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Deconstructing Saudi Arabia's Foreign Aid Motives to Yemen

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Cover Page Footnote

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DECONSTRUCTING SAUDI ARABIA'S FOREIGN AID MOTIVES TO YEMEN

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas tentang motif bantuan luar negeri Arab Saudi di Yaman. Arab Saudi telah menjadi negara donor yang paling signifikan bagi Yaman, tetapi juga mengancam kondisi kemanusiaan di Yaman dengan melakukan intervensi militer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab mengapa Arab Saudi memberikan bantuan luar negeri ke Yaman di tengah intervensi militernya. Konsep yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah bantuan luar negeri menurut Veen (2011) untuk menganalisis kepentingan Arab Saudi melalui pengiriman bantuan luar negerinya ke Yaman. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah studi pustaka dengan menganalisis pernyataan resmi Arab Saudi yang dipublikasikan di situs-situs resmi pemerintah, dan juga wawancara dengan ahli kawasan Timur Tengah. Pernyataan tersebut kemudian melalui proses coding menggunakan perangkat lunak Atlas.ti untuk membantu analisis data. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Arab Saudi memiliki empat motif yang terlihat signifikan, yaitu kemanusiaan, reputasi, keamanan, dan pengaruh. Keempat bingkai tersebut saling terhubung satu sama lain utamanya untuk kepentingan mempertahankan power Arab Saudi. Dengan begitu, bantuan luar negeri digunakan untuk mempertahankan pengaruh Arab Saudi dari ancaman ekonomi dan keamanan, mencegah rezim yang tidak bersahabat dengan Arab Saudi untuk berkuasa di Yaman, serta meningkatkan reputasinya di ranah internasional.

Kata Kunci: Arab Saudi, bantuan luar negeri, krisis kemanusiaan, Yaman

ABSTRACT

This research assesses the motives of Saudi Arabia's aid to Yemen. Saudi Arabia has been the most significant donor to the country whilst threatening humanitarian conditions in Yemen through its military intervention. Thus, this research aims to unveil the Kingdom's reasons to provide foreign aid to Yemen whilst doing the military intervention. This research uses the seven foreign aid frames according to Veen (2011) to analyse possible interest implied in the Kingdom's foreign aid delivery to Yemen. The method used in this research is a literature review by analysing the Kingdom's official statements published on the government's official websites and an interview with a Middle East expert. The statements were coded using qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti. This study finds that Saudi Arabia has four significant motives to provide foreign aid to Yemen, namely humanitarian, reputation, security, and power. The four frames are connected but mostly related to the Kingdom's objective to maintain its power. Thus, foreign aid is used as a soft power tool to preserve Saudi Arabia's influence against economic and security threats, prevent an unfriendly regime from ruling Yemen, and increase its reputation in the international sphere.

Keyword: foreign aid, humanitarian crisis, Saudi Arabia, Yemen

INTRODUCTION

In international relations, foreign aid has been an essential tool for international actors to build relationships with one another. It is considered a gift to be shared with others to reach a particular goal, namely development (Furia, 2015, p. 3). Here, South countries are often positioned as a subject for North countries to deliver their aid, which is considered the solution to the South's problems (Furia, 2015, p. 2). A constructed global view makes foreign aid a norm or principle of behaviour according to identity (Lancaster, 2007, pp. 18-19), which, in this case, is rich to poor countries.

Yemen was categorised as a country with the highest poverty and malnutrition amongst Arab countries even before the war in 2014 (Coppi, 2018, p. 9; Eshaq, Fothan, Jensen, Khan, & AlAmodi, 2017, p. 32). This situation has worsened with the political instability in the country. Unstable domestic conditions continuously occur with violence, rebellion, murder, and open war in Yemen (Feierstein, 2019, p. 1). Moreover, the civil war in Yemen involves intervention from external actors, such as Saudi Arabia and its coalition, the United Arab Emirates, and arms assistance from the United States. This involvement adds complexity to the war and significantly affects humanitarian conditions in Yemen.

The civil war that has been going on for almost seven years has seriously threatened the Yemenis' survival. Military attacks during the war, both by Yemeni forces led by the Houthi and the Saudi Arabian coalition, resulted in many civilian casualties. The tens of thousands of airstrikes launched in the war caused thousands of deaths (Yemen Data Project, 2021) and infrastructure damage that limited people's access to basic needs (Sowers & Weinthal, 2021, p. 158). In this war, the humanitarian crisis becomes an indirect attack that can weaken the parties involved in the war.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was also a significant donor in improving people's quality of life. Saudi Arabia formed a humanitarian aid centre in 2015, called the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief). Judging from KSRelief's records, Yemen has been the largest recipient of aid, reaching 71% of the support Saudi Arabia provides through the aid centre (KSRelief, 2021). At the 2019 donor conference to assist humanitarian operations in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates contributed \$750 million each (Sowers & Weinthal, 2021, p. 175). In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic significantly decreased the amount of aid to Yemen, Saudi Arabia became the largest donor on humanitarian operations in Yemen. During the donor conference in mid-2020, Saudi Arabia even pledged 500 million dollars to Yemen (Kossaify, 2020).

Saudi Arabia's intervention on both sides, military and humanitarian, poses a dilemma for international humanitarian organisations. Sowers & Weinthal (2021, p. 175) stated that international humanitarian organisations were hesitant to accept donations from countries prolonging the war. The executive director of Oxfam International, Winnie Byanyima, highlighted the ironic situation in Yemen, where humanitarian aid donors were the most significant actors in military activities (Zarocostas, 2019, p. 33). Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States provide substantial humanitarian assistance to Yemen despite their significant position in assisting war participants.

An in-depth study of Saudi Arabia's foreign aid objectives and the country's military intervention in Yemen is interesting considering the existing dilemma. On the one hand, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has been prolonged due to domestic instability, especially with the civil war. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia also actively provides humanitarian aid to overcome the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. To date, there has been no research that specifically addresses Saudi Arabia's objectives in providing foreign aid to Yemen considering the military intervention.

In highlighting the role of Saudi Arabia in Yemen, previous research has generally focused on military intervention by Saudi Arabia since 2015. Related articles comprise justifications for Saudi Arabia's intervention (Clausen, 2019) and humanitarian impacts (Buys & Garwood-Gowers, 2018; Edwards, 2019), as well as debates on the legitimacy of these interventions regarding arms trade activities, war blockades, and international norms (Tzimas, 2018; Fink, 2017; Musa, 2017). Military intervention was also associated with Saudi Arabia and Iran proxy war in the Middle East (Guggenheim, 2021; Popp, 2015; Khan & Ullah, 2020). Meanwhile, Sowers & Weinthal (2021) highlighted the dilemma that arises with Saudi Arabia's involvement through military intervention and humanitarian assistance. The article explained that international humanitarian organisations deemed they should not accept donations from countries supporting the continuation of the war.

This research intends to unveil Saudi Arabia's motives on providing humanitarian assistance to Yemen. Based on earlier research, Saudi Arabia's assistance is a dilemma considering that, at the same time, Saudi Arabia also intervened militarily in Yemen, which is one of the causes of humanitarian crisis in the country. This contrasting action on humanitarianism raises urgency to understand more deeply states' objectives to deliver aid. In this case, Saudi Arabia's assistance to Yemen. Researchers argue that foreign aid sent by Saudi Arabia to Yemen is a tool for the Saudi Arabian government to achieve its national interests. This article uses the foreign aid concept as an analytical tool. The discussion begins by

describing the humanitarian circumstances in Yemen and the foreign aid provided by Saudi Arabia. After that, the foreign aid is analysed using seven framings according to Veen (2011) to discover Saudi Arabia's reasons to provide aid to Yemen.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Foreign Aid

The foreign aid concept in this study focuses on the type of aid that aims the improvement of the humanitarian condition. Foreign aid is a gift from one country to another in the form of resources the recipient needs (Furia, 2015, p. 2). Lancaster (2007, p. 11) defined foreign aid more specifically by focusing on improving the human condition and excluding assistance less relevant to development, such as military aid and bribery for political purposes. Apodaca (2017, p. 2) and Lancaster (2007, p. 9) mentioned foreign aid as an instrument in foreign policy. Policymakers in the United States even mentioned foreign aid as an essential tool in the country's foreign policy related to national security policy (Tarnoff & Lawson, 2016 in Apodaca, 2017, p. 2). Thus, foreign aid becomes one of the instruments that assist the government in dealing with other countries following foreign policy objectives.

The existence of an interest in foreign aid has sparked a long discussion. In understanding donors' motives to provide foreign aid, aid policy researchers tend to be divided into two: some consider humanity as the main reason, and others focus more on the dominating interests of donor countries (Veen, 2011, p. 9). With the debate in the discussion about the motives for providing foreign aid, Veen (2011) sought to elaborate on the objectives and framing of aid policy systematically. Veen (2011, p. 10) divided aid policy objectives into seven framings as in Table 1. The foreign aid concept becomes the main analytical tool in this research by analysing documents and statements of the Saudi Arabian government based on the seven framings below.

Table 1. Seven Frames in Aid Policy

Frame	Destination
Security	Increase the physical safety of donors: support allies, oppose Communism, etc.
Power/Influence	Pursue power: increasing leverage over others, gaining allies and positions of influence in the international sphere
Wealth/economic interest	self- Further economic interests of donor economy; support the export industry
Enlightened self-interest	Pursue global public good: peace, stability, environmental health, population control, etc.
Reputation/self-affirmation	Establish and express a certain identity in international relations; improve international status and reputation
Obligation/Duty	Fulfil obligations, both to historically connected countries and to positions in the international system
Humanitarianism	Improving the welfare of the world's poor; providing humanitarian assistance

Source: Ideas, Interest and Foreign Aid (Veen, 2011, p. 10)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used qualitative research methods which emphasise a systematic qualitative research process (Miles et al., 2014). Researchers collected primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through Saudi Arabia's official statements from the Kingdom's official websites. An interview with a Middle East region expert, Yon Machmudi, Ph.D, was also conducted to triangulate the data. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained through a literature study to obtain data related to humanitarian circumstances in Yemen and Saudi Arabia's foreign aid to Yemen in 2015-2021. Data on to Yemen's humanitarian condition was collected through English journal articles and reports from trusted sources, such as the United Nations. Meanwhile, documents on Saudi Arabia's aid to Yemen are articles and reports in English.

Researchers used Atlas.ti software throughout the research for a systematic qualitative analysis. The Atlas.ti comprises research data management and analysis. The documents retrieved from online resources were imported into the software to be collected and analysed. Firstly, the researchers highlighted sentences or paragraphs needed for the research. Then, the highlighted parts were categorised into codes based on their main idea. The type of coding used in this study is descriptive coding which uses nouns to identify the topic in the data source (Saldaña, 2021, p. 134). In this study, the codes used to refer the concept of foreign aid, according to Veen (2011), consist of seven framings. After the coding process, the significance of each code is measured through cross-tabulation analysis within the software.

DISCUSSION

Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

The current war dramatically deteriorates Yemen's humanitarian condition. Before the war, Yemen was already ranked bottom for its economy and health compared to other Arab countries (Coppi, 2018, p. 9; Eshaq et al., 2017, p.32). It drove massive protests from Yemenis to the government for a better living. However, as the protest turns to war, the humanitarian condition worsens with military activities threatening people's lives. The attacks have caused direct casualties and enormous damage in Yemen, which leads to indirect deaths.

Military activity in Yemen resulted in many casualties within a short period. It is noted that the escalation of the war occurred in 2014 causing 2.5 million Yemenis to be displaced in just one year after the civil war outbreak (Lopour, 2016, p. 1). Between 2015 and mid-2021, the Yemen Data Project (2021) recorded 23.093 airstrikes launched by parties to the war. The attack left nearly twenty thousand Yemenis killed, with 8.772 of them dead. In addition to the direct threats posed by war attacks on society, Yemenis also face indirect threats that threaten their well-being. The attacks that occurred had a tremendous impact on the damage to infrastructure for public services, which has become a target for destruction in the war (Sowers & Weinthal, 2021, p. 158).

With the destruction of various public facilities, the Yemenis find it difficult to meet their basic daily needs. During 2015-2019, agricultural areas were the primary targets destroyed by the Saudi Arabia coalition, the Houthis, and the supporting forces of both sides, apart from various unknown attacks, followed by water and sanitation and health sources (Sowers & Weinthal, 2021, p. 164). The death toll of the Yemeni community was recorded at around 233.000 people from the indirect effects of the war, such as food shortages and lack of health services and infrastructure (International Rescue Committee, 2020, p. 1). Humanitarian crises are used as a form of indirect attack that can weaken the parties involved in the war.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Aid in Yemen

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the civil war, Saudi Arabia provides foreign aid through a humanitarian agency called the King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Center (KSrelief). KSrelief was formed in May 2015 under the direction of King Salman or two months after the start of Saudi Arabia's Operation Decisive Storm military intervention in Yemen (Arab News, 2019). The centre formation is a continuation of the Kingdom's initiative

and commitment on humanitarian relief. It donates and collaborates with other international actors to widen the aid delivery.

Based on data from the official KSrelief website, Yemen was the largest recipient country of the institution. It had ten times the difference to the second recipient country, Palestine (KSrelief, 2022). This huge gap shows how Saudi Arabia prioritises Yemen for aid, as acknowledged by KSrelief General Supervisor Abdullah Al Rabeeah (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2020c). From year to year, Saudi Arabia claimed to be the largest donor country to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and was the most active in propagating international aid to enter Yemen, as found in various reports of Saudi Arabia's foreign aid to Yemen through KSrelief.

Table 2. Aid from Ksrelief to Yemen in 2015 to 28 February 2022

No	Aid Sector	Number of Programs	Funds (US\$)
1	Food Safety	124	1,379,740,733
2	Health	319	797,611,394
3	Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance	30	686,711,977
4	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	32	212,869,314
5	Camp Coordination	51	189,097,378
6	Nutrition	16	162,932,702
7	Protection	33	158,895,271
8	Multicluster	19	123,671,595
9	Education	26	121,946,305
10	Early Recovery	25	113,618,564
11	Logistics	8	45,427,383
12	Emergency Telecommunications	1	16,000,000
	TOTAL	684	4,008,718,617

Source: ksrelief.org

As listed in the table above, Saudi Arabia reported that foreign aid sent to Yemen included the needs of food security, health (health sector; water, sanitation, and hygiene; nutrition), economy (education sector, logistics, and early recovery), and personal (humanitarian and emergency relief, camp management, emergency telecommunications, and protection sectors). Food was the leading sector that Saudi Arabia paid attention to, considering the food crisis in Yemen reached almost half of the population (Eshaq et al., 2017, p. 32). The second sector that received the most significant assistance from KSrelief was health, which included assistance with medical equipment, medicines, and overcoming malnutrition and hygiene.

Saudi Arabia cooperated with other international actors in providing such foreign aid, especially UN agencies. Among them, Saudi Arabia donated to the World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO) to carry out humanitarian programmes in Yemen (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019a). Saudi Arabia also created a programme with WHO to deal with disease outbreaks in Yemen, such as cholera (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018a). Furthermore, the Kingdom collaborates with UNRWA and becomes one of the most significant donors to the agency (Altalhi, 2017).

To improve life in Yemen, Saudi Arabia established a special program called the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen, abbreviated as SDPRY, which focuses on repair and development. The programme covered projects from various sectors, including health, education, water and dams, agriculture and fisheries, electricity and power, roads, ports and airports, and government buildings (Saudi DPRY, 2022). These projects aim to improve people meet their daily needs. Saudi Arabia distributes its aid to various regions in Yemen, as it is committed to assisting Yemen comprehensively through KSrelief and Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO) by coalition countries (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018b, 2020d).

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Aid Motives to Yemen

In analysing the foreign aid provided by Saudi Arabia to Yemen, this study uses seven frames of foreign aid according to Veen (2011, p. 10). This study found 98 documents used for coding. The code of each frame is presented in Table 3. Unlike grounded research which codes are found by the researchers, this research is deductive by using Veen's foreign aid frames to categorise the text meanings as codes.

Table 3. Coding

Frames	Code
Security	National and regional border security Support the alliance country

	Counter-terrorism
Power/Influence	Against sectarianism
Economy	Support economy
	Facilitate import
	Opening job opportunities
	Economic ties
Enlightened self-interest	World threat existence
	Pursuing security and peace
	Commitment to global humanity
Reputation	As the largest donor country
	Getting affirmations
	Lead
Obligation	Strong relationship
	Position
Humanitarianism	Protects and relieves suffering
	Security and stability
	Commitment to global humanity
	No other motive

Source: Coding list by the authors on March 2022

Table 4. Coding Results

Frame Type	Number of Quotes	Percentage
Security	56	19.79%
Power/Influence	76	26.86%
Economy	28	9.89%
Enlightened self-interest	14	4.95%
Reputation	39	13.78%
Obligation	13	4.59%
Humanitarianism	57	20.14%
TOTAL	283	100%

Source: Research result by the authors on March 2022

Based on the table above, four framings stand out in the documents used for research: security, power, reputation, and humanity. Meanwhile, the other three frames (economy, enlightened interests, and obligations) do not account for ten percent of the overall findings. Even so, the percentages do not rule out the possibility of a relationship between frames nor make the other three frames irrelevant. The researchers focus on discussing the four main frames: how Saudi Arabia showed its emphasis on these frames and their relationship with

other frames. Since foreign aid motive is frequently questioned "is it purely for humanitarian reasons or are there other interests?" (Veen, 2011, p. 9), the discussion begins with the elaboration of the humanitarian frame, then reputation, security, and influence.

a. Humanitarianism

Veen (2011, p. 44) states that donors tend to provide foreign aid for humanitarian reasons with the following characteristics: (1) donor countries do not have humanitarian needs in their country and have the same humanitarian norms; (2) the recipient country is a country that needs assistance; (3) recipient countries have good governance. Internationally, Saudi Arabia showed a high level of humanitarian concern. The government claims the country is the "Kingdom of Humanity" that provide humanitarian assistance to needy countries (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022). The Kingdom assisted countries in the Middle East and other regions outside the Middle East (Al-Yahya & Fustier, 2011, p. 7). With its extensive assistance, Saudi Arabia has become the world's largest non-OECD donor country (Bakrania, 2012, p. 3).

In addition, the Saudi Arabia government also explicitly stated that its assistance is a manifestation of its commitment to international humanitarian law. KSrelief supervisor stressed that the centre upholds international humanitarian law by cooperating with international organisations for a wide aid delivery (KSrelief, 2017c). Saudi Arabia also mentioned its opposition to war violations, such as attacks on civilians, as a part of its commitment. The Kingdom even stated repeatedly that there are no other motives for its foreign aid to Yemen apart from humanitarianism (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018; KSrelief, 2019).

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia illustrated its commitment to humanitarian law by mentioning its impartial aid to all parts of Yemen, including the Houthi-controlled areas (KSrelief, 2019). However, as the researchers discussed it more with the informant, he mentioned that the aid to Yemen is not evenly spread. Saudi Arabia focuses on areas that are not controlled by the Houthis to weaken the opponent (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Based on the data obtained, the area that received the most assistance from Saudi Arabia was Aden, which is currently the temporary capital of Yemen after the Houthi invasion of Sana'a. Saudi Arabia even created a campaign program called *Beautiful Aden* through the SDPRY programme to improve life in the new capital, including economic improvement and infrastructure development (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2020b). This fact is in contrast to the Kingdom's claim of its impartial aid.

Saudi Arabia's attention to the humanitarian level in Yemen has been recorded for a long ago. The informant of this research stated that Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and Europe have a consortium called Friends of Yemen (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Friends of Yemen assisted Yemen in improving the country's economy. Day (2020, p. 1) also mentioned that the consortium helps the Yemeni government to respond to poor security conditions. The Kingdom of Humanity and Friends of Yemen are manifestations of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy orientation called the political economy of assistance (Machmudi, 2020, p. 2). This assistance is closely related to Saudi Arabia's desire to spread its influence, so this humanitarian framework is also related to power/influence.

Regarding the second indicator, Yemen's need for humanitarian assistance is not in doubt. The country's position as a country with the worst level of humanitarian crisis in the world shows that Yemen needs external assistance to improve life quality. Thus, Saudi Arabia's ambition to provide aid to Yemen for humanitarian reasons can be understood. In the reports and statements, Saudi Arabia emphasised that the reason behind the delivery of aid is "... to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people..." (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019b). He also committed "...will continue to do all we can to make sure help reaches those who need it." (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018c). These statements show how Saudi Arabia has prioritised protecting the Yemeni people in the current humanitarian crisis.

The third feature relating to good governance as Veen (2011, p. 44) mentioned is difficult to be considered as a reason for Saudi Arabia to assist Yemen. In contrast, the political situation in Yemen was falling apart. The Yemeni government (recognised by Saudi Arabia and currently in Saudi Arabia, namely Mansour Hadi) needed external assistance because its position was jeopardised. It was the reason for Saudi Arabia to carry out its military intervention in Yemen. The Saudi Arabian government wants to "...support countries that may not have the ability to do the job on their own." (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2015b). Bakraina (2012, p. 2) also mentioned that Saudi Arabia differs from Western countries. The Kingdom does not seem interested in promoting and debating good governance and transparency in recipient countries.

However, Saudi Arabia's statements that illustrate its concern for humanitarianism are in contrast to the military intervention it has carried out since 2015 against Yemen. The Yemen Data Project (2022) noted that Saudi Arabia's air strikes had reached more than 25,000 by 2022, and more than 2,000 were targeted at residential areas. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia have been widely reported, including using humanitarian aid for military needs (Ziadah, 2019, p. 296). These violations raised questions

about the humanitarian assistance provided and made the military operations carried out by Saudi Arabia and its coalition illegal (Ghasemzadeh & Heidarpour, 2019, p. 693).

Despite numerous reports of abuses, Saudi Arabia and the coalition still does not acknowledge these violations. Investigations into this issue were not transparent, and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs often manipulated it (Cumming-Bruce, 2018). In reports and news officially released by the government, Saudi Arabia emphasised that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen resulted from war violations and attacks by the Houthis. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia showed how the country committed to providing humanitarian assistance to counter the damage caused by the Houthis.

"You can see the destruction caused by the Iranian-backed militias, and you also see the reality - the development and construction being carried out by the Kingdom," Al Jaber said. "The difference between the two visions is clear: Iran is spending time and resources to smuggle missiles and send soldiers, while the Kingdom has been working to rebuild the nation and the future of its people." (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018d)

He [Ambassador Al Jaber] stressed that the Kingdom and the coalition, especially the King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Works (KSRelief), provided assistance to Yemen in excess of \$600 million, but the Houthi militias and Saleh forces in return steal the aid and sell it on the black market and prevent the needy from receiving relief supplies. (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2017b)

The informant of this research verified that the foreign aid provided by Saudi Arabia was not commensurate with the damage done (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Instead of repairing, the damage in Yemen will only worsen if military intervention continues. The discrepancy between the statement and the humanitarian conditions on the ground opens up new possibilities for other motives behind sending Saudi Arabia's foreign aid to Yemen amidst the military intervention the country has carried out with its coalition.

b. Reputation

This study found a particular image that Saudi Arabia wants to show in its statements regarding its foreign aid in Yemen. According to Veen (2011, p. 43), several things can be considered to determine whether a country provides foreign aid for its reputation. Firstly, countries that provide foreign aid with a reputation motive will try to stand out from other countries. The

reputation in question is in the form of status acquisition and self-affirmation. Secondly, the position of the receiving country with high international visibility. Thirdly, the recipient country's regime is related to the donor regime. These three things are related to the donor's desire for recognition for his kindness in the international arena. Researchers found these traits in Saudi Arabia's statements on Saudi Arabia's foreign aid to Yemen.

Firstly, Saudi Arabia was a significant humanitarian donor in Yemen. The Kingdom claimed that foreign aid provided by its country is the largest donor to Yemen. However, this statement had shifted to "one" of the most prominent donors in the past two years. Through the statement, the government of Saudi Arabia emphasised the significant humanitarian contribution made by Saudi Arabia to improve human security in Yemen during the crisis compared to other countries. However, the Kingdom still highlighted its contribution as the biggest to Yemen in international institutions. The Kingdom said that it became “..the largest *consistent* donor to Yemen..” on UN pledge events for Yemen (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2020c).

Saudi Arabia is the largest donor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2015c)

Saudi Arabia has been the single-largest donor of humanitarian aid to Yemen. (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016)

Over the past five years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has implemented projects in Yemen with a total funding of USD 16.7 billion. This makes the Kingdom one of the top donors to Yemen. (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2020a)

Saudi Arabia's lead on the international stage to encourage other countries to donate to Yemen is highly visible. Through various statements in forums, Saudi Arabia tried to indicate its position at the forefront in improving the humanitarian condition in Yemen through persuasion and showing the urgency of foreign aid to Yemen. Saudi Arabia not only emphasised its position on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen but also on the crises that occur in other countries. The government of Saudi Arabia tried to show its concern and the magnitude of Saudi Arabia's contribution to the humanitarian crisis in the world.

"We, as a centre," he [Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, General Supervisor of KSrelief] continued, “are coordinating with international, UN and local

partners to ensure the entry and distribution of aid to all those in need.”
(KSrelief, 2017c)

Secondly, consideration of receiving countries' visibility on the international stage can also be seen in Yemen. As Veen (2011, p. 43) noted, high visibility can be seen through the recipient's international prominence and its position as a preferred recipient of peer states. This reason is related to the humanitarian considerations that prompt Saudi Arabia to send foreign aid, namely because of Yemen's position as a country with the worst level of human security in the world. The United Nations annually holds high-level pledging events for Yemen's humanitarian crisis, to which Saudi Arabia has donated a lot. OCHA (2022) recorded that Saudi Arabia is amongst the top five donors to Yemen's humanitarian aid. The Kingdom is the highest donor to Yemen compared to other Middle Eastern countries and stands amongst Western countries that are a part of Friends of Yemen.

Thirdly, Saudi Arabia's tendency to assist Yemen includes regime consideration. Saudi Arabia was worried about the opposition countries' influence in Yemen, so Yemen was one of the countries that Saudi Arabia focused on (Farouk, 2020). As Parker (2021, p. 165) pointed out, Saudi Arabia had close ties to President Hadi, who was affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood (IM). Meanwhile, the Houthis, according to Saudi Arabia, were affiliated with Iran, which was known as Saudi Arabia's power competitor in the Middle East region.

Saudi Arabia also received great appreciation from various international actors for its assistance to Yemen, from the Yemeni government (which is recognized by the Saudis, namely Mansour Hadi) to international organisations that receive large donations from Saudi Arabia. This gratitude shows the international visibility of Saudi Arabia's aid. As stated by Veen (2011, p. 43), this is one of the indicators of the reputation frame on foreign aid:

His Excellency Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, President of the Republic of Yemen said, “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains at the forefront in Yemen. Saudi Arabia was the first to realise the gravity of the danger and trouble in Yemen, and the Kingdom is the first to step forward to fulfil and champion the needs of Yemenis.” (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018b)

KSrelief has received commendations and expressions of appreciation from UN officials and the world for its fair and generous support of all in need.
(KSrelief, 2017a)

The high appreciation from various actors and how the Kingdom values gratitude explains Saudi Arabia's concern about reputation. As Veen explained (2011, p. 43), the reputation frame can be considered essential for the donor state depending on the scope of aid. Bilateral aid indicates the donor state's concern about its reputation among the recipient; meanwhile, multilateral aid comprises international status. In Saudi Arabia's case to Yemen, both bilateral and multilateral aid is visible, along with recognition from both sides. It is found the Kingdom initiates bilateral projects to deliver aid directly to Yemen, such as Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SaudiDPRY, 2022). Multilaterally, Saudi Arabia cooperated with various international organisations to hold humanitarian programmes in Yemen and donated a lot to humanitarian programmes run by UN agencies, especially in the UN's Yemen Humanitarian Pledge Day agenda to collect donations from donor countries (KSrelief, 2020). Therefore, the Kingdom's reputation concern is visible in Yemen and internationally.

Saudi Arabia wanted to emphasise its position of prioritising the humanitarian condition in Yemen. Saudi Arabia's statements showed that this was a reinforcement of Saudi Arabia's claim against war violations alleged against its country and coalition countries, as well as showing its status as a major power or regional power as well as its military intervention in Yemen (Darwich, 2018, p. 132). The Kingdom's identity, which was known as an influential country in the Middle East – driven by geographical proximity, language, family ties, and economic relations – had made Saudi Arabia take the leading role in the international humanitarian movement for Yemen (KSrelief, 2017b). This is also related to the framework of obligations and power by placing Saudi Arabia as a country friendly to Yemen and its significant regional position.

However, the reputation championed by Saudi Arabia has also caused a polemic in the international sphere. Some humanitarian agencies accepted aid from Saudi Arabia for Yemen, but some refused. As researched by Sowers & Weinthal (2021, p. 175), the realisation that Saudi Arabia, as the largest donor, was the biggest promoter of the military led to the refusal of international humanitarian agency workers to accept the assistance provided. This fact was considered an ethical and organisational challenge for humanitarian operations. The aid provided by Saudi Arabia to Yemen was actually seen as an attempt by Saudi Arabia to cover up their crimes and form a positive image that allows them to continue military activities in Yemen (Gharib, 2018).

Farouk's findings (2020) justified this. He wrote that development and humanitarian assistance could help maintain Saudi Arabia's international image (Farouk, 2020). The research

informant also mentioned that this is related to Saudi Arabia's efforts to use foreign aid as an instrument of soft power so that international actors reckon Saudi Arabia as a generous and kind country to its neighbouring countries (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Saudi Arabia maintained its position as a significant donor in Yemen before and after the outbreak of the war to avoid resistance to its military intervention. In addition, Saudi Arabia also expected the aid to revive its image, which was often criticised for the consequences of the humanitarian crisis caused by its military intervention (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022).

c. Security

Providing foreign aid with a security frame was also one of the reasons that were significantly seen in Saudi Arabia's statements. Saudi Arabia's tendency to assist Yemen on a security basis was also related to Saudi Arabia's position in the Yemen conflict. The main security reason Saudi Arabia often gave in providing foreign assistance to Yemen was "... to assist Yemen in its efforts to restore security and stability" (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018a). Saudi Arabia's efforts to fight for Yemen's internal conditions could be assessed in terms of supporting alliance countries and the reasons for security-based foreign assistance, according to Veen (2011, p. 10).

However, Saudi Arabia's security reasons for providing foreign aid to Yemen were not only limited to supporting alliance countries. Saudi Arabia has its own opinion on defining the conflict in Yemen. According to Saudi Arabia, the current unstable condition of Yemen also poses a threat to the country, the Middle East region, and even the world (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2015a; 2017c). According to Veen (2011), the security frame is related to international tensions. In this case, Saudi Arabia's way of interpreting the conflict in Yemen as a threat to Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the region, and even the world has prompted the country to provide foreign aid to Yemen.

Saudi Arabia is concerned the most about the security of the Middle East region compared to other countries in its efforts to maintain the stability and security of its regime (Li, 2019, p. 6). Saudi Arabia has historically seen Yemen as a source of threat, with its stability inextricably linked to the security of the Arabian Peninsula (Darwich, 2018, p. 127). Therefore, Saudi Arabia has been trying to control Yemen's politics, including when there was instability with the Houthi movement. Saudi Arabia's assistance also tends to be given to state and government actors rather than sub-groups in the country, as is the case with the security framework, according to Veen (2011, p. 41). Saudi Arabia's ambition is to "... prioritise the

welfare of the Yemeni people in its efforts to restore peace and stability to Yemen" to prevent worsening conditions resulting from military intervention in Yemen (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2018b).

Yemen as a threat to the region and the world is an interesting point to note. After discussing with the informants, the researchers found that the "security" referred to here is related to two things, namely the economy and the threat of terrorism (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Saudi Arabia mentioned that the assistance it provided to fight for stability in Yemen was important for the Gulf state "...to secure the region [Middle East] from terrorism and keep the region safe for international trade and transport." (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2017a).

Firstly, economic considerations were vital in overcoming the current crisis in Yemen. Since Yemen has a strategic position as the gateway to international trade for the Gulf countries and Europe, its stability is vital for these countries. In the southwest of Yemen, there is an important shipping lane that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, namely Bab el Mandeb Strait (FCNL, n.d.). The strait holds the trade key from the Middle East to the global market, such as Europe, the United States, and Asia. Before the civil war struck Yemen, commodity flows through the strait had a significant increase, but gradually decreased during the crisis (EIA, 2019). Therefore, the tension of the conflict in Yemen was very worrying for Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and the West, especially with the attacks on trading ships.

These attacks threaten the international waterways that we all rely on for shipping. Ships and their crews must be allowed to pass through international waters safely. We call on Iran to halt any further actions which threaten regional stability, and urge a diplomatic solution to de-escalate tensions. (Government of Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, US, 2019).

Figure 1. Bab el-Mandeb Geographical Illustration



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Secondly, the presence of a terrorist group, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), in Yemen urges Saudi Arabia to prevent Yemen from becoming a failed state. Because the war, lack of opportunities, unemployment, drug use, and other health factors can encourage youth in Yemen, who comprise 60% of the population, to join terrorist groups (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2016, p. 162). Therefore, it is essential for Saudi Arabia to maintain the stability and sovereignty of the Yemeni government to carry out the War on Terror (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2016, p. 162). This situation made Saudi Arabia define the crisis in Yemen as a global threat, considering that AQAP has an extensive international network across national borders (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022).

The War on Terror campaign run by Saudi Arabia cannot be separated from the country's relationship with the United States. Since the terror attacks that occurred on September 9, 2001, the US has entered into Yemen's military affairs to oversee the anti-terrorism movement in the country (Bonney, 2020: 71). The US has entered the political dynamics in Yemen as a manifestation of its foreign policy orientation that campaigns for the war on terror, including by supporting Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen through its military activities (Michael, Chukwu, Hezekiah, & Jonathan, 2020: 131).

d. Power

In addition to humanitarian, reputation, and security reasons, the foreign aid provided by Saudi Arabia also appeared to be given based on power. Of the 98 documents used for research, it appeared that Saudi Arabia tended to affiliate the Houthis with Iran as the "Iranian-backed Houthi Militia" and wrote it as the party responsible for the crisis in Yemen. These statements showed Saudi Arabia's insecurity about Iran's presence in the Yemen conflict. Saudi Arabia sought to demonstrate that its presence in Yemen was an attempt to counter the Iranian threat and prevent Shia expansion in the Gulf (Darwich, 2018, p. 129). Moreover, Saudi Arabia's long-term national policy is to maintain stability and ensure the security of its regime in the region (Li, 2019, p. 6).

The narrative of the war in Yemen as a proxy war for Saudi Arabia and Iran is not new. Many said that the presence of Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen manifested the Sunni vs. Shia conflict, but this statement oversimplifies Yemen's complex political situation (Darwich, 2018, p. 130). According to Esfandiary & Tabatabai (2016, p. 157), despite the fact that the Houthis are a Shia group, they have a different fundamental value from Iranian Shi'ism, which makes the Houthis and Iran relation in terms of belief to be considerably small. In fact, Iran has neither influence nor control over the Houthis (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2016, p. 157). Likely, Iran's presence or absence in Yemen would not change the current crisis (Darwich, 2018, p. 130).

Even so, the Houthi leader's historical closeness to Iran and financial and military assistance also worries Saudi Arabia. As our informant noted, the Houthi movement's leader in Yemen has a background in Iran, which has led to a close relationship between the two (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Therefore, apart from the debate about the continuation of the proxy war and the control of the Houthis by Iran, Saudi Arabia, in general, is worried that the existence of its regime will be threatened if the Houthi movement succeeds in coming to power.

The approach taken by Saudi Arabia to fight against the threat of the status quo is also implemented in the provision of foreign aid. Saudi Arabia has a foreign policy approach to obtaining soft power, which has been mentioned as a political economy of assistance in the previous discussion. This approach helps build trust and a positive image, not only from the recipient country but also from other international actors. This intention was very much in line with the definition of soft power, according to Nye (2004, p. 11), that foreign policy can be a state instrument to attract other actors persuasively. Therefore, the position of soft power also includes the interests of power/influence and the reputation of Saudi Arabia.

Power frame is very closely related to security. It is important to note that Yemen was positioned as Saudi Arabia's "backyard" (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2016, p. 169), which indicates the importance of Yemen to Saudi Arabia. Understanding Yemen's position as Saudi Arabia's backyard cannot be separated from Saudi economic and security interests that depend on Yemen's stability. Firstly, economically, Yemen is a crucial trade route for Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and the West, where there is Bab el-Mandeb. Secondly, the AQAP presence in Yemen drives attention to the war on terror, especially for Saudi Arabia. It is Saudi Arabia's mission to avert the terrorist organisation to be widely spread in the Middle East (Darwich, 2018, p. 135). To keep both things under control and stable for Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom needs to maintain a regime friendly to be in power in Yemen (interview with Yon Machmudi, Ph.D on May 25, 2022). Moreover, Saudi Arabia fears the Houthi as Iran's accomplice and the next Hezbollah in its backyard (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2016, p. 163), which will directly threaten the Kingdom's power in the region.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify Saudi Arabia's motives for assisting Yemen. The researchers used data from key informants and 98 documents related to Saudi Arabia's foreign aid to answer this question. The data underwent a coding process to determine the framing of Saudi Arabia's aid. Four of the seven frames (security, influence, economy, common interest, reputation, obligation, and humanity) look significant in Saudi Arabia's statements: humanity, reputation, security, and influence.

Interestingly, the frames are connected to one another. This research found that power is the main objective of Saudi Arabia's policy, which leads to the visibility of other frames. It can be concluded that Saudi Arabia wanted to maintain its power, especially in the region. The Kingdom is defending its position as the most notable country in the region by using a persuasive approach through foreign assistance to countries in need, including Yemen. Several things urge Saudi Arabia to assist Yemen by considering the expansion of Iran's influence, the threat of terrorism, and the strategic position of trade in Yemen. Therefore, foreign aid was provided to prevent worse conditions in Yemen and to ensure that Yemen does not fall into regimes opposed to Saudi Arabia, so that the Kingdom can preserve its power in the region.

Veen's foreign aid frames apply to both qualitative and quantitative research methods. However, in his book, Veen elaborates more on the measurement for quantitative research. This research has succeeded in applying the concept to the qualitative method, but further

research on foreign aid frames using the quantitative method will be significant to understand Saudi Arabia's foreign aid pattern holistically and justify the result of this research accordingly.

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