INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE CRISIS OF COVID-19 ON THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: A CASE STUDY OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research aims to explore the role of Saudi Arabia in influencing the global system amid the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly examining its efforts in managing the crisis and its impact on international law and security.

Theoretical Framework: The study is anchored in the theoretical frameworks of international law and international security. It seeks to understand how these frameworks intersect with Saudi Arabia's response to the pandemic.

Method: Utilizing secondary research data, the study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the phenomenon. It focuses on examining existing literature and data sources to derive insights into Saudi Arabia's pandemic response and its international implications.

Results and Conclusions: The findings reveal that international human rights law and the World Health Organization's (WHO) health regulations significantly shaped Saudi Arabia's response to the pandemic. The nation adhered to WHO guidelines, contributed funds to the WHO and regional countries, and implemented strong national policies. Additionally, Saudi Arabia made notable efforts in international security by de-escalating conflict with Yemen, in line with the UN secretary-general's ceasefire call. Collectively, these actions have positioned Saudi Arabia as a responsible state in the international community.

Research Implications: This study contributes to the broader understanding of state responses to global crises, highlighting the role of national policies and international cooperation. It offers insights into how countries like Saudi Arabia navigate complex challenges like a pandemic while balancing international obligations and national interests.

Originality/Value: This research is unique in its comprehensive analysis of Saudi Arabia's multifaceted response to the COVID-19 pandemic, encompassing aspects of international law, health regulations, and security measures. It provides a nuanced understanding of how a key Middle Eastern country has managed a global health crisis while also navigating its own economic transformation and regional geopolitical challenges.

Keywords: international law, international security, Covid-19, Saudi Arabia, WHO, international health regulations, international human rights law, economy, security, safety.

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DIREITO INTERNACIONAL E A CRISE DA COVID-19 EM SEGURANÇA INTERNACIONAL: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DA ARÁBIA SAUDITA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo explorar o papel da Arábia Saudita na influência do sistema global em meio à pandemia da Covid-19, examinando particularmente seus esforços na gestão da crise e seu impacto no Direito e na segurança internacionais.

Estrutura Teórica: O estudo está ancorado nos quadros teóricos do direito internacional e da segurança internacional. Procura entender como esses quadros se cruzam com a resposta da Arábia Saudita à pandemia.

Método: Utilizando dados de pesquisa secundária, o estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa para analisar o fenômeno. Ele se concentra em examinar a literatura existente e fontes de dados para obter insights sobre a resposta da pandemia da Arábia Saudita e suas implicações internacionais.

Resultados e Conclusões: As constatações revelam que o Direito Internacional dos Direitos Humanos e os regulamentos de saúde da Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS) moldaram significativamente a resposta da Arábia Saudita à pandemia. A nação aderiu às diretrizes da OMS, contribuiu com fundos para a OMS e países regionais e implementou políticas nacionais fortes. Além disso, a Arábia Saudita fez esforços notáveis na segurança internacional ao diminuir a escalada do conflito com o Iêmen, em linha com o pedido de cessar-fogo do secretário-geral da ONU. Coletivamente, essas ações têm posicionado a Arábia Saudita como um Estado responsável na comunidade internacional.

Implicações da Pesquisa: Este estudo contribui para a compreensão mais ampla das respostas do Estado às crises globais, destacando o papel das políticas nacionais e da cooperação internacional. O site oferece ideias sobre como países como a Arábia Saudita lidam com desafios complexos como uma pandemia enquanto equilibram obrigações internacionais e interesses nacionais.

Originalidade/valor: esta pesquisa é única em sua análise abrangente da resposta multifacetada da Arábia Saudita à pandemia da Covid-19, abrangendo aspectos do Direito Internacional, regulamentações de saúde e medidas de segurança. Fornece uma compreensão matizada de como um país chave do Médio Oriente geriu uma crise global de saúde, ao mesmo tempo que percorre a sua própria transformação econômica e desafios geopolíticos regionais.


1 INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia has presented a good example globally in terms of its initiatives in confronting the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic was unprecedented in terms of scale and severity of its devastation and harm to everyone globally. All countries have
done well in making their boundaries and jurisdiction safe from this pandemic and not letting it spread to other countries from their soil. Saudi Arabia is one such pleasant and ideal example that has prevented the pandemic in its boundaries. It has also prevented the pandemic from spreading to other countries from its soil. However, the pandemic needed a multi-perspective response to counter it because of its severity and intensity. Internal law and international security are two very broad and globally important aspects that should be considered.\(^2\) This paper has focused on these very important aspects to view the impact and value of Saudi actions in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason for taking these two aspects is their involvement in studying the pandemic and its effects.\(^3\)

Any country is sovereign to make policies and laws for its land. It is independent so that it can make strategies and policies for the betterment of its people. In this respect, every country is responsible for ensuring the security of its people and the land. It is called national law, and when it comes to the security of the country, it is called national security. The increasing interaction of countries globally has made them interdependent and interconnected as well. In this regard, they are also responsible for security at the international level, and there are international laws in the form of treaties and engagement across countries. COVID-19 presented a situation where every country must have an international perspective because of its scale of it. World Health Organization issued precautions, and national governments of every country expressed concerns and responded by closing their borders.\(^4\) Every country must abide by new rules and international policies. They aimed at preserving and ensuring the international security and protection of all countries. As a result, some countries undertook perfect initiatives, and other countries might not have been able to do well. Saudi Arabia and its policies concerning international law and international security are worth examining, and that is the aim of this paper.

The research aims to examine how Saudi Arabia has been confronted with the crisis resulting from COVID-19 effectively from international law and international


security perspectives. In this context, it is to examine if Saudi Arabia is a good example considering its performance.

To highlight the role of Saudi Arabia in effectively confronting the COVID-19 pandemic

- To explain how Saudi Arabia has been able to present a good example in this regard
- To investigate the role of international law and international security measures in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic
- To examine if Saudi Arabia can be presented as a good example in its efforts to confront the pandemic

2 INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW CONCERNING COVID-19

COVID-19 has triggered a joint global response; otherwise, the pandemic could not have been controlled. It was inevitable for any country to join a global response to counter the spread. International institutions, international laws, and the international community's response have helped to counter the pandemic. This is how; international law is directly linked with the pandemic because it lets any country comply with international law. In the same way, international security is also there because it is the biggest motivation for any country. The pandemic started in Wuhan, China, and soon, every country was influenced by it. It caused issues and concerns for international security. In this situation, countries that undertook strict measures to stop the pandemic from spreading did well. They ensured not only the security of their citizens but also contributed to international security. This is the combination of international security and international law in the context of the pandemic. The crisis developed due to the pandemic being under control due to measures undertaken by any country. Before taking the perspective of Saudi Arabia specifically, the following discussion focuses on international security and international law in the context of COVID-19.

There is a range of international legal issues influenced by COVID-19. There is international humanitarian law that focuses on international human rights and concerns.

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There is an international human rights law that ensures every person deserves respect and dignity. Freedom of expression and action is also part of it. Many countries closed their borders for foreigners to enter their land. Moreover, many areas in the world produce a large number of refugees. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic affected refugees that come under international refugee law. The increasing need for online and virtual platforms has led to involvement the international cyber law. Along with this, the World Health Organization played a central role during the pandemic as it kept issuing rules and regulations for countries to follow.

The role of WHO is worth discussing here, which has actively regulated and formulated policies and rules for countries to follow. These guidelines were based on evidence and data collected on the spread of the pandemic. The body streamlines efforts under the International Health Regulations, and their effectiveness should be examined to know effectiveness and value. The body has been effective in setting guidelines, but it lacks power for enforcement. Information is necessary to be there for decision-making, and member states of the body are to provide this information. Lack of information or inaccurate information from member states can make WHO blind, and its ineffectiveness cannot be avoided. However, international health regulations are the outcomes of broader experiences to control the spread of the pandemic. The body has the mechanism to set standards and criteria in this regard.

The impact on international security comes from two aspects. First, it can divert attention from ongoing conflicts and efforts to resolve them. It happened during the spread of Ebola when the attention was diverted from conflict in affected countries to the Ebola pandemic. The aspect of the impact is in terms of more vulnerable groups during any conflict or disagreement. It is not the case with COVID-19, especially because it has affected everyone equally. However, it has affected more vulnerable and unprepared groups and segments. These groups and segments might be those who do not have measures or resources to deal with it. Therefore, international security issues can be

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severe during the pandemic. Now, it is worth highlighting the role of Saudi Arabia in confronting the pandemic from these perspectives.

3 INITIATIVES OF SAUDI ARABIA IN CONFRONTING THE PANDEMIC

Initiatives taken by Saudi Arabia in confronting COVID-19 have been remarkable and outstanding. Saudi Arabian government is found to be fully prepared to respond to the pandemic effectively because it already has strong governance, surveillance, and security network. Its preparedness for adequate and effective response helped the country to take unprecedented and early steps towards the prevention of spreading the pandemic. It is also worth noting that Saudi Arabia is home to holy places for Muslims, and they arrive in the Kingdom from across the globe. It was challenging for Saudi Arabian government to have checks and balances on pilgrims because of the nature of the pandemic. These have been adequate and timely responses and decisions towards the prevention of spreading the pandemic, which helped. It implies that any national-level decision or policy made by Saudi Arabia had international implications. Therefore, the country has ensured compliance with international law and international security for all other countries.

3.1 THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ADVICE AND SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT

There were directions, precautions, and advice from the World Health Organization to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first place, the international body did not call this disease a pandemic, but it changed its status to it. It meant that COVID-19 was a pandemic that had international implications and required international-level initiatives and steps (Abdulkadir et al., 2022). According to the body, a well-connected and integrated response was required with at least five components. First, there must be active surveillance measures to be adopted to note how the pandemic was spreading. The second component is the continuous prevention and control of infections. It involved undertaking steps to prevent the spread of infections. The third component was more systematic and specific, which might require special initiatives. It was to make effective plans to ensure healthcare facilities. The fourth component was the
control and checked on mass gathering events.\(^9\) For this purpose, any government must postpone these events so that they cannot be means to spread the pandemic. The fifth component of the policy is to raise public awareness and understanding of the disease. It required public involvement in decisions made for the containment and prevention of the pandemic.

Saudi Arabia came up with plans by having coordinated and integrated coordination, planning, and monitoring at the country level. It also coordinated and integrated its efforts with other countries to ensure international security and compliance with international law. Following WHO guidelines were part of the efforts to comply with international law. It formed an emergency committee, risk assessment tools, risk communication, a surveillance mechanism, and postponement of social gatherings along with strict adherence to rules and policies recommended by WHO. This is how; Saudi Arabia effectively managed its entire response that started showing favorable results.\(^10\) These favorable results aimed at having the desired outcome that at least reduces the prevalence and spread of the pandemic. Above all, it was the effective functioning of the government and its different institutions. They focused on implementing policies and remained proactive by making timely and effective decisions.

3.2 FORMATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

Coordination and integration of efforts in confronting the pandemic required a central committee for this purpose. It was also under compliance with international law that there should be a national committee for coordinated and integrated efforts. The Saudi health ministry chaired this committee, and the chair oversaw the pandemic under the National Command and Control Center. The purpose of this center was to collect international, national, and regional data on the pandemic and forecasting trends of the pandemic. It helped to take proactive steps because trends developed could be used to foresee the future.

The first step before the committee was to contain or limit the spread of the pandemic. It required coordination of national and international activities. For instance,


repatriating Saudi citizens from abroad was also under the jurisdiction of the committee. Management of port procedures and trade with other counties also required international-level communication and steps. These steps were aimed at ensuring international security regarding systems and individuals. Resources available from the health ministry and the Saudi Center for Disease Control did well in meeting these targets and objectives. Suspension of domestic and international flights was also to make international security ensured and certain. This is how; the pandemic was targeted and chased under the directions of the national emergency response committee headed by the health minister.11

3.3 RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN CASE OF MASS GATHERING

Risk assessment tools helped Saudi Arabia confront the pandemic very effectively. It was not new for the Kingdom to manage mass gatherings because it managed such gatherings continuously. The health ministry developed tools for risk assessment in 2010 when it established the Global Center for Mass Gatherings Medicine. As a result, it developed two tools called the Jeddah tool and the Salem tool to contain the spread of the pandemic. The health ministry modified the Salem tool to the COVID tool, and it used the Jeddah tool for strategic risk assessment of mass gatherings.12 This is how; it ensured the security and protection of a large number of pilgrims who visited the kingdom. The Kingdom also used these tools to ensure the protection of small and medium gatherings in the country.13

3.4 RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For detection, responding to concerns, and dealing with misinformation, there should be risk communication and community engagement. This initiative was especially required because of the sensitivity of the pandemic. To deal with the problem of misinformation and the spread of rumors, the health ministry engaged with the public through a daily press conference on the pandemic and the crisis. It worked with other sectors and ministries to communicate the exact situation on the ground about the

pandemic (Vaidya et al., 2023). The language was easy to understand, and it was not technical, so an ordinary person could understand it perfectly. Community empowerment strategies were also going on by monitoring the response of citizens over social media.

The health hotline center was scaled up in the country, and more than 2000 employees were present on this hotline. The purpose was to ensure streamlined and timely information to the public so that everyone could know what he wanted. These entire steps and decisions were aimed at following the direction of WHO and international laws to prevent the spread of the pandemic. This is how; the health ministry ensured the participation of citizens in confronting the pandemic.

3.5 SAUDI ARABIA FOLLOWS WHO INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS

World Health Organization is the international entity for health and international health regulations of WHO guide countries in making health-related initiatives. It has been noted above that these regulations, and the WHO body does not have the force to let countries follow these regulations. It is the domain of every country to take this responsibility and follow WHO policies under these regulations.

Saudi Arabia has followed these regulations during the early phase of COVID-19. It is one of the first countries to follow these regulations and guidelines. Steps of international significance included stopping from China, and it also banned the entry of all pilgrims coming to the country. Later, it also banned travel to and from Saudi Arabia so that it could prevent spreading the pandemic to and from its land. This is how; Saudi Arabia aligned its steps with international health regulations presented by WHO. It is also the reason why the country has been successful in countering the pandemic.
3.6 SURVEILLANCE, RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS, AND HEALTH ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

The Saudi ministry of health focused on rapid response teams for surveillance teams and tracing infections and infectious diseases in the kingdom. Saudi Arabia relied on data provided by WHO and its functions. International health regulations also guided the country to follow steps in confronting the pandemic. The priority was to evaluate and monitor confirmed cases and conduct an analysis of the global data on a daily basis. Due to the coverage of the pandemic globally, each step taken by Saudi Arabia was in line with the international trend of the pandemic. For more efficiency in its efforts to counter the pandemic, there was the health electronic surveillance network.\(^\text{17}\)

The health electronic surveillance network was the response to the pandemic, and it served the purpose of continuous surveillance. The system was integrated with the public health information system and accessible to all healthcare sectors in the country. Such integrated and coordinated response to the pandemic paid back, and things remained under proper checks and balances. Saudi Arabia enabled early disease detection, prevention, response, control, and community health monitoring that helped in making effective and workable decisions. Every country was focusing on measures to counter the pandemic, and it created a favorable environment for Saudi Arabia. Its efforts were also in line with other countries; however, proper and faster response mechanisms by Saudi Arabia kept it ahead of many countries.

3.7 MASS SCREENING INITIATIVES AND CHECKS ON INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Screening of infectious persons was at the heart of the Saudi Arabian policy to counter the pandemic. It was very difficult to trace infected persons because of the severity and ability of the pandemic to spread fast. Moreover, any infected person could infect others in no time because of the fast-spreading ability of the pandemic. Saudi Arabia adopted mass screening initiatives to have a check. Field tests were introduced by Saudi Arabia, under which populated districts were under attention. There were 807 populated locations where mass screening of individuals took place. It was the first step

in the mass screening programs. In the second stage, the Mawid app self-assessment tool was introduced to classify infected individuals to know if they are high-risk individuals or low-risk individuals. This stage was followed by the screening of individuals in designated primary care centers. In the third stage, suspected cases of COVID-19 have been focused that is a proactive method to counter the spread of the pandemic. This is how; the Saudi government made its land and citizens secure while it kept following international trends of the spread of the pandemic. International data and statistics have been before Saudi Arabia. It made policies to counter the trend, and it remained successful.

International travel and transport were aimed to ensure international security as well as being part of containing the pandemic within Saudi Arabia. Points of entry and international travel and transport were the domain of international affairs, and Saudi Arabia followed the overall trend globally to close points of entry. Surveillance activities continued at land, air, and sea points so that spread of the pandemic could be controlled. For screening of international travelers, they were asked at points of entry to fill out health declaration forms, epidemiological surveillance, adopt precautionary measures, and implement mechanisms to detect travelers. Saudi Arabia did not violate international law or any agreement with a country. The world focus was to counter the pandemic, and for this purpose, it was easier for Saudi Arabia to ban international travel. The major concern for Saudi Arabia and any other country was to contain the spread in their respective land and within their respective population.\textsuperscript{18} In this regard, Saudi Arabia took the lead and remained successful in containing the pandemic.

The above discussion has explained how the Saudi Arabian government has abided by the guidelines of WHO. Its international health regulations are binding on almost 200 countries, while its compliance is heavily based on the ability of a country. Saudi Arabia has proved this ability to ensure the safety and protection of its citizens and the world. Saudi Arabia did not need to convince other countries to follow or accept the measures taken by it. It is because of the pandemic is affecting the whole world. At the same time, it was not convenient or easier for a country to deal with the pandemic in this era of globalization. Ease in movement across borders made it challenging, and it was the capacity of Saudi Arabia that made it a reality.

4 RELATIONSHIP OF SAUDI ARABIA'S STEPS WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

During the pandemic, every country was concerned and was making decisions to secure and protect its land and the population. At the same time, every country was supposed to take care of global interests because of the intensity of the pandemic. In this context, international law and international security played a common role in shaping a country's steps toward eradicating COVID-19. Saudi Arabia did well in this respect, and it formulated its domestic response in light of international considerations. In this regard, the country seemed to consider WHO most of the time as Saudi Arabia is a signatory of international health regulations. It also ensured international security as international law helped the country to make this happen. International security came under threat because special circumstances during the pandemic could affect security situations. It was compliance with international law that helped Saudi Arabia to ensure international security by confronting the pandemic.\(^{19}\) The following is an explanation of how Saudi Arabia has been able to confront the pandemic to ensure international security and comply with international law.

It has been the result of the above discussion until this stage that Saudi Arabia has been responsible towards its citizens as well as for the international community. Its efforts to contain the pandemic within its borders have been effective. It has affected national, regional, and global security ensured by following international law. According to a mission report by WHO, Saudi Arabia has played a leading role on these levels. First, it effectively countered the pandemic within its borders, and then, it coordinated and worked collaboratively with regional countries. It worked with international health organizations like WHO to contribute and fund global efforts to end the pandemic. These initiatives have been considering international law and viewing international security as a priority.

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4.1 GOVERNANCE AND INTERSECTORAL COORDINATION BY SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is bound to follow WHO directions and guidelines, but WHO does not have the force to implement them. It must rely on countries to implement its guidelines and directions. In this regard, Saudi Arabia contributed well to WHO objectives through governance and intersectoral coordination. Evidence-based governance and intersectoral coordination led Saudi Arabia to ensure WHO guidelines are being implemented and followed. Saudi Arabia adopted an effective and efficient governance structure and coordination across sectors and departments. It transformed and reactivated its laboratory diagnostics and health information management system for this purpose (Kumar et al., 2023). Along with this, response interventions also went well in countering the spread of the pandemic.\(^2\) It was in line with the collective and international healthcare policy that the pandemic should be dealt with an iron hand. Saudi Arabia has a comprehensive and responsive governance structure that has a strong ability to implement policies. Every sector has a governing body, and relevant ministries see the actions and practices of each sector. This expertise was reflected in the healthcare policy during the pandemic when it contained the pandemic within its borders.

According to a WHO report, the survey into Saudi Arabian actions and response to the pandemic was covered by the regional office of the body. The region covered under this response efforts included the Eastern Mediterranean and Saudi Arabia. National priority given to the COVID-19 pandemic was exemplary in the country. Highest level authorities also felt the need for a response that is timely and effective to contain the pandemic to its limits. The response was multipronged, but the focus remained on health professionals and personnel providing testing and treatment services.

4.2 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND COVID-19 RESPONSE

Health authorities in the country decided to put COVID-19 at the pivot so that every strategy is targeted to contain the pandemic. In this regard, the country abided by International Human Rights law by having equal and inclusive policies for residents and non-residents. Efforts to contain the pandemic not only focused on Saudi citizens but

immigrants were also addressed equally and inclusively. It is part of international immigration law that any country must not make discriminatory policies against any immigrant. Immigrants belong to diverse backgrounds in terms of their nationality, language, race, religion, and culture. They might have different perspectives as well, but there should be consistent policies for immigrants under international law as adopted for permanent residents of any country.21

Making consistent policies for immigrants was not a choice but was inevitable. The nature of the crisis might be said as unprecedented. It is unprecedented in the modern era since the Spanish flu in 1918, when the whole world was grasped by a pandemic. In recent history, the world has witnessed global-level diseases like Ebola and SARS, but they did not reach the level of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, WHO expressed serious concerns over this spreading virus. Later, it had to announce a pandemic that was prevailing. In this context, Saudi Arabia did not have a choice unless it adopted an inclusive policy. Immigrants must be part of this inclusive policy so that they cannot be infected by it. COVID-19 infected people irrespective of their diverse attributes, and any policy to exclude immigrants could not have benefited Saudi Arabia in its efforts to contain the pandemic. It realized this while it was also bound to follow this policy under International Human Rights Law. Therefore, it adopted a comprehensive and well-planned strategy to counter it and remained successful.

4.3 DONATIONS TO WHO AND REGIONAL COUNTRIES

Saudi Arabia was undergoing serious economic woes during the pandemic because of the hit to its oil exports. COVID-19 put global economic activity at a standstill, and countries saw a reduction in their output. Low consumer demand triggered low production at factories around the world. The world seemed to focus on containing the pandemic, and there were some industries that completely closed their business. The airline industry is one of these industries which closed its business altogether. It is also worth mentioning that the major input for the airline industry is oil that runs its airplanes, jets, and charter planes. Countries around the world also reduced their import bills for oil because they did not have demand (Enggarsasi & Sa’diyah, 2023). It was one of the vital

reasons why the Saudi Arabian economy witnessed pressure on its fiscal management.22 Even then, Saudi Arabia donated a hefty amount to global efforts against the spread of COVID-19.

The amount worth $750 million was donated to the global COVID-19 response by Saudi Arabia and was given to WHO and many regional countries. It made Saudi Arabia an active and responsible advocate who is serious about containing the pandemic from all levels, including strategic, policy, and financial levels. It repeated the commitment by Saudi Arabia to align its policies with international policies and strategies in dealing with the pandemic. Donations and financial support must have helped the international body and regional countries to ensure a speedy and effective response to restrict the spread of the pandemic. Through this assistance, Saudi Arabia ensured equal access to diagnostics, providing treatment and vaccines to wider people, and for the investment to develop tools at the national and global levels.

According to the WHO report, Saudi Arabia could be seen as an example for regional countries on how to combat the crisis. They could see and follow Saudi Arabian steps to control the pandemic from spreading. The regional focus remained because Saudi Arabia considered the nature of the pandemic. Merely closing borders could not help, but Saudi Arabia coordinated and worked with regional countries to adhere to international law. It worked on common objectives and measures with regional countries, and it helped them in capacity building. Moreover, donations are given to WHO was aimed at contributing to international efforts by Saudi Arabia, which is a good example in the right direction.

4.4 ALIGNING THE VISION 2030 AND STEPS TOWARD PILGRIMS IN FIGHTING AGAINST THE PANDEMIC

Two main attractions are there for migrants and visitors in Saudi Arabia. First, it is home to holy places for Muslims, and they arrive there from all corners of the world. Second, the country is passing through a transformation phase of its economy to diversify its economy. This transformation initiative is known as Vision 2030, under which Saudi Arabia aimed to reduce reliance on oil exports.

As part of these efforts, Saudi Arabia did extraordinarily well when it closed its borders to tourists, visitors, and migrants. It has been discussed how the country has responded to this policy. The country needed a continuous inflow of people and economic activity to keep Vision 2030 running. Health ministry and healthcare service provisions are also part of the vision. It helped Saudi Arabia in responding to the pandemic because the vision already focused on coordination and integrated services to be provided. The transition through the vision helped Saudi Arabia is planning to make effective decisions towards the crisis. The vision is of international significance because many businesses and businessmen are interested in visiting and come to Saudi Arabia to work in newly built cities. Suppliers, raw material providers, workers, practitioners, experts, and people from diverse backgrounds have stakes in the vision.

From the Saudi Arabian perspective, it could also not afford to get late with the vision. It must need activities and actions to complete in time, but COVID-19 caused a halt to these ambitions. Suddenly, it became the priority to counter the pandemic, and it could harm the vision or efforts to contain the pandemic. Saudi Arabia made a balance and worked with national and international stakeholders to keep the vision running at a sustained pace. Along with it, the focus turned to contain the impact of the pandemic so that it could not spread. It is worth mentioning here that Saudi Arabia has been facing Middle East respiratory syndrome since 2012. It also benefited the country in making effective and calculated efforts based on experience received while fighting against the Middle East respiratory syndrome.

4.5 RESPONSE OF SAUDI ARABIA TO WAR IN YEMEN DURING COVID-19

International security witnessed a challenge during the pandemic, especially when it could increase concerns and challenges to international security. Many conflicts and disagreements are going on globally, and one is there on the southern border of Saudi Arabia. Countries fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic must focus on steps to counter it. Involvement in war and fighting could make things severer and more intense because of the diversion of attention. In this context, it is worth making the tough decision of a ceasefire when the UN security general also requested the ceasefire. Saudi Arabia was active and responsible in abiding by this call by the United Nations to announce a

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halt to the war. Saudi Arabia has been fighting against Yemen against terrorist activities there. In 2020, the war entered its fifth year, and it was still in the active conflict. Saudi Arabia showed responsibility here and announced a unilateral truce so that the focus on the pandemic could not divert. It was aimed at WHO directions that only 51 percent of healthcare facilities in Yemen are fully operational.

This case also proves that international security has passed through significant challenges due to the pandemic. Governments across the globe were forced to give the pandemic priority over any other area or policy. There were also fears that combat forces could also be infected with COVID-19, and any single case could cause panic among them. United Nations and voices for peace internationally called for being responsible. More powerful countries could take unilateral steps because they could shape a scenario. Saudi Arabia took the step in this case unilaterally, and the world praised this effort. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has never violated international law during its engagement in the war against Yemen. It states that involvement in the war is for self-defense. Insurgents in Yemen could become a threat to Saudi Arabia, and it must make efforts to counter them effectively. This is how; international security has been influenced and affected by the pandemic, and international law provided the support.

International security becomes more important when the world is facing a series of conflicts and flash points endangering world peace. Sides fighting against each other might not make wise or balanced decisions, and they could have undermined the importance of a ceasefire during the crisis brought on by the pandemic. Saudi Arabia had one conflict on its borders, and it made a wise and rational decision to make a peaceful decision. In this respect, it is worth noting here that countries must prioritize their efforts and actions when they face challenges. Priority for peace must be in everyone’s view; otherwise, a crisis can turn into a humanitarian crisis, and it is not affordable.

5 SAUDI ARABIA CONSIDERATION

Saudi Arabia is one of the countries which overcame the pandemic through early and timely steps. The discussion in the above sections of this research has noted that Saudi Arabia has worked along three broad areas. First, it has worked in line with international law as its policies and measures were in accordance and collaboration with international

law. Second, it has proactively responded to the pandemic nationally and regionally and emerged as a good example. Third, it announced a unilateral ceasefire in the war against Yemen on humanitarian grounds. It also abided by advice from the UN secretary-general, who called for ending conflicts and that countries should announce a ceasefire to fight against the pandemic. These three aspects of the Saudi Arabian response have been explained in the following, which indicates Saudi Arabia as a good example during the pandemic.

5.1 CONSIDERING THE INTERNATIONAL LAW

The discussion has revealed that Saudi Arabia followed WHO guidelines and international health regulations. It is the signatory of these regulations and has been responsible for following trends globally. It has also been sharing information and data with the international body so that it can make the right decisions. There are different international laws that are relevant for the pandemic hit the world. The two most relevant international laws are international health regulations by WHO and international human rights law. Saudi Arabia followed both of them by making policies.

It transformed its healthcare sector, and the ministry of health adopted an intersectoral and integrated approach to dealing with the pandemic. It shared data and information with WHO and made relevant decisions to align its efforts. Second, it made equal and inclusive policies for migrants by not discriminating against residents and non-residents within Saudi Arabia. By doing this, it followed the international human rights law that ensured equal and inclusive rights for all migrants. Donations to WHO and aligning its national policies with the body are exemplary steps taken by the organization. It made crucial decisions of international importance, like banning international travel and restricting movement to and from the country. In doing so, the country remained along with the international trends and requirements. This is how; Saudi Arabia has been an example worth following and mentioning for other countries.

5.2 CONSIDERING THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS AGAINST THE PANDEMIC

Saudi Arabia transformed its health facilities and services under the leadership of the health ministry. As part of these efforts, the government focused on laboratory diagnostics, mass screening, a ban on mass gatherings, mass vaccinations for free, and integrating intersectoral efforts to streamline all steps and initiatives. With the help of these efforts, the national-level response got streamlined and coordinated shape, and it presented an effective picture. Inclusive policies for everyone, along with banning international travel, enabled the country to be ahead of many countries. During these steps, Saudi Arabia did not violate any international law, and the ethical standing of its efforts remained high.26

Donations made to WHO from Saudi Arabia also included support to regional countries. Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East, and it shares its financial strength and expertise to enhance the capacity building of regional countries. It earned respect and a sense of responsibility for Saudi Arabia as it played a greater international role. It was necessary as well because of the severity and intensity of the pandemic. An individual country cannot come up with requirements and needed steps to counter the pandemic. Saudi Arabia realized this fact, and it collaborated with regional countries. To this end as well, Saudi Arabia proved to be an example.

5.3 CONSIDERING THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

International security has been under threat from COVID-19, and international law could help ensure international security. Saudi Arabia did not cause panic or hostile policies towards neighbors and migrants during the fight against the pandemic. It streamlined steps and worked towards the peaceful implementation of measures and steps against the pandemic. However, it faced a challenge to the south of its borders with Yemen, where it has been fighting a war since 2015. It also presented a good example by announcing a unilateral ceasefire at the request of the UN secretary-general.

Saudi Arabia put security threats aside and made the fight against the pandemic a priority. Its ceasefire was welcomed internationally, and it eased efforts in Yemen to counter the pandemic. It led the example for other conflicts and war zones to follow that

the pandemic could cause a new front of the war. It was in line with international law and humanitarian efforts to put humanity first. This is how; led the example.

These are examples exhibited by Saudi Arabia in fighting against the deadly COVID-19 virus that could devastate the world. Following prompt and integrated response against the pandemic prevented this from happening, and it emerged as an example worth following. This is how; the research has noted how Saudi Arabia has been able to record this success smoothly and systematically.

6 CONCLUSION

The research concludes that Saudi Arabia has presented a good example through its calculated, effective, and result-oriented fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the research was to assess the impact of international law on international security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The main focus has been on international law that provided a smooth and meaningful framework for Saudi Arabia to move on. It is the strength and essence of any law that makes things certain for all stakeholders. Objectives set in the first chapter of this research have been met as the research has highlighted the role of Saudi Arabia in effectively confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. Its national, regional, and international efforts in confronting the pandemic have been remarkable and exemplary. A hidden purpose of this research has been to decide if Saudi Arabia is a good example in its fight against the pandemic.

It has been explained how Saudi Arabia has been able to present a good example in this regard. It has been possible by making timely and focused decisions, and there are intersectoral and integrated efforts behind it. The level of integration and coordination at the national level equipped Saudi Arabia with the required steps and initiatives to fight against the pandemic. It closed its borders and functioned its economy smoothly during the pandemic. It worked to its benefit, and it did not see the situation as out of control. In this perspective, the role of international law and international security is worth noting, where international law is more important and influential over international security.

The research has investigated the role of international law and international security measures in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Relevant international laws to the case of COVID-19 can be many as the pandemic has gripped the world. However, this research has related the international human rights law and the international health regulations by WHO. Saudi Arabia has worked in line with these laws as its policies
towards migrants are in line with the international human rights law and health policies under regulations by WHO.

The research has examined if Saudi Arabia can be presented as a good example in its efforts to confront the pandemic. This analysis is part of the last section of the discussion in this research. It has been noted that Saudi Arabia is a good example considering its national, regional, and international efforts to eliminate COVID-19. In this regard, it has abided by international law and ensured international security considerations as well.

The research recommends taking Saudi Arabia as an example of dealing with such a health crisis as the world witnessed during COVID-19. In this regard, a country should focus on coordinated efforts and steps to deal with the crisis presented by the pandemic. It has been recommended that international law, international bodies' provisions, and region-level efforts must be part of the attention of a country.

As well as, it is recommended that the international security should be studied with more emphasis in the context of COVID-19. International law and steps by Saudi Arabia have affected the international security scenario, but it has been hugely influenced by steps taken by the country. For instance, Saudi Arabia has taken a unilateral decision to call a ceasefire in the war with Yemen. There should be a focus on the enforcement of international law to ensure international security.

In the end, it is recommended that countries take coordinated efforts at the national level. Success at the national level provides the foundation to be successful at the international level. Therefore, all countries should integrate and coordinate across sectors within their national boundaries to be effective.
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