

**Approval Thesis Summary**

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**SAUDI ARABIAN'S MILITARY INTERVENTION IN YEMEN'S CONFLICT 2015**

**UNDERGRADUATE THESIS**



**A. Afifah Islamiyah**

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Approved by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Surwandono', is written over the 'Approved by' text.

**Dr. Surwandono, S.Sos., M.Si.**

**Thesis Advisor**

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**A.Afifah Islamiyah**

**Dr. Surwando, S.Sos., M.Si.**

International Program of International Relations Departement  
Faculty of Social and Political Science  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta  
2018

Email: afifahilmii@gmail.com

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**Abstract**

This thesis aims to understand the reason of Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemeni conflict in 2015. Yemeni conflict is the continuation of internal conflict but heated by the Arab Spring in 2011 and reached the peak in 2014-2015. This research uses the qualitative method. Data is analyzed by first processing and then displaying in to be explored more using qualitative method.

The result of this research shows that Saudi Arabia conducted intervention by several reasons. The close relation between Yemen and Saudi Arabia in terms of geography and politic is highly influencing the decision. The increasing humanitarian crisis and the failing state of Yemen also encouraged Saudi Arabia to intervene under the principle of Responsibility to Protect.

**Keywords: Yemeni conflict, Saudi intervention, geographic and political element, responsibility to protect**

Since long time ago Saudi and Yemen had already relation, it was from bad and good sides because they are a neighborhood country. Besides that, those countries also a member of the Arab League in the inter-governance organization. There were several moments which already happened between those countries, they are The Treaty of Taif (1934), Yemen's civil war (1962-1970), Yemeni unification (1990), The Gulf War (1990-91), North-south war (1994), Treaty of Jeddah (2000) as the result of border

dispute, and the last is The Houthi rebellion (2015). Also, each country is always meddling with internal conflict which happens to them.

In Yemen, there is an internal conflict between the Sectarian Shiite which represented by the Houthi group and the Sunnis which represent the Government of Yemen. An internal conflict like that already happened since Yemen divided into two parts for decades; the Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South) the country finally unified as the Republic of Yemen in 1990. Differences over power-sharing and the pace of integration between north and south came to a head in 1994, resulting in a bloody civil war. Harmony between all factions remains a difficult, sometimes violent process, but countrywide democracy is a long-term goal.

Most recently, with the rise of the Arab Spring, protests in Yemen were widespread in early 2011. Among the demands were changed in the economic conditions and corruption, as well as a call for the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.<sup>1</sup> The protests quickly transformed into a massive uprising and an assassination attempt against Saleh.

By late 2011, after signing an agreement, Saleh stepped down; however, protests and conflict continued. Then Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi as the only candidate at the time won the election with the result on the ballot won 99 percent of the vote and became President of Yemen.<sup>2</sup> Political instability in Yemen is not good, which occurred during efforts to overthrow Ali Abdullah Saleh a gap for groups that Shiite Houthi rebels try to seize power from the government. The condition in Yemen is becoming worse. When it happened, Saudi came and did a military action. 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.

### **Yemen's History and the Rise of the Houthi**

Before unification in 1990, Yemen was two entities of North Yemen and South Yemen. Before achieving independence, northern Yemen was part of Ottoman until 1911. This region dominated by two large tribal confederations, the Hashid, and Bakil. Istanbul signed the Da'an agreement with Yahya Mahmud al-Mutawakkil and handed

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<sup>1</sup>Popp, R. (2015). War in Yemen: Revolution and Saudi Intervention., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

over the sovereignty of northern Yemen. North Yemen declared independence in 1918 following the fall of the Ottoman after World War I. Yahya ruled North Yemen with an Islamic rule and traditional rule in some degree. Yahya was killed in a coup and replaced by his son Imam Ahmad. Ahmad was corrupt and authoritarian. He murdered in a coup, and North Yemen fell under the civil war of both the supporter of monarchy and republic.

In 1967 the supporter of republic won the war after being supported by Soviet and Egypt, establishing the Yemen Arab Republic. Abdul Rahman al-Iryani ruled the new republic regime and after that, in 1972, led North Yemen into a short border conflict with South Yemen, weakening the country even more. As a result, in 1974 Abdul was ousted in a coup, and North Yemen fell into chaos. In 1978, Ali Abdullah Saleh took control of North Yemen and with the authoritarian way he successfully controls North Yemen, neutralizing coup and eventually led North Yemen into unification with South Yemen in 1990.

On the other hand, South Yemen was a collection of independent tribes under the rule of the British colony. There were two separate entities, the Federation of South Arabia and the Protectorate of South Arabia, both were under British rule and promised with independence in 1968. However, in 1963 Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and National Liberation Front (NFL) started armed struggle to fight the British. The condition was severe, and in 1967 the British left South Yemen, and the People's Republic of South Yemen was declared independent.

In 1970, the radical Marxist NFL movement ousted a coup and changed the country into People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen, and heavily backed with Soviet and China. In 1980, Abdul Fatah Ismail resigned from the head of state of South Yemen and replaced by Ali Muhammad Nasir. However, in 1986 Ismail returned, and the clash between the factions of Nasir and Ismail erupted, destabilized the country and resulted in Nasir's ouster and Ismail deaths. Later, Haydar Abu Bakr al Attas assumed the position of head of state of South Yemen.<sup>3</sup>

South Yemen remained the proxy of the Soviet's power in the Middle East even when the surrounding countries were starting to establish relations with the US and the West after the war with Israel. However, in the late 1980s, Soviet was under great

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<sup>3</sup> "Country Profile: Yemen, August 2008", Library of Congress – Federal Research Division., pp. 2-3., <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Yemen-new.pdf>.

political reform, and it influenced South Yemen too. This situation also led to more realization between North and South Yemen, in which in 1988 both agreed to discuss unification, joint oil exploration, and border demilitarization. In 1990, North and South Yemen unified to become the Republic of Yemen. President Saleh of North Yemen became president of the new republic; Ali Salim al Baydh, secretary general of the Central Committee of the Yemen Socialist Party, was named vice president; and South Yemeni President al Attas was named a prime minister.<sup>4</sup>

Unification does not mean an instant peace and stability. The nature of this unification seemed rushed and left out some problems like a suspended election, failed military unification, unstable economy, and so on. The bad economic condition mainly became the factor of domestic unrest throughout 1992 and resulted in civil war in 1994. Al Baydh and al Attas declared the new Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY) to replace former South Yemen, reinstating Aden as the capital. This movement was supported by Saudi Arabia in hope to prevent Yemen from becoming too powerful in the region. However, DRY gained no international recognition and Aden fell into Saleh's forces two months later.

Although lasted shortly, the consequence of the civil war was significant. Most prominently is the stronger control of Saleh's forces and regime. He replaced the government officials from South Yemeni people to North Yemeni people who were loyal to him. Then, it caused more inequality between the North and South power and would become the fuel of future separatism ideas and movements. In recent conflict, people of former South Yemen gather themselves in Southern Movement to separate themselves and gain independence.

Houthi is a group originated from northern Yemen in a region called Sa'ada. This region was known to be underdeveloped and vastly unequal compared to the central government in Sana'a. The name 'Houthi' came from the name of the family of Zaidi clerics in northern Yemen, more specifically Badruddin al-Houthi, father of Hussein al-Houthi, the founder of the movement. Zaidi is a branch of Shia Islam which was the majority of northern Yemen. Houthi's main goal is to combat underdevelopment and political marginalization in Yemen while also fighting for greater autonomy for Houthi-majority region. The claim to support a more democratic republic in Yemen and believe

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

that fighting corruption is the main action of their political program.<sup>5</sup> They are officially known as “Anshar Allah,” meaning the “Supporters of God.”

The Houthi movement created by Hussein al-Houthi. The Anshar Allah revolution led by his brother Abdul Malik al-Houthi. Houthi is the line of modern Zaid clerics family who still exists today. Some experts say that Houthi started out as a moderate religious movement, preaching tolerance and had a broad-minded view. In 1986 they founded the Believing Youth (BY)/Ittihad Asy Syabab movement, full of religious activity to teach Zaidi Shia to society. During the unification of Yemen in 1990, there was a great opportunity for a multi-party system in Yemen, and BY transformed politically into Hizbul Haq (Party of Truth) to represent Zaidi people in politics. Hussein al-Houthi became the member of the representative council in 1993 and 1997.

Although its considered Shia, Zaidi is different from the majority of Shia in Iran and Iraq and elsewhere in the world. Zaidi rejects the belief of Twelve Shia Imam and does not recognize the legitimacy of Ayatullah in Iran. A distanced relation with other Shia is also the reason why Houthi sometimes considered too local and not uninfluenced by Iran and other Shia power in the Middle East, some even considered that Houthi is not a representation of all Shia in Yemen at all.<sup>6</sup> Although, the BY teaching material was full of teaching from Shia in Lebanon (Hezbollah) and other Shia teaching from other countries.<sup>7</sup> However, Houthi is also open about its political relations with Iran, admiring certain parts of Iranian system especially Iran’s resistance to the West and US. However, Houthi never consider themselves as the proxy of Iran nor the extension of Iran’s political interest in Yemen.<sup>8</sup>

The radicalization of Houthi started after the US invasion of Iraq when BY-affiliated youth then adopted anti-American and anti-Jewish slogan and chanted it in the Saleh Mosque in Sana’a after Friday prayers. Houthi believed that invasion of Iraq is nothing more than an imperialist agenda of the West and the 9/11 is just a conspiracy by US and Jewish to give an excuse to the invasion. It was also around this time the Houthi started calling themselves Ansar Allah.

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce Riedel, “Who are the Houthis, and why are we at war with them?” (18 December 2017), retrieved 19 July 2018, from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/12/18/who-are-the-houthis-and-why-are-we-at-war-with-them/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Shia in Yemen”, *Shia Rights Watch*, 2015., p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Barak A. Salmoni, Bryce Loidolt, & Madeleine Wells, “Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen”, RAND Corporation, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> April Longley Alley, “Who Are Yemen’s Houthis?” (Interview) (25 February 2015), retrieved 24 July 2018, from Council on Foreign Relations: <https://www.cfr.org/interview/who-are-yemens-houthis>.

This action marked the beginning of government's worry and supervision toward Houthi group, believing that Houthi could soon transform to be against the government of Yemen as well. Upon knowing of this provocative chanting and action, the government of Yemen arrested more than 800 BY supporters in Sana'a in 2004 and president Saleh asked Hussein al-Houthi to stop propagating the action. Instead, Hussein responded by calling for the insurgency against the government in June 2004 and starting the role of Houthi as possessing military power in Yemen. Again, the struggle was inspired by Hezbollah in Lebanon for successfully fighting Israeli army.<sup>9</sup> Hussein killed by the Yemeni military in September 2004, and the leadership of Houthi moved to his brother Abdul Malik al-Houthi. Houthi engaged in war with the Yemeni government until the ceasefire in 2010.

### **Recent Yemeni Conflict and Saudi-led Intervention**

Just like other parts of the Arab world, Yemen also experienced the Arab Spring. Also, like other countries as well, the protest started and grew because of the ongoing problem inside the country, both in the social, economic, or political aspect. Almost half of the Yemeni population live under the poverty line, and one-third suffer from chronic hunger.<sup>10</sup> Yemen is the least developed country in the Middle East and even has lower Human Development Index compared to developing countries like Sudan, Djibouti, and Mauritania.

Regarding politics, Yemeni people were upset because the reigning president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, had been the president for more than 30 years full of corruption and lack of real effort for welfare. In 2009 there was a call for political reform, making parliament to gain more power and government to be more decentralized, which never implemented. Regarding security, Yemen was also crippling from internal conflict caused by Al-Qaeda, Houthi insurgency, and South Yemen secessionists.

Protests in Yemen were widespread in early 2011 after the video from Tunisian revolution spread over the internet. Among the demands were changing in the constitution, economic conditions, and corruption, but soon turned to blame the current regime and call for the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The protests

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<sup>9</sup> Saeed Al Batati, "Who are the Houthis in Yemen?" (30 March 2015), retrieved 24 July 2018 from Al Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/yemen-houthis-hadi-protests-201482132719818986.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Finn, "Yemenis take to the streets calling for President Saleh to step down" (27 January 2011), retrieved 18 July 2018 from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/27/yemen-protests-president-saleh>.

quickly transformed into a massive uprising and an assassination attempt against Saleh. The most massive crowd gathered around 10.000 people at Sana'a University, and soon the protests grew to 20.000 people.<sup>11</sup>

By late 2011, after signing an agreement, Saleh stepped down; however, protests and conflict continued. On February 2012, President Ali Abdullah Saleh formally resigned from the post of President of Yemen.<sup>12</sup> Then Vice President Abdurrahuh Mansur al-Hadi as the only candidate to become a president at the time won the election and became President of Yemen. Political instability in Yemen is not good, which occurred during efforts to overthrow Ali Abdullah Saleh a gap for groups that Houthi tries to seize power from the government.

After that, on September 2014, the battle between Yemeni government forces with the Houthi group took place on the edge of Sanaa (capital city of Yemen) happened. Because the situation became worse on January 2015, Abdurabbuh Mansur al-Hadi resigned from the post of the President of Yemen. President Hadi escaped from Sanaa with the help of the UN Security Council on February 2015, which makes the power in Yemen vacant.<sup>13</sup> Soon, Houthi took control of Sana'a and declared as the leader of Yemen. However, this action condemned as a coup by international powers, and some region in Yemen rejected the authority of Houthi. Therefore, the UN asked Houthi to hold a national talk and unite both Hadi and Houthi as the national government.

After a successful escape on March 2015, President Hadi announced Aden as the temporary capital of Yemen<sup>14</sup>, declared Houthi's authority as invalid, and requested help from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to restore power in Yemen. Forces loyal to Houthi and former President Saleh tried to sabotage the Aden airport, and fighting broke out. It marked as the beginning of the Yemen Civil War which is still ongoing until now (2018). March 26, 2015, Saudi Arabia undertakes request of President Hadi and launch aerial attacks to Yemen.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Lina Sinjab, "Yemen protests: 20,000 call for President Saleh to go" (3 February 2011), retrieved 18 July 2018 from BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12353479>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *Yemen's President Hadi asks UN to back intervention*. (2015, March 25). Retrieved May 2015, from BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-32045984>.

<sup>14</sup> R Popp. (June 2015). War in Yemen: Revolution and Saudi Intervention.

<sup>15</sup> *Saudi-led coalition calls of airstrikes in Yemen*. (2015, April 21). Retrieved 2015, from The National World: <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/saudi-led-coalition-calls-off-airstrikes-in-yemen>.



As what has explained, the ongoing conflict was not a bilateral conflict (government vs. opposition). Rather, it was a collection of groups fighting to support their own agenda and claiming that they did the best for Yemen. On one side there was the government of Yemen, represented by Saleh's regime then Hadi's regime. Saleh was initially in favor of Houthi movement but soon sought help from Saudi and get assassinated by Houthi in 2017. Then, of course, there was Houthi fighting caused by injustice and inequality for years. Opposition to the government fractured into many factions, including Joint Meeting Parties, Islah, the al-Ahmar family, and South Yemen Movement. The opposition did not even agree upon each other on how to replace the current government of Yemen. Meanwhile, terrorist groups like AQAP and ISIS were benefitting from the conflict as well.

The condition in Yemen concerned parties around it. This made some governmental organizations to respond to the crisis. One of the responding organization is the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).<sup>16</sup> GCC provided the GCC Initiative<sup>17</sup> in 2011 which help the process of President Saleh resignation and the transfer of power to President Hadi. The initiative also assured that President Hadi would commit to reform the military, tackle corruption, address regional grievances, review the constitution, and elect a new parliament. The initiative also regarded as the effective measure to prevent a civil war in 2011 (which was seen as too early, although civil war did erupt in Yemen in 2015). European Union also supported this GCC Initiative by providing funding.

Hadi also asked the UN to support him against the Houthi. Using Article 51 of UN Charter as his legal justification, he asked "willing countries" in UN to help him in his struggle for authority. Article 51 covers an individual or collective right to self-defense and therefore it is suited and legal for Hadi to use the military coalition to combat Houthi in the name of defense.<sup>18</sup> In response, UN then produced a resolution called UN Security Council Resolution 2216 in 2015 to push Houthi in talks with Yemeni government (referring to previous resolutions) and to allow the military

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<sup>16</sup> More about GCC in Chapter II.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Burke, "EU-GCC Cooperation: Securing the Transition in Yemen", *GLC Gulf Paper*, Gulf Research Center, 2013., p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Michele Nichols, "Yemen asks U.N. to back military action by 'willing countries'" (25 March 2015), retrieved 19 July 2018 from Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-un/yemen-asks-u-n-to-back-military-action-by-willing-countries-idUSKBN0MK2OP20150324>.

measure to stabilize the region. This resolution was used by Arab Saudi and its coalition via Arab League to legitimize its military action starting in 2015.<sup>19</sup>

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." 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 take action 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

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<sup>19</sup> Scott Peterson, "How a tough UN resolution is making push for Yemen peace talks harder" (9 April 2018), retrieved 23 July 2018 from CSMonitor: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2018/0409/How-a-tough-UN-resolution-is-making-push-for-Yemen-peace-talks-harder>.

rights violation done by Yemeni government for the past several years and the expression of Houthi's interest for a struggle for welfare.<sup>20</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>21</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 unknown.<sup>22</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

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<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim, "Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring", *BPC Policy Brief*, 2016., p. 25.

<sup>21</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.

<sup>22</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>.

powers as US allies. The US supported intelligence, training, and logistics, as well as Turkey, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

### **Humanitarian Crisis dan the Factors of Saudi's Intervention**

According to Humanitarian Coalition, a humanitarian emergency is “an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area.” The condition of humanitarian emergency and crisis worsened by the “Vulnerability” or the reduced capacity of individuals or groups to resist and recover from life-threatening hazards and is most often connected to poverty.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, even before the crisis erupted in 2011, Yemen was a poor country. A large part of the population (almost 50 percent) lives below the poverty line. Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, has a per capita income (\$1,270) that is a fraction of its neighbors’ (Oman: \$19,110, Saudi Arabia: \$21,210). The high population growth requires additional 700,000 health and education services and 300,000 new jobs every year.

Yemen was dependent on imports; 90 percent for food, 60 percent for fuel, and 80 percent for medical supplies.<sup>24</sup> In late 2013 in the height of the crisis and before the 2015 civil war erupted, more than half of the population (14,7 million people) were in need of humanitarian assistance. They include 10,5 million food-insecurity (4,5 million of them were severely insecure); 1 million children under five live in acute malnutrition. According to 2010 WFP’s Comprehensive Food Security Survey, 32 percent of the population is in dire need of food, and 13 percent of the children under five wasted, and 56 percent stunted.<sup>25</sup> Also, 13,1 million Yemenis had no access to a water source and sanitation facilities. 8,6 million people had difficulty in health access.<sup>26</sup>

According to the US Department of State, the most significant human rights problems were arbitrary killings, disappearances, kidnappings, and other extremist threats and violence committed by various groups and a weak and corrupt judicial

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<sup>23</sup> “What Is A Humanitarian Emergency?” (2018), retrieved 10 August 2018 from *Humanitarian Coalition*: <https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/what-is-a-humanitarian-emergency>.

<sup>24</sup> Humanitarian Foresight Think Tank, “24-Month Yemen Scenario Analysis: No Easy Solutions”, *Humanitarian and Development Program*, IRIS, 2015., p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> “United Nations Development Assistance Framework Republic of Yemen”, 2015., p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Source: Steven A. Zick, “Yemen’s security crises and transition process: implications for humanitarian action and access”, *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 61, 2014., p. 3.

system that did not provide for the rule of law.<sup>27</sup> The number of deaths resulted in insurgency attacks by Houthi and AQAP since the beginning of the 21st century was too many to count. During Houthi insurgency from 2004 to 2014, many humanitarian organizations stated that hundreds to thousands killed while Houthi claimed 25,000 casualties.

Fighting in al-Dhale between government and Houthi in early 2014 resulted in 20 children dead and hundreds injured. The next clashes killed 270 people and injured 600. In October 2014, AQAP attacked Houthi supporters, and the suicide bombing killed 50 individuals. About 2,000 Sa'dah residents of northern Yemen were permanently handicapped, and 250,000 Yemenis displaced from their home.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, since 2000, Al-Qaeda had launched 68 attacks in all around Yemen, resulted in 283 deaths up to 2010.<sup>29</sup> There was also the case of an underage soldier. Tribal members under 18 took part in the tribal militia or armed groups both affiliated to the government or other groups. Houthis routinely used child soldiers to operate checkpoints and search vehicles.

Yemen also suffered from the freedom of press and information. In September 2014, Houthi destroyed the government's official Yemen TV and shut the station off. Houthi then rebuilds the station and replaced the management in order to suit the Houthi agenda. Houthi also broke into pro-Islam Suhail TV, looted its equipment, and forced it to stop broadcasting. Houthi detained seven employees and interrogated them for the addresses of senior employees.

On the other hand, the government sometimes try to cover the news by not reporting fighting between AQAP and or another conflict in the South. Internet was also hard to connect in Yemen where most websites were inaccessible in peak hours. Houthi also closed all mobile telephone communications mainly during the takeover of Sana'a.

There was also restrictions of the freedom of movement within and out of Yemen. In many regions, especially in areas outside effective central security control, armed tribesmen frequently restricted freedom of movement, operating their checkpoints, sometimes with military or other security officials, and often subjecting travelers to

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<sup>27</sup> US State Department, "Yemen 2014 Human Rights Report", p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Tom Finn, "Salafist, Houthi sectarian rift threatens to engulf fragile state of Yemen" (21 December 2011), retrieved 23 July 2018 from The Daily Star: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2011/Dec-21/157464-salafist-houthi-sectarian-rift-threatens-to-engulf-fragile-state-of-yemen.ashx#axzz1i76kMykq>.

<sup>29</sup> "Background Report: Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Anwar al-Awlaki, and Samir Khan", *START Background Report*, START, 2011., p. 12.

physical harassment, extortion, theft, or short-term kidnappings for ransom. The restriction also more discriminate toward women because women could not travel far alone and must accompany by a husband or family.

After the civil war started in 2015, the humanitarian condition became more severe. Yemen was on the brink of famine, with 5,9 million children was estimated to be hungry. United Nations even upgraded the conflict level of Yemen to level 3, similar to the conflict in Iraq, Syria, and South Sudan. In late 2013, there were about 300.000 people displaced within the country. However, 200.000 of them returned but still face many challenges in re-establishing their lives to fulfill their basic needs. However, after the civil war broke out, about 1,5 million people now displaced. This condition worsened by the existence of more than 200 thousand refugees from Africa (mostly from Somalia) stranded in Yemen. They initially planned to move to more prosperous Gulf Countries but stranded in Yemen due to conflict and difficult border control from Gulf Countries themselves. These refugees caught in the crossfire, and many were also a victim of human rights violation done by conflicting parties. Also, more than 4.000 people reportedly died and 28.000 injured when the civil war just only started for a few months.<sup>30</sup>.

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

Foreign Policy of every state is different; it depends on their national interest and what approach that they used. For this undergraduate thesis, the writer would analyze the case and answer a research question use a theory of Foreign Policy based on William D. Coplin's book. The title of the book is "Introduction of International Politics: Model of Decision Making Process."

In his book, Coplin used a rationality approach to explain how the process of a state to make a decision. There are some points on rationality approach: first, rational approach emphasizing that the main actor to achieve national interest is a state; second, on global political scene - to reach those aims a state make a rational strategy; third, making an analyses about what decision will be taking the best or is it good/bad.; last, foreign policy is a calculated-response of the act of the other states.<sup>31</sup> This approach

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<sup>30</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Group for Yemen, "Conflict in Yemen: The Forgotten Crisis", *Report*, 2015., p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Rd. Rikan Krisna Wangsa riview on William D. Coplin. "Introduction of International Politics: Model of Decision Making Process". From: [http://www.academia.edu/11030333/William\\_D.\\_Coplin\\_Introduction\\_to\\_International\\_Politic\\_Model\\_of\\_Decision\\_Making\\_Proces](http://www.academia.edu/11030333/William_D._Coplin_Introduction_to_International_Politic_Model_of_Decision_Making_Proces). Retrieved November 2, 2017.

called a rationality approach because of a result of a deep calculation and analyses from every alternative.

By using a rational approach in his book, Coplin mentioned that the first thing to use to analyze foreign policy of a country is by finding out why the country is making such a policy. The causes a head of state (policy maker) to decide should be found because every head of state did not instantly make foreign policy, it must have considered beforehand.

As written in Marsedes Marbun's translation book "Pengantar Politik Internasional: Suatu Telaah Teoritis Ed. 2", according to Coplin three factors influence the decision making process of foreign policy, which are: domestic politics, economy-military capability, and international context.<sup>32</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.

### **Geographic Element**

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>33</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.

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<sup>32</sup> William D. Coplin, *Pengantar Politik Internasional: Suatu Telaah Teoritis* [Introduction to International Politics: A Theoretical Overview], 1992, Marsedes Marbun, Trans., 2nd Edition, Bandung: Sinar Baru., p. 30.

<sup>33</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.

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>34</sup>

It is clear that 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. 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>35</sup> The situation in Yemen was seen as 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>36</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.

According to Wyllie, a threat can be measured by looking at the capability and intention.<sup>37</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 dollar in training the Saudi Arabia National

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<sup>34</sup> Martin Griffiths and Terry O'Callaghan, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2002., p. 120.

<sup>35</sup> Gelvin, "Why is Saudi Arabia suddenly so paranoid?" *The Conversation*.

<sup>36</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.

<sup>37</sup> James Wyllie, "Force and Security", in Trevor C. Salmon & Mark F. Imber (ed.) *Issues in International Relations*, New York, Routledge, 2008., p. 76.



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>38</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 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).

### **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

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<sup>38</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.

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>39</sup>

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

“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>40</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>41</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 and the

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<sup>39</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, *2017 Report*, 2017., p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>41</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.

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>42</sup>

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

The Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) has become a prominent feature in international debates about preventing genocide and mass atrocities and about protecting potential victims. Starting from the tragedy which happened in Rwanda and The Balkans in the 1990s, where at that time international community failed to do an intervention on that conflict.

UN Secretary-General Koffi Annan recalled about the humanitarian crisis which happened in Rwanda and Kosovo on his Millennium Report of 2000; he has a question

"If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica, to gross and systematic violation of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?"<sup>43</sup>

The formula of sovereignty as a responsibility to protect then developed furthering a report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS or Evans-Sahnoun Commission). In December 2001, International Commission on Intervention State Sovereignty (ICISS) firstly presented the expression of “Responsibility to Protect” as a response of Kofi Annan’s question about when the international community must intervene in the internal conflict of a state, for the humanitarian purpose. The issues were reported again in December 2004 by the United Nations Secretary General’s High Panel on Threats, Challenge and Change with the title “A More Secure World, Our Shared Responsibility.”

ICISS also reported that Responsibility to protect should insert three types of responsibility;<sup>44</sup>

1. The Responsibility to Prevent

To address both the root causes and direct causes of internal conflict and

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<sup>42</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, *2017 Report*, 2017., p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> *The Responsibility to Protect*, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001., p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> The responsibility to Protect, Report of The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001.

other man-made crises putting population at risk.

2. The Responsibility to React

To respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, which may include coercive measures like sanctions and international prosecution, and in extreme cases military intervention.

3. The Responsibility to Rebuild

To provide, particularly after military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the cause of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert.

### **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>45</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.

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 be seen that Saudi Arabia did 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

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<sup>45</sup> “Saudi Arabia And The Yemen Conflict”, *2017 Report*, 2017., p. 13.

military power. The early response 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 previously, 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>46</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’ 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.

### **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>47</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

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<sup>46</sup> “Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO): Unprecedented Relief to the People of Yemen”, *Relief Web*, 2017.

<sup>47</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.

and collaboration to safeguard their independence and sovereignty.<sup>48</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 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 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>49</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>50</sup>

## 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.

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<sup>48</sup> Raslan Ibrahim, "Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring", *BPC Policy Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 2, BRICS Policy Center, 2016., p. 18.

<sup>49</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>50</sup> Ibid.

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 suffering 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 in order 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 purpose 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.

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