

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Yemen is one of the biggest countries in the Middle East that share a border with Saudi Arabia and has a straight access to two important strategic waterways which are the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.¹ Before civil war in 1962, Yemen was separated between the north with its capital in Sana's and the south with its capital in Aden. These two parts have been in constant dispute with one another and their own constituents.²

According to Yemen's latest census in December 2014, the population of Yemenis was 19.72 million which is indicating an average annual population growth of more than 3%. The data from the U.S government in July 2007 showed the population of Yemenis increased to 22.2 million. This calculation did not include the refugees who came from Somalia. Based on the data provided by the United Nations Refugee Agency in 2017, there were 91,000 Somalis in Yemen.³

With the expectation that the Yemen population will keep increasing every year, a crucial change is needed to make sure they have an opportunity to work and improve their welfare. In 2003 there were 45% of Yemen's population was

¹ W. Andrew Terril, "The Crisis in Yemen Governance," in *Yemen and the Challenge of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Curtis Benton and Charles G. Attwater (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2013), accessed December 2, 2020, <http://ezproxy.library.uph.edu:2076>, 10.

² Robert E. Mitchell, "What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen," *The Middle East Journal* 66, no. 2 (2012): 291-312, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23256686>, 292-293.

³ "Country Profile: Yemen," *Library of Congress – Federal Research Division*, last modified 2008, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Yemen.pdf>, 5-6.

considered below the poverty line. A late report from the International Food Policy Institute reveals that one-third of Yemenis go hungry. Before the First Gulf War, many Yemeni families relied on the remittances sent home by their relatives who worked in Saudi Arabia and Gulf State as their source of income. But when Yemen was unsuccessful in stopping Iraq to invade Kuwait, around 800.000 Yemeni workers were dispatched home by force as retaliation. Saudi Arabia builds security barrier along its border to prevent them and other illegal immigrants looking for jobs. This situation caused the economy of Yemen shaken and pushed the government to open new job opportunities.⁴

Agriculture as a possible sector for Yemen to solve the need for its growing unemployment necessities is unreliable. This sector only supplies around 10.9% of country's GDP and the availability of the land to be used for growing crops is below 3%. Yemen depends on imported food for their daily needs. A study released in 2009 shows that Yemen has moved into food-importing country since 1960s. Furthermore, the condition of Yemen which has low rainfall causes a famine and dependence on food aid from America and other international donors.⁵

The last resort for Yemen to have a source of income comes from the petroleum sector. The oil reserve of Yemen in January 2009 was added up to 3 billion barrels, whereas the inventory of Yemen natural gas was 478.5 billion cubic meters. As reported by the World Bank officials, revenue collected from petroleum sector helped 85% of government's entire budget in 2005. Different source claim that

⁴ Robert E. Mitchell, "What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen," *The Middle East Journal* 66, no. 2 (2012): 291-312, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23256686>, 294.

⁵ Robert E. Mitchell, *What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen*, 294-295.

petroleum sector accounts for about 25% of GDP. These figures indicate that the decrease in the output and income will reduce government capability in boosting. Economic development and creating jobs.⁶

Right now, jobs that are accessible for Yemenis man is army. There are 895.000 men is being in armed forces. Based on one source, Yemen's military has spent about 23.9% to 40% of the central government's total expenditure. A lot of man in military is due to Yemen's lasting internal conflict such as the civil war that led to the creation of Republic of Yemen, armed opposition by Houthi concentrated in northern Sa'ada, and lately multi-governorate open resistance to Sana'a as the center of Republic of Yemen.⁷

The population of Yemen is divided between two types of Muslims which are Shi'a and Sunni. The existence of Shi'a can be found in tribes located in the North Yemen, whereas the presence of Sunni can be discovered in tribes located in the South Yemen. In northern Yemen, the tribes usually will affiliate themselves with one of the two crucial tribal confederations. The southern Yemen on the other hand do not have this kind of organizational feature. Based on the report of a Turkish think tank, the Zaidiyya Shiites account for 45% of Yemeni society whereas Sunni Shafi'ites account for 55% of Yemeni society. The Zaidiyya Shiites have believed that the Yemenis should be led by Shi'a imams. They at the same also want the Sunni particularly the Salafite movement in their region to be restricted. Former president Ali Abdullah Salih is a Shia origin who is dominant both in the

⁶ Robert E. Mitchell, *What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen*, 295.

⁷ Robert E. Mitchell, *What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen*, 295.

government and army throughout his presidency. In the South the Sunni is found mostly in Ta'izz and the Tihama. The Sunni people in Ta'izz is believed to be more peasants than tribal-oriented. Their economy is also considered to be prosperous compare to the others. Moreover, they are intelligent and Western-oriented.⁸

Many studies examined the role of tribal leaders such as shaykhs and religious leaders, and how they have been used by both the central government and Saudi Arabia. The studies show, the tribes tend to adopt policies when they are receiving money and will stop adopt the policies or even change political side, once they are not receiving money. The central government gives money or monthly payment to the “significant” shaykhs around 4.000-5.000 only to make sure the central government has its support and control over them. Saudi Arabia as rich country can buy even more tribal leaders’ support compared to the central government itself to influence Yemen’s political decision. In 2015, there are 17.000-18.000 Yemenis accept Saudi Payments.⁹

The political system of Yemen is built on political and partisan pluralism. However, the outcome of 2003 elections display that the General People’s Congress (GPC) which is led by President Ali Abdallah Salih dominates the government and parliament. Some amendments happened in February 2001 by the national referendum result in the extension of presidential term to seven years, parliamentary term to six years, and the Shura Council which is nominated by president is increasing in the size and authority.¹⁰ The administrative divisions of Yemen are

⁸ Robert E. Mitchell, *What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen*, 299.

⁹ Robert E. Mitchell, *What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen*, 301-302.

¹⁰ “Country Profile: Yemen,” *Library of Congress – Federal Research Division*, last modified 2008, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Yemen.pdf>, 18.

separated into 21 governorates (including Sana'a municipality). These cities later will be sub-divided into 333 districts, then sub-divided into 2.210 sub-district, and then into 38.248 villages.¹¹

In January and February 2011, Yemeni political activists and dissatisfied youth motivated by the events in Egypt and Tunisia went to the street of Sanaa and Taiz to force the country's long-term president Ali Abdullah Saleh resign from his position. Both the Houthis and the Southern Movement proclaimed their support for the protests by the end of February. Afterward, other entities such as the Joint Meeting Party (JMP), a coalition of opposition parties and a number of defectors from the regime itself took part in the demonstration. The protest has caused the government control of the country frail. In two months, the Houthis had captured and controlled the majority of far-northern province of Saada. The capital and the central city of Taiz full with the confrontation between pro- and anti- Saleh, and the outbreak of peaceful demonstrators. In the South, the secessionist group was able to use power vacuum to appear from the shadows and at the same time Al-Qaeda-affiliated militant snatch the control of most of the Southern province of Abyan.¹²

The fears that Yemen will collapse leading to the series of Western-backed talks arbitrated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and sponsored by the Group of 10 (G10), a diplomatic group composed of GCC states, the UNSC permanent members and the EU delegation to Yemen. In April 2011, Jamal Benomar who is

¹¹ Robert E. Mitchell, "What the Social Sciences Can Tell Policy-Makers in Yemen," *The Middle East Journal* 66, no. 2 (2012): 291-312, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23256686>, 304.

¹² Adam Baron, "Civil War in Yemen: Imminent and Avoidable," *JSTOR* (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), last modified 2015, accessed December 2, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep21570>, 2.

the UN Special Adviser on Yemen chosen to facilitate the mediation between Saleh Genal People's Congress (GPC) and the JMP. This mediation finally showing a result in November in which the representatives of GPC and JMP signing the GCC deal in Riyadh. This agreement will ensure Saleh to quit his position in exchange that he will not be persecuted. Besides that, this agreement will set the country path to form a unity government between GPC and JMP, and referendum-like election for two years term with consensus candidate Hadi.¹³

Along with GCC deal, there is National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC is arranged by United National Security Council Resolution 2051 that started in 2013. The wish of president Hadi about this dialogue is to unite all the nation's political factions such as Houthis in order to achieve consensus om governance. On January 24, 2014 all of the parties complied to the political "Road Map" that is concluded out of NDC. The outcome of NDC was the creation of two new federal regions in the South (Aden and Hadramawt) and four federal regions in the north. In addition to that, the capital Sana'a would have a special status. Lastly, was drafting the constitution. At the beginning, the Houthis agreed to support the result of NDC but when it comes to the implementation the Houthis are hindering.¹⁴

Near the end of summer in 2014, Yemen government announced that they would stop the fuel subsidies. This announcement provided the Houthis with the opportunity to attract mass demonstration asking for the government to resign and bring back the subsidies. A demonstration that ended in chaos made the Houthis

¹³ Adam Baron, *Civil War in Yemen: Imminent and Avoidable*, 2.

¹⁴ "Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Conflict" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2017), last modified April 2017, accessed December 2, 2020, https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/WhitePaper_Yemen_April2017_0.pdf, 23.

capable to take control of Sanaa. The backers of Saleh who Houthis had alliance with during NDC supported the Houthis action in Sana. Following the captures of Sanaa by the Houthis, A Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) was agreed and the second new government for roughly three years was created in early November consist of mostly technocrats rather than partisan figure. The Houthis pretended to like this resolution, while in the back, try to cause a chaos. Seeing their actions, the UN imposed a sanction to Saleh and two Houthi leaders.¹⁵

In the middle of preparation to announce the completion of the drafting of a new constitution, the Houthi rebels abducted Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak, the president's chief of staff, and later moved to attack the presidential palace compound and the homes of key officials. A week after the kidnapping, the cabinet and the president leave their position. On 6 February 2015, the Houthis unilaterally issued a "constitutional declaration". When Hadi was finally able to run away from the house of arrest in the capital and went to Aden on 21 February 2015, Hadi withdraws his resignation and proclaimed Sanaa "occupied".¹⁶

On March 25, 2015, the Houthi took Yemen's southern capital, Aden after seizing Taiz which is the third-largest city in Yemen. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perceived the occupation of Aden as a trigger for military action. The rise of the Houthis in Yemen which was followed with the increase involvement of Houthis alliance which is Iran and former president Saleh is believed to further Saudi Arabia

¹⁵ Adam Baron, "Civil War in Yemen: Imminent and Avoidable," *JSTOR* (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), last modified 2015, accessed December 2, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep21570>, 3.

¹⁶ Adam Baron, "Civil War in Yemen: Imminent and Avoidable," *JSTOR* (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015), last modified 2015, accessed December 2, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep21570>, 4.

decision to take military action in Yemen.¹⁷ Therefore, On March 26, Saudi Arabia together with nine other nations launched Operation Decisive Storm. The aim of this operation was to defend the legitimate government of Yemen under President Hadi.¹⁸

The military operation led by Saudi Arabia caused 8.670 to 13.600 people were killed in Yemen from March 2015 to December 2017. In late 2018, the victims rose to nearly 60.000. As reported by Andrea Carboni, a researcher on Yemen for the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), there are 57.538 civilians and combatants were killed between 2016 until late 2018, throughout these years most of these victims are malnutrition and illness like malaria and typhoid. At the end of the report, it stated that the war had led to famine and humanitarian efforts were launched to meet the needs of Yemeni people. The U.S and Western Countries which before fully supported the military operations launched by Saudi Arabia decided to censure Saudi-led intervention.¹⁹

The humanitarian crisis experienced by Yemen people has pushed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to send humanitarian assistance as a way to protect civilians during their efforts to bring back the safety and stability of Yemen. As the single largest donor country, Saudi Arabia has given more than \$847 million in humanitarian assistance to Yemen. In April 2015, King Salman bin Abdulaziz

¹⁷ Mahjoob Zweiri, "Yemen in the Context of Iran-Gulf Relations," in *Yemen and the Gulf States: The Making of Crisis*, ed. Helen Lackner and Daniel Martin Varisco (Gerlach Press, 2018), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wrpww6.8>, 89-90.

¹⁸ "Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Conflict" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2017), last modified April 2017, accessed December 2, 2020, https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/WhitePaper_Yemen_April2017_0.pdf, 27-28.

¹⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, "Regional and Global Trials," *JSTOR* (ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, 2019), last modified 2019, accessed December 2, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep20689.10>, 162.

contributed \$274 million to United Nation to support their humanitarian efforts in Yemen. To ensure the distribution of aid in Yemen effective, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia created the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) in May 2015. Following the establishment of KSRelief the Kingdom then donates an extra \$267 million to Yemen.²⁰

1.2 Research Question

Based on the information available above, the writer suggests the following research questions:

1. What is the interest of Saudi Arabia's humanitarian aid in Yemen?
2. What is the implication of Saudi Arabia's aid in Yemen?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to find the political agenda behind Saudi Arabia large humanitarian assistance in Yemen by considering the military goals of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. This research paper also seeks to highlight whether their humanitarian assistance will improve or worsen the current situation in Yemen.

1.4 Research Contributions

The findings from this research proposal give a broader understanding on how Saudi Arabia use their humanitarian assistance as a tool to further their interest in Arabian Peninsula. While at the same time promoting the moral obligation to help people in needs. The research topic will cover Yemen civil

²⁰ "Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Conflict" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2017), last modified April 2017, accessed December 2, 2020, https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/WhitePaper_Yemen_April2017_0.pdf, 39.

war, Saudi Arabia military operation in Yemen and the contribution of Saudi Arabia in terms of humanitarian aid in Yemen. By describing the aspects above, this research will be beneficial for scholars who are interested in foreign aid topics and policy makers who need references for their upcoming policies.

1.5 Structure of Writing

The first chapter, which is the introduction, provides the general overview of the thesis's main content, including the background of the topic of the thesis, research questions, research objectives and research contribution.

The second chapter, which is the theoretical framework, explains further the theory of international relations and concepts that are used to analyze the political motivation of Saudi Arabia's humanitarian aid in Yemen and its implication. This chapter also assembles and summarizes peer-reviewed research in relation to the humanitarian aid, especially in the concept of civil war and military intervention.

The third chapter, which is the methodology, gives detailed explanation on the research approach, research method, data collection technique, and data analysis technique used in gathering data and information for the research.

The fourth chapter, which is the analysis, provides the analysis of all the data gathered regarding Saudi Arabia's humanitarian aid in Yemen and its implication to the future situation of Yemen according to the theories and concepts in International Relations. The result of the analysis is used to address the research questions of this thesis.

The fifth chapter, which is the conclusion and recommendation, summarizes and concludes the analysis of the previous chapter. At the same time, this chapter also points out recommendations regarding the situation between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

