1) The proper authority of who will conduct the mission.

Saudi Arabia had the proper authority; having been asked personally by President Hadi himself and through the legitimacy of an international organization such as GCC, Arab League, and the United Nations.

- 2) Only cause objective factor toward intervention.

Saudi intervention did not mean to invade or occupy Yemen but only to stabilize the region and restore the legitimate government as requested by President Hadi.

3) The true goal of humanitarian security.

As stated in Chapter III, many humanitarian violations were ranging from restriction of information to killing occurred during the reign of Houthi. What Saudi did in the intervention was to weaken the presence of Houthi and therefore to minimize the victims by Houthi.

4) Last option of possible resolution.

Previously in 2011 GCC had already arranged a diplomatic mediation of power handover that was agreed by the Houthi. However, in 2015 Houthi coup instead and did not oblige to the 2011 talks result. The military intervention was a direct continuation since the talk failed to achieve unity and agreement.

5) Proportional way.

The Saudi-led Coalition did launch not only the military intervention (Operation Decisive Storm) but also development (Operation Restoring Hope). Moreover, Saudi via Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO) also gave Yemen aid in the form of funding, financial, economic recovery in Yemeni national bank, infrastructure support in airport and seaports, and massive exports of basic goods such as fuel, food, and medicine.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile, in implementing RtoP, there are the steps: ‘responsibility to prevent,’ ‘responsibility to react,’ and ‘responsibility to rebuild.’ In this case, the steps had only approached ‘responsibility to react’

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<sup>124</sup> “Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO): Unprecedented Relief to the People of Yemen”, *Relief Web*, 2017.

because the ongoing conflict has not yet resolved. In *'responsibility to prevent,'* the international community has the responsibility to prevent the crisis from erupting like doing development aid (to minimize the gap of people), mediation, and other preventive actions to nurture peace. The effort of Saudi Arabia in 2011 counted as preventive action by mediating the conflicting parties via GCC. However, in 2015 the condition was so severe, and Saudi could only support to coercively *'responsibility to react'* using military intervention. Although in this step the effort can also vary like embargo and filing the proposal to the international court.

## **2. Saudi-led Intervention and Arab League Principle**

As both members of Arab League, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are bound to follow the Arab League Charter (Pact of League of Arab States). In the Yemeni conflict, Arab League had once tried to help mediate the conflict between the Yemeni government and Houthi in 2009 but was rejected by President Saleh at that time. President Saleh assured that it would be the last conflict with the Houthi and the conflict would not spill into Arab region or international scope<sup>125</sup>; however, the history proved otherwise.

According to Article 2 of Arab League Charter, the purpose of the Arab League is to establish close relations among member states through coordination and collaboration to safeguard their independence and sovereignty.<sup>126</sup> It also aims to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries. The charter states very clearly that the organization is to maintain independence and sovereignty while still

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<sup>125</sup> Youssef, "Mediation and Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: The Role of the Arab League", *OSCE Yearbook 2013*, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, 2014., p. 303.

<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Chapter II.

promoting the sense of pan-Arabism. The principle of RtoP (as what has discussed previously) is to assist a state which fails to maintain its own sovereignty. The Saudi-led intervention is not violating any principle or articles in the Arab League Charter because the government of Yemen was proven to fail to maintain their own sovereignty on the territory and their own people due to Houthi's coup. President Hadi himself even asked for assistance from Saudi Arabia and other surrounding states to help him restore his legitimacy.

The intervention is also believed to be in-line with the interest of Arab League. For decades, the Arab League is known to maintain the de facto rule and the regime in the region. It was not interested in encouraging major change like the Arab Spring<sup>127</sup> and the Yemeni conflict—as the result of an internal dispute seasoned by Arab Spring—was also not highly encouraged. Arab League supported the intervention, stating that it supported the call from Saudi Arabia's King Salman to operate "... until it achieves its goals for the Yemen people to achieve security".<sup>128</sup> The coalition, according to the Los Angeles Times, was a defining moment for Arab states to strengthen their relations via joint-military force. This kind of unity not seen since Gulf War 1991. It also signed that the Arab region would be more assertive and not dependent on the West and the US.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Refer to Chapter II.

<sup>128</sup> Christina Boyle & Zaid Al-Alayaa, "Arab League's joint military force is a 'defining moment' for region" (29 March 2015), retrieved 25 August 2018 from Los Angeles Times: <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-joint-arab-military-force-20150329-story.html>.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

Conflict in Yemen is the continuation of the long internal dispute in Yemen. The belligerencies were various, mainly the government, Houthi, terrorism groups, and other groups like the south secession movement, although the two main actors were the government and the Houthi. Houthi is a Shia minority group living in the northern part of Yemen and was under major inequality and low welfare since the 20th century. Yemeni government and Houthi were engaged in a few battles throughout the history of Yemen. Houthi is also known for their anti-Western and anti-Jewish principle.

In 2011, the wave of Arab Spring reached Yemen. This moment was utilized by the people of Yemen to force President Saleh whose reign was more than 30 years and created hardship of life for Yemeni people. President Saleh resigned from his office and was replaced by President Hadi. However, the result of the revolution was severe and in 2014, seeing the instability and the opportunity to gain power, Houthi launched attack to take control of the government.

Yemeni government fought back, but soon weakened by the condition and in 2015 Houthi successfully took control of the capital. President Hadi visited Saudi Arabia, other surrounding states, and the UN to gain assistance to take control Yemen again because the Houthi's coup was considered unlawful and the legitimate government is still Hadi's. In response, in 2015, Saudi Arabia formed the Saudi-led coalition to intervene in the Yemeni conflict.

For Saudi Arabia, Yemen is a strategic interest for both Saudi Arabia and Arab region. According to Saudi Arabia's foreign policy circle, Yemen falls under Arab Circle, which is the second priority to Saudi Arabia after Gulf Circle. This made Saudi paid great attention to the situation happening in Yemen and, as the bordering country, felt the need to take part in the conflict as the measure to secure its own position in the region.

The intervention launched in 2015 under the name Operation Decisive Storm and lasted for several months. Saudi Arabia and other states supporting the operation believed that Houthi regime after the coup had brought many sufferings and created the condition of massive human rights violation. Deaths, poverty, malnourished, child soldier, prevention of travel, discrimination, and other violation were believed to be conducted by the Houthi. Due to this fact that many countries supported the operation including GCC, Arab League, and many Western countries allied with Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia believed that the operation is based on the geographic and political importance of Yemen for Saudi Arabia. In terms of geography, Yemen is the bordering country. Therefore, the instability of Yemen will also hamper the stability of Saudi Arabia. Especially, seeing Houthi winning can influence people of Saudi Arabia to fight the government and do the same action, thus Saudi Arabia tried to contain that influence as hard as possible. The instability in Yemen would also create a place for terrorist groups to flourish, which can threaten Saudi Arabia and surrounding countries in Arabian Peninsula.

In terms of politics, Saudi Arabia saw themselves as the political guardian of President Hadi because President Hadi personally requested Saudi Arabia to intervene in the conflict and to secure his place as legitimate president. Saudi Arabia also saw this conflict as the continuation of long rivalry between Saudi's Sunni regime and Iran's Shia regime. Iran backed Houthi—because both are Shia—by giving weapons and supplies. Surely, Saudi did not want to lose their position against Iran. Lastly, Saudi also believed that, politically, securing Yemen through intervention was in-line with the interest of the US, the strongest ally of Saudi Arabia.

Another reason of Saudi's intervention is because the human rights condition in Yemen. Saudi Arabia was believed to operate under the principle of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) in Yemen. Yemen was considered a failed state; the government fail to protect their own citizen and was ousted by

the rebel instead. According to this principle, other countries have obligation to assist the failed state to regain order and stability and to ensure the well-being of the people.

The principle of RtoP was not about military aggression only but rather a series of steps. Before intervening militarily, Saudi Arabia had operated diplomatically to resolve the dispute between the government and the Houthi. GCC and Saudi Arabia facilitated as mediation for the conflicting parties to end the dispute, but Houthi turned out violating the agreement and rather seize the government in a coup. Thus, the military intervention is not prohibited if such case occurred. RtoP also did not mainly about military. In fact, the military intervention of Saudi-led coalition only lasted for several months and after the ceasefire, most of the operation was focused to give aid to Yemeni people, both by direct fund and assistance in building infrastructure.

As the member of Arab League, Yemen and Saudi Arabia must not violate the organization's charter, and they did not in the case of this Yemeni conflict. One of the main purposes of the Arab League is to maintain sovereignty of the member states. The coup of Houthi is seen as the breach of sovereignty by the rebel, and other member states could help the government of Yemen to restore their sovereignty. The intervention was also a medium to strengthen internal relation between member states through joint-operation and not dependent to external factor like the US.

Geographic and political element is the most dominant factor in deciding Saudi to intervene. This is due to the fact that reasons like border, political climate, proxy war with Iran, and interest in Yemen are more easy to identify. On the other hand, the reasoning of RtoP, although also true, but not as clear as the previous reason due to the fact that in order to know the intention of an actor, the main source is the personal statement from them. In this case, the statement coming from Saudi government to confirm that they intervene because of RtoP came from little and limited sources, therefore it was more difficult to analyze.

The writer also believes that this thesis will become an additional source in developing subjects like Middle East Studies, Conflict Resolution, and studies about Islamic World. Moreover, the use of the RtoP concept is unique because it is rarely mentioned. However, future studies are expected to be more comprehensive and thorough to include the continuation of the political condition in Yemen after the intervention. Since, although Saudi stated that the military intervention was stopped, but military actions done by both Yemen, Houthi, and Saudi kept continuing until recent time (2018).

- Renny Januar Dini, I Made Pasek Diantha, & A.A Sri Utari, "Tinjauan Yuridis Intervensi Militer Koalisi Saudi Arabia Dalam Konflik Bersenjata di Yaman", Thesis, Universitas Udayana.
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