

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL MEDIATORS IN THE YEMENI CONFLICT

This chapter presents the findings concerning the United Nations and the Sultanate of Oman in mediating the Yemeni conflict. The chapter begins by showing the findings of the mediation role played by the United Nations from 2011 until 2024, and then discusses the mediation strategies the UN envoys utilized in their negotiations and mediations. After that, the chapter presents the findings of the mediation and negotiation process, as well as the strategies by the Sultanate of Oman. Finally, the chapter states the reasons behind the persistence failure of the mediators' strategies to transform the Yemeni conflict into long-term peace process.

The Yemeni conflict has been described by researchers and politicians as an intractable conflict due to several factors, see chapter two. It is an essential to restate the research questions in order to maintain the focus of the research as this chapter focus on stating the findings of the two-research questions, namely "*What roles do the international mediators play in the Yemeni Conflict?*" and "*Why do the international mediators' strategies fail to end the intractable conflict in Yemen?*" Since the Yemeni conflict has been described as a complex conflict, the researcher believes that it is necessary to explain, in brief, the nature of the Yemeni conflict as well as its motives before going through the mediators' roles and the strategies they use in their mediation processes.

4.1 The United Nations Mediation Roles

The United Nations is an organization of sovereign states, which voluntarily join together to create a reform (The United Nations, 2018, p. 5). The UN mission in peacekeeping is helping in assisting in political process, reforming justice systems, training law enforcement and police forces, disarming former combatants and clearing land mines utilizing three pillars, namely consent of the parties, impartiality, non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. In building the peace, the United Nations, through its envoys, tries to find settlements for conflict through diplomatic channels possible to maintain peace on the ground, meet with leaders from disputing parties or countries and try to reach peaceful solutions (The United Nations, 2018).

The United Nations publishes various types of documents in support of the mediation and negotiation between the conflicting parties like published agreements, statements, press releases, briefings, and resolutions. Table 4.1 shows the three types of official documents published by the United Nations that this study focuses on; agreements, resolution, and statements produced by the president of the Security Council. These documents are primary data by which the findings of the study is believed to be more reliable and the documents are valid and authenticated. To begin with, the study found eight-signed agreements between the warring parties in different countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and Yemen. These documents were dated between 2011 and 2023. There are different roles played by the United Nations in those agreements namely as facilitator (e.g., the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative GCC), supervisor (e.g.,

the National Dialogue Conference NDC), and initiator (the United Nations Truce). Four UN envoys are involved in mediating these agreements with a possibility in reaching a peace process. However, most of these agreements and initiatives ended with failure, some of them still on-going, and others passed. Other documents published by the United Nations Security Council are resolutions that supports negotiations, confirms peacekeeping, requests cooperation, and/or stresses for restrictions. Other documents are statements published by the President of the United Nations Security Council by which he welcoming, supporting, calling, arguing, and expressing issues related to the peace process.

The united Nations contributes in the Yemeni conflict through its special envoys who ‘are not ordinary mediators’ (Al-iryani, 2021, p. 24). The UN has sent several representatives to Yemen since 2011. The special envoys for Yemen are Jamal Bin Omar (2011 – 2014), Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed (25 April 2015 – 26 February 2018), Martin Griffiths (16 February 2018 – 19 July 2021), and Hans Grundberg (2021-2024). The role of the United Nations will be discussed through the contribution of each envoy.

Table 4.1 The United Nations Roles in Mediating the Yemeni Conflict

Mediation by the United Nations							
(1) Agreements							
	Name/Place/ Envoy/ Year	Place	UN Envoy	Parties Involved	Outcomes	Status	Year
1.	The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative	Saudi Arabia	Jamal Bin Omar (facilitator)	The Government and Revolutionists	Power transaction: see Resolution 2014 (2011)	Failed	2012
2.	The National Dialogue Conference (agreement)	Yemen (Sana'a)	Jamal Bin Omar (facilitator)	All Political and Social Actors in Yemen	A comprehensive solution; See, resolution 2140 (2014)	Failed	2014
3.	The Peace and National Partnership Agreement	Yemen (San'a)	Jamal Bin Omar (Mediator)	The Government, the Houthis, Southern Movement, GPC, LPM.	Agreement on forming a new Government and military and security,	Failed	2014
4.	The Kuwait Talks	Kuwait	Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed (facilitator)	The Government and the Houthis	No common point between the parties.	Failed	2016
5.	Stockholm on (Hudaydah agreement)	Sweeden	Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Houthis and the Yemeni Government and the UAE	Stop ceasefire on the Hudaydah ports and City, See, resolution 2451 (2018)	On going	2018
6.	Stockholm on (Prisoners exchange agreement)	Sweeden	Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Houthis and the Yemeni Government and the UAE	Release of Prisoners and detainees, See, resolution 2451 (2018)	On going	2018
7.	Stockholm on (Taiz Agreement)	Sweeden	Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Houthis and the Yemeni Government and the UAE	Opening main roads, See, resolution 2451 (2018)	On going	2018
8.	Riyadh Agreement	Saudi Arabia	Hans Grundberg (supervisor)	The Government and the Southern Transitional Council	The STC commitment towards the government and the nation.	Passed	2019
9.	United Nations Truce	Yemen	Hans	Houthis and the Yemeni	Stop ceasefire in all frontlines, Reopening	Passed/on	2022

	Initiative (extendable)		Grundberg (initiator)	Government	Sana'a airport, road opening, fuel entrance,	going	
(2) United Nations Resolutions on the Yemeni Conflict							
	No./Year	Content of the Resolution					
1.	2014 (2011)	calling for implementation of a political settlement based upon the GCC Initiative and requesting the Secretary-General to continue his good offices.					
2.	2051 (2012)	reaffirming the need for the full and timely implementation of the Transition Agreement and signaling potential sanctions;					
3.	2140 (2014)	supporting the implementation of the National Dialogue outcomes, reaffirming the need for the full and timely implementation of the political transition, and establishing a sanctions regime under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter					
4.	2201 (2015)	deploring the unilateral actions taken by the Houthis to dissolve parliament and take over Yemen's government institutions, expressing grave concern over reports of the use of child soldiers, and urging all parties to continue the transition					
5.	2204 (2015)	extending the mandate of the Sanctions Panel of Experts to March 2016					
6.	2216 (2015)	demanding that all Yemeni parties fully implement resolution 2201 (2015), imposing an arms embargo on selected individuals, and requesting that the Secretary-General intensify his good offices role in order to enable the resumption of the political process					
7.	2266 (2016)	extending the asset freeze and travel ban imposed by resolution 2140 (2015) to help stem the crisis in Yemen, which is threatening the country's ongoing political transition					
8.	2402 (2018)	unanimously renewing a travel ban, assets freeze and arms embargo against those threatening peace and security in Yemen					
9.	2451 (2018)	endorsed the Stockholm agreement, called on all parties to fully respect the ceasefire in Hudaydah, and authorized the Secretary-General to establish and deploy, for an initial period of 30 days, an advance monitoring team on the ground, to support and facilitate the immediate implementation of the Stockholm agreement.					
10.	2452 (2019)	establishing a Special Political Mission to support Hodeidah Agreement in Yemen					
11.	2481 (2019)	the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)					
12.	2511 (2020)	renewing the sanctions against Yemen imposed by Security Council resolution 2140 (2014) until 26 Feb. 2021 and extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 28 Mar. 2021					
13.	2534 (2020)	the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)					
14.	2564 (2021)	strongly condemning the ongoing escalation in Marib, renewing the ban on destabilizing actors in Yemen, and extending the mandate of Sanctions Committee Expert Panel to 28 Mar 2022					

15.	2586 (2021)	the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)
16.	2624 (2022)	renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year, called the Houthis a terrorist group and added the Houthis as an entity to the Yemen sanctions list, subject to the measures of the targeted arms embargo in resolution 2216, for having engaged in acts that threaten the peace, security, and stability of Yemen.
17.	2643 (2022)	the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)
18.	2691 (2023)	the mandate of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA)
(3) Statements (President of the UN Security Council)		
	Type/Name/Year/No.	Content of the Statement
1.	S/PRST/2012/8	welcoming the Yemeni-led peaceful transition process to a just and democratic political system.
2.	S/PRST/2013/3	welcoming the announcement of the launch of the National Dialogue Conference on 18 March 2013.
3.	S/PRST/2014/18	welcoming the recent progress in Yemen's political transition, in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and Implementation Mechanism, including the recent meeting of the National Authority for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Dialogue Outcomes on 11 August; and the economic reform agenda.
4.	S/PRST/2015/8	supporting the legitimacy of the President of Yemen, Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, and calls upon all parties and Member States to refrain from taking any actions that undermine the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen, and the legitimacy of the President of Yemen. The Security Council reaffirms its full support for, and commitment to, the efforts of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Yemen, Mr. Jamal Benomar, and to the UN-brokered negotiations.
5.	S/PRST/2016/5	welcoming the launch of peace talks that started on 21 April 2016 in Kuwait, and requesting the Secretary-General to provide a plan on how the Special Envoy's office can further support the Yemeni parties.
6.	S/PRST/2017/7	calling on Parties in Yemen to Engage Constructively in Good-Faith Effort for Conflict Resolution
7.	S/PRST/2017/14	urging Greater Humanitarian Access to Famine-Threatened Yemen
8.	S/PRST/2018/5	expressing its grave concern at the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict on civilians.
9.	S/PRST/2019/9	expressing concern by developments in Yemen, and calling on all parties to exercise restraint

4.1.1 Jamal Bin Omar (2011 – 2015)

Jamal Bin Omar served as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen where he worked tirelessly to facilitate the combined efforts of the international community to promote a democratic transition in the country. As the United Nations Mediator, he led the Yemenis to sign the transition agreement in 2011 after a negotiation with the Yemeni parties and facilitated the positive conclusions of the National dialogue conference in 2014 and other agreements.



Figure IV.1 The Agreement Mediated by Jamal Ben Omar

As shown in Figure 4.1 Jamal Benomar mediated and supervised three agreements between the government and the other political parties dated from 2011 until 2015.

First, The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative (21 April 2011). As the Arab Spring hit many Arab countries and reached Yemen in 2012 by which the Youth demanded change in the political system of most Arab countries including Yemen. The

opposition parties in Yemen rode the wave and went out the streets in demonstrations demanding the step down of the President Ali Abdullah Saleh (in power for 33 years) where he tried to find a political settlement through a “Joint Meeting” (Dashela, 2021, p. 11). The situation went beyond his control for further escalation which ended with targeting the President and his government members while praying at the Palace Mosque. The president was seriously injured and wounded were then he was evacuated to Saudi Arabia for treatment in its hospitals. Saudi Arabia raised its concern about the escalation in Yemen, mainly the Houthis ‘Ansar Allah’ military actions in the northern parts of Yemen, and pushed for a negotiation between the president Ali Abdullah Saleh and the Opposition parties by the Gulf Cooperation Council GCC and the supervision of the United Nation through its special envoy for Yemen Jamal BenOmar. The GCC and the UN mediated and agreement to transfer power from President Saleh to his Vice President Abdo Rabu Mansoor Hadi through elections and form a government consists of 50 percent from each side. However its success, research criticized this agreement as it is ‘focused on the interests of conflicting local political parties and external players ignoring the public interests, the citizen’ rights, and addressing the main roots that led to the 2012 demonstrations’ (Dashela, 2021, p. 12).

Based on our analysis, the GCC initiative and UN envoy ignored two essential actors, namely the Houthis who were at that time approaching Sana’a utilizing their military capabilities and the Separation Movement in the South. These two groups did not sign the Gulf Initiatives and its mechanism implementation. Utilizing the weakness of the GCC initiative and the granted immunity of the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, the later started to contact the Houthis and the Separatist Movement to form a union against the Islah party and its allies to revenge the Mosque attack. The UN, represented by its envoy Jamal BenOmar, did not use his authority to pressure over the Houthis, Saleh’s

military moves, and the Separatist Movement who are trying to abstract the political settlement during the transitional phase. To support our claim, and as cited in Dashed (2021, p. 14) that Jamal BenOmar, in an interview with Al Jazeera ‘Saleh, the former president, was the one who facilitated the Houthis capture of the Capital City, Sana’a promising them that there will be no resistance as he still controlled the army’. This move motivated the UN special envoy to open new channels and conduct negotiations between the formal government and the Houthis.

Our analysis concludes that not only the Houthis and the Separatist groups who Jamal Ben Omar neglected in the negotiation process, but also other social actors, namely Tribal Sheikhs who play a crucial role in forming the Yemeni politics. This group was marginalized during the transitional phase. According to Dashed (2021, p. 14) ‘the Sheikhs are traditional leaders who have been highly respected by the Yemeni society and influential among their communities as they foster social cohesion’.

Another factor contributes in the failure of the Gulf Initiative under the supervision of the UN envoy is the economical factor. The UN paid much attention towards the political Transitional process and ‘did not realize the deterioration of the economy of the country and the UN consider it as a secondary factor due to the lack of understanding of the Yemeni Dilemma’ (Dashed, 2021, p. 15). However, the office of the United Nations envoy for Yemen confirms that the office helped empower Yemenis to lead their transition, to plan for it in a deliberate, considered and informed manner, and to learn from the experiences of other countries.

Second, the National Dialogue Conference (18 March 2013 – 25 January 2014) is a major outcome of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative agreement by which all Yemenis were required to set together in a negotiation table to discuss the future of

Yemen under the supervision of the United Nations, through its envoy Jamal Benomar, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and members of the ambassadors of the permanent members of the Security Council. In the front lines of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen OSESGY concerning the National Dialogue Conference, the United Nations stressed that its role in the NDC was through providing diplomatic, political, technical logistical and financial support.

Jamal Ben Omar worked closely with various Yemeni leaders and political parties to prepare and arrange for the NDC through its Technical Preparatory Committee that involved all the political factions and constituencies. According to the United Nations, the office of the special envoy created what is called a Secretariat and the Presidium consists of nine working groups concentrate on crucial problems like the Southern Question, Sa'ada, national issues and reconciliation and transitional justice, state building, good governance, foundations for building military and security, independent entities, rights and freedoms, and sustainable development. In addition, Jamal ben Omar facilitated, financed, and supported the selection of 565 delegates from all Yemeni parties include the Southern Hirak, the Houthis, women, youth and civil society, commenced the NDC. However, 'the Houthis still keeping their heavy weapon and obstructing the success of the dialogue by provoking conflict and expansionist wars in some northern governments and the special envoy did not discuss the Houthis' weapons during the NDC dialogue' (Dashela, 2021, pp. 16–17).

Through the conference, the UN special envoy, Jamal ben Omar, facilitated many sessions during the dialogue by providing experiences from other countries in various matters. For example, the UN envoy specialized a Working group to deal with the Southern problem on the bases of federalism (the conference concluded with the 'Outcome Document' called a roadmap that divided Yemen into six regions). Research

on this regard confirmed that Jamal Ben Omar ‘did not reflect to proper local experts to address the complexity of the situation, otherwise he relied on his experiences in previous mediations (e.g., in Iraq) and some local experts who do not aware about the risks of the transitional phase’ (Dashela, 2021, p. 16)

Even though, the special envoy Jamal ben Omar and the United Nations are proud about what they have provided, facilitated, financed, and managed, researchers who have a close eye on the UN’ Role in the NDC negotiation and conflict management say that ‘the UN special envoy Jamal Ben Omar had a negative role during the conference that he did not utilized his power to force the Houthis to stop conducting military operations in some governments in the north or declare any objection to its military acts, while the Houthis are blowing up the houses of their opponents, education centers, and the headquarters of political parties, and seizing state camps in Sa’ada, Amran and other areas’(Dashela, 2021, p. 16).

To conclude, Jamal Benomar had no clear and comprehensive vision towards the complexity of the Yemeni conflict. Therefore, due to the lack of clear mechanism in transforming the outcomes of the NDC concerning the federal system, the civilian state, a new constitution, elections, disarming the militias, correct transitional phase, and ending the southern problem and criminalizing racist ideas lead the failure of the NDC and the mission of Jamal Ben Omar did not end with an honor. Thus, many parties rejected the outcomes of the NDC ‘Document Outcomes’ including the Southern Hirak and the Houthis (who

continued their war strategies, with the collusion of some parties, to invade the Yemeni Capital and many other governorates).

Third, the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (2014). The failure of the NDC seized the opportunity of the Houthis to launch military invasion of some Northern governments like Hajjah, Amran, and finally they arrived in Sana'a in 21 September 2014. Consequently, the UN special envoy Jamal Ben Omar urged the Yemeni political parties for further negotiation following the Houthis seizure of Sana'a, the Capital of Yemen. This time, the name of the agreement is The Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA). As a mediator, Jamal Benomar asked the Government, the General People Congress GPC, the JMP Joint Movement Parties, the Southern Movement, and the Houthis to sign a ten-article agreement.

The PNPA agreement urged for forming a new government along with military and security aspects. Accordingly, the Houthis accepted to implement the forming of the government and refused the military and the security side' (Dashela, 2021, p. 18). Further talks supervised by the Jamal Ben Omar and political parties took place by which 'the Socialist Party proposed forming of a new government by which the Southern Movement suggested the expansion of the House of Representatives, while the Houthis proposed The National Council consists of 551 members composed of the GPC and its allies, the JMP and their Partners, the Southern Movement, and the Houthi movement'(Dashela, 2021). This talk also ended with a failure due to the fact that the Houthis believed in military actions not negotiations.

Previous research believes that the PNPA legitimized the Houthis to take further military actions. According to Dashela (2021, p. 18) ‘the PNPA allowed the Houthis to expand their coup to other governorates’. Jamal ben Omar accused, in his briefings for the Security Council S/PV.7381, the Houthis for violating the negotiations using military actions’ (United Nations, 2015) and they did not welcome the international and the UN resolutions demanding stop violence and get involved in political negotiations (Dashela, 2021, p. 18).

Afterwards, the Houthis conducted key military and political actions following the failure of the PNPA agreement. To begin with, the Houthis continued their military escalations in Sana’a and other governorates, announced their own constitution, dissolved the House of Parliament and form The Presidential Council, placed the president under house arrest, Ben Omar recognized the Houthi’s actions and sounded the failure of the transitional peace, The president fled to Aden and the Houthis targeted him in his Palace, then he fled for Saudi Arabia to ask help from regional powers mainly Saudi Arabia, and the launch of the Decisive Storm.

4.1.2 Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed (2015 – 2018)

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed of Mauritania has been assigned by The United Nations Secretary-general ban Ki-moon to be his special envoy for Yemen to work closely with the members of the United Nations Security Council, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Governments in the Middle east and other partners, as well as the United Nations Country Team for Yemen to negotiate peace agreements between the conflicted parties. He led the talks between the Houthis

and the Yemeni government in Kuwait in 21 June 2016. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, like his ancestor, focused on the political dialogue between the warring parties in Yemen through initiatives and roadmaps. He has supervised and mediated many initiatives and negotiations including The Geneva Talks (the first in June 2015 and the second in 15 December 2015), and the Kuwait Dialogue, 21 April 2016.

First, the Geneva Talks (1 and 2). Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed's mediation and negotiation was a big burden. Unlike the previous special envoy for Yemen Jamal Ben Omar where he focused his mediation and negotiation with local political actors, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed has to negotiate with local, regional, and international powers to revive the negotiation process in Yemen. As many regional and international powers being involved in the Yemeni conflict, his task as a UN mediator is more complex. The Saudi-led coalition harden the task, by launching daily airstrikes, which the decision making in the negotiation is in the hands of Saudi Arabia and the Iram, as proxy war parties.

Therefore, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said in an interview with Al Jazeera TV that 'He is not so optimistic about the upcoming negotiation in Geneva because the situation is quite difficult'. In addition, his base of mediation relied on three pillars, namely the GCC initiative, the outcomes of the NDC, and the General Security Resolution. For him, the legitimacy of the sovereignty has to be respected by the international community and the Houthis. The Geneva talks were centered about the ceasefire, the Houthis withdrawal and modalities, and monitoring mechanism. As the UN envoy prepares for the negotiations in

Geneva, the Houthis were having discussion on Muscat, Oman. The Houthis requested a ceasefire before any talks. Consequently, the Geneva peace talks 1 failed to produce a ceasefire agreement under the umbrella of the United Nations. Therefore, the Geneva talks 2 was taken place in 15 December 2015 between the Houthis and the government and ends with a failure.

Second, the Kuwait Talks took place between two parties, the Yemeni legitimate exiled government and the Houthis and their allies (the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh). The Special envoy of the United Nations Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed was the representative of the United States Security General who facilitated, monitored, and supervised the negotiation. The Agenda of the negotiations focused on three major issues; the political and security track, the human rights file prisoners, and the detainees and forcibly hidden persons, which can be broken down into five areas, namely a ceasefire, a withdrawal from the cities, the handing over of weapons, the restoration of State Institutions, and the file of detainees and forcibly hidden persons (Alkhataf, 2019, p. 5). However, the discussion paid attention to the issues of the Houthis withdrawal of the cities, handing over weapons, and security procedures and arrangements contained in Security Council Resolution 2216. The UN envoy proposed a formation of a national-unity government its task is to restore security, basic services, revive the economy of Yemen, in addition, the government have to prepare for a comprehensive dialogue for a comprehensive political solution, defining the tasks of the institutions that will manage the transition and ending the draft Yemeni constitution. The UN envoy stresses the importance of the inclusivity in the

political dialogue, the participation of women and youth, the representation of the southern Yemen to determine the future of Yemen. Furthermore, the UN envoy stressed for a clear roadmap states the national and international monitoring mechanism to implement the outcomes of the agreement (Alkhataf, 2019, p. 7).

At the opening session of the Kuwait negotiation, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that ‘Kuwait is striving to transform the war into peace and destruction to reconstruction and underdevelopment to development’(Alkhataf, 2019, p. 8).

During the negotiations, both warring parties refused to provide concessions. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed played ‘somewhat effective role because he did not raised expectations and was able to keep the negotiation alive due to the challenges’, but he could not maintain the communication strategy phase of the mediation, drafting and manipulating, building common grounds between the warring parties, provide solutions or propose concessions and not prevent withdrawing of the parties(Alkhataf, 2019, p. 11). One of his positive mediation strategies is that, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed with ‘separate and simultaneous working groups to deal with certain issues’ (Alkhataf, 2019, p. 11).

4.1.3 Martin Griffiths (2018 – 2021)

According to Villanti (2021, p. 21) Martin Griffiths, a three-year special envoy for Yemen, presided over UN mediation efforts and intensified UN engagement in Yemen with the mission to deliver UN efforts to negotiate an end

to the persistence war between the Yemenis after the failure of the peace talks in Kuwait in 2016 led by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. The UN Resolution 2216 is an obstacle for all UN envoys including Griffiths as it is obstructing mediation efforts that “demands the Houthis to withdrew from seized territory and handover arms in what amount to surrender” (Villanti, 2021, p. 21) and the envoys had not clear mechanism to implement this Resolution.

Based on our analysis of documents issued by Yemeni peacebuilding institutions, as an expert in the conducting political dialogues between governments and rebels, Yemenis expected Griffiths’ success in mediating the Yemeni conflict. However, researchers see his mission as an UN envoy failed like his predecessors (Dashela, 2021, p. 35).

First, Stockholm Agreements (2018 - 2021). Initially, Griffiths’ priority in Yemen was to develop a negotiation framework based on the Kuwait’s talks, but the clashes between the Emirati-led forces and the Houthis in the port of Hudaydah, the only outlet for the Houthis in the sea, hinder his mission and started to make negotiations to prevent a possible ‘a great big famine’ (Villanti, 2021, p. 22) by which the US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged for a ceasefire in Hudaydah and the resumption of peace talks in the next month.

According to Villanti (Villanti, 2021, p. 22) in December 2018, Griffiths was able to flew with a Houthis delegations to Sweeden to sign what is known the Stockholm Agreement between the Houthis and the Government to end fighting

in Hudaydah and de-escalate the situation in Taiz, prisoner exchange mechanism. The reason behind his success in signing the Stockholm agreement are as follows; (1) the gaining of the international pressure, especially super-power countries like the US, EU, and the UK on the Saudi-led coalition to stop the war and the airstrikes, (2) the murder of the Saudi Journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, by which the Saudi authorities acquiesced and provided concessions of its interests in the middle east. The parties agreed, under the pressure of the regional and international powers, on the following agreements:

- (1) Agreement on the withdrawal of the Hudayadah City and ports, Salaf and Ras Issa.
- (2) Agreement on an executive mechanism for prisoners' exchange.
- (3) A statement on the city of Taiz.

This agreement was not completely implemented due to 'the lack of details and definitions in the original agreement' (Villanti, 2021, p. 22), and it was signed 'under pressure and its implementation mechanism was ambiguous' (Dashela, 2021, p. 36). Even though Griffiths was able to bring the Houthis and the Government on the negotiation table and prevent the war in Hudaydah, critics upon his negotiation framework believe that 'he was unable to make any notable progress in the Yemeni conflict' see (Dawsari, 2021, p. 26). However, the special envoy considers this agreement is a breakthrough for permanent resolution in Yemen.

Griffiths, in the mid of 2020, initiated what is called “Joint Agreement” proposed a nationwide ceasefire, The opening of the airports for flights and ports for commercial purposes, and parties commitment to end the conflict (Dashela, 2021, p. 18; Villanti, 2021, p. 23). The Houthis were ready to implement the agreement concerning the humanitarian side and continue its military actions towards the city of Marib.

To conclude, Martie Griffiths is a professional mediator, but not a peace maker especially if the warring parties are not willing to commit peace. The US support was a key behind his partial success utilizing the international support, and if completed in the side ‘Iran’, it might be a breakthrough for his to build a permanent peace in Yemen. In other words, his style of mediation depends on ‘finding common grounds’ (Villanti, 2021, p. 23).

4.1.4 Hans Grundberg

Hans Grundberg, who succeeded Martin Griffiths, was the Ambassador of the European Union to Yemen. According to the UN official website, Grundberg’s 15-year-experience in conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation with the focus on the Middle East as he headed the Gulf Division at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign affairs in Stockholm at the time Sweden hosted the Yemeni delegations signing the Stockholm agreement in 2018 about Hudaydah made him an expert in the Yemeni affairs. In his first briefing for the United Nations Security Council, four days since his appointment, Grundberg describes the Yemeni conflict as a challenging task for him and his team due to its complexities and the difficulty of the task. In addition, he mentioned that the situation in

Ma'rab and Hudaydah is worsen due to the Houthis offensive and persistence attack highlighting the humanitarian impact as well as the damage to the infrastructure. Grundberg, in his briefing (S/PV.8854, United Nations, 2021a) confirms his roles and duties as special envoy for Yemen:

1. Assess past efforts, what has worked and what has not, listen to both Yemeni men and women;
2. To ensure meaningful participation of women to integrate gender perspective across all issues and ensure a sustainable peace;
3. Bring together actors across conflict parties and societal component Under the United Nations' ambarella to find common ground and resolve their differences without resorting to force;
4. Reassess and steps-up previous mediation regional 'Yemen's neighbors' and the United Nations' negotiation efforts;
5. Conduct consultation with Yemeni, regional, and international actors including President Hadi Mansour, Ansar Allah leadership, Sana'a-based actors, political actors throughout Yemen, regional leaders in Riyadh, Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Tehran, Cairo, etc.;

- Return to the Security Council each month to reflect frankly and openly on those discussions.

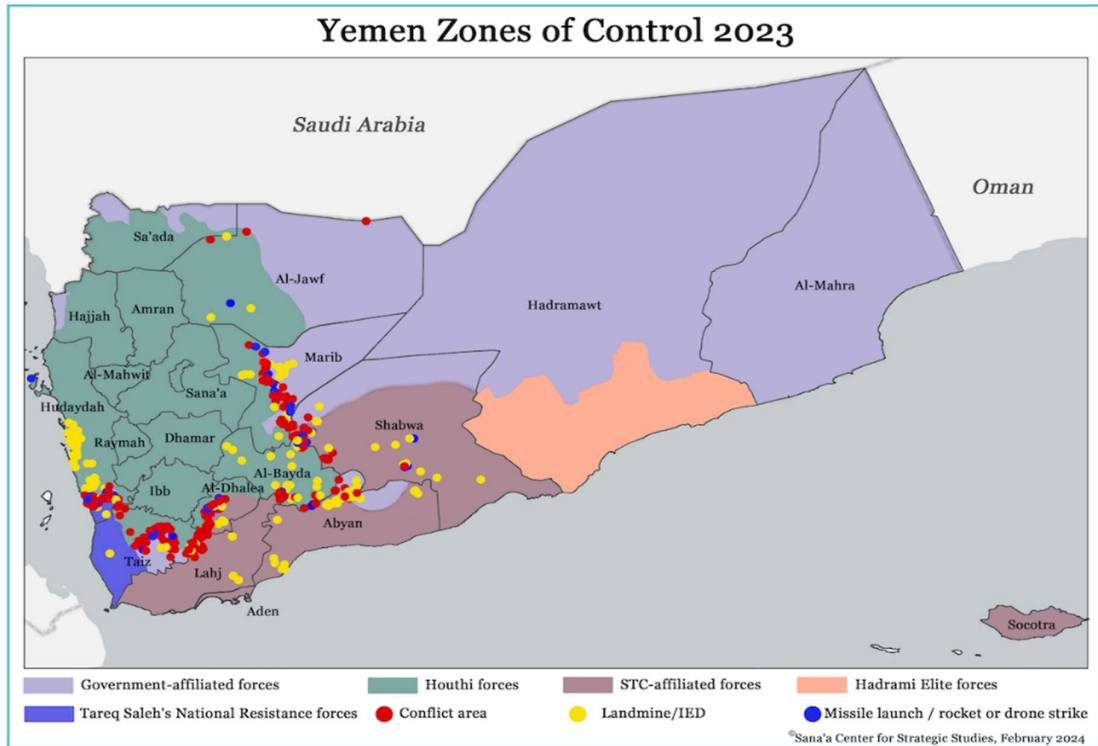


Figure 4.2 The Warring Parties Control 2023-2024

Source: Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies

The Map in Figure 2 shows that the military actions and ceasefire has been stopped due to the current truce. The red dots show the conflicting areas or the frontlines between the Houthi's military forces and Government forces. The Map also shows how Yemen is being divided between five warring parties including, the Houthis (backed by Iran) who controls Sa'ada, Parts of Al-Jawf, Amran, Hajjah, Al-Mahwit, Sana'a, Hudaydah, Raymah, Dhamar, Sana'a, Ibb, Al-Bayda, and parts of Al-Dhalea governorate. The Southern Transition Council (backed by the United Arab Emirates) controls, military, Lahj, Abyan, Shabwa governorates.

The legitimate government controls Al-Jawf, Ma'rib, Hadramout, Al-Mahra, and some parts of other governorates. Tariq Saleh forces control the Taiz governorate and some parts on Tihamah. Hadrami Elite Forces control parts of the Hadramout governorate.

Three months later, Grundberg, after holding a comprehensive discussion with Yemenis and others, he has been convinced for a comprehensive peace approach consists of three major elements, see (S/PV.8929, United Nations, 2021b). These are:

1. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved through piecemeal solutions but through a comprehensive political settlement.
2. Sustainable peace can only be achieved if it represents the interests of diverse Yemenis; both who involved in politics and who do not.
3. Sustainable peace must be supported and coordinated regionally and internationally to ensure peace process and broader stability.

The Truce, which is a “Light at the end of the tunnel”, a statement by the special envoy for Yemen during his briefing in front of the United Nations Security Council (S/PV.9017, United Nations, 2022) by which he was pleased to confirm, after months of bilateral negotiations, a United nations initiative for two-month nationwide renewable truce after six years of war. The Truce come into effect on 2 April 2022, renewable. The two-month truce includes provisions to improve (1) freedom of movement of goods and civilian men and women as well as children, (2) reduction of violence and civilian

causalties (3) re-opening of the Hudaydah port (4) re-opening of Sana'a airport for flights (5) re-opening of roads in Taiz and other frontlines.

The truce has been an economic, political, a social breakthrough after

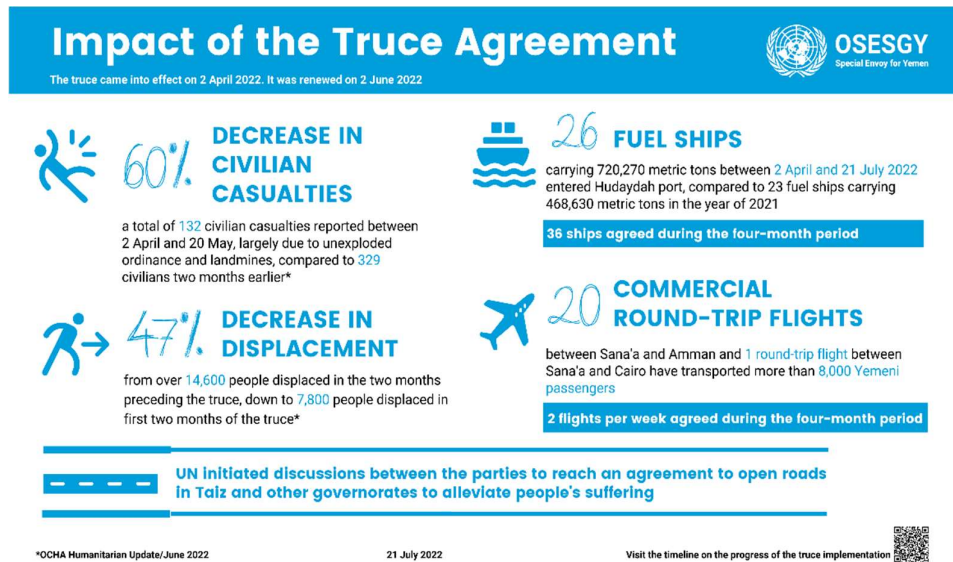


Figure 4.3 Impact of the Truce Agreement

eight-year of persistence fighting between the warring parties and proxies. It decreases civilian casualties, displacement and refugees, as well as asylum seekers, the flow of fuel to all parts of Yemen, and the flights in and out Yemen from Sana'a airport.

4.1.5 UN Envoys Strategies of Mediation

This study utilizes the parameters of mediation and mediation strategies published by Jacob Bercovitch (1992) that consists of three main strategies, each of which consists of sub-strategies. First, **Communication-Facilitation**; make contact with parties, gain trust and confidence of the parties, arrange for interactions between the parties, identify issues and interests, clarify situation,

avoid taking sides, develop a rapport with parties, supply missing information, develop a framework for understanding, encourage meaningful communication, offer positive evaluation, and allow the interests of all parties to be discussed. Second, **Formulation**; choose meeting side, control pace and formality of meetings, control physical environment, establish protocol, suggest procedures, highlight common interests, reduce tensions, control timing, deal with simple issues first, structure agenda, keep parties at the table, help parties save face, and keep process focused on issues. Third, **Manipulation**; change parties' expectations, take responsibility for concessions, make substantive suggestions and proposals, make parties aware of costs of nonagreement, supply and filter information, suggest concessions parties can make, help negotiations to undo a commitment, reward party concessions, help devise a framework for acceptable outcome, change expectations, press the parties to show flexibility, promise resources or threaten withdrawal, and offer to verify compliance with agreement (Bercovitch, 1992, p. 105).

Table 4.2 presents the findings based on parameters on mediation and the mediation strategies theories. In our analysis we used the (✓) to mark if the item was being utilized, to some extent, by the UN envoy in the mediation process in all agreements. If the item is marked with a dash (-), the item is, to some extent, less or not utilized by the UN Envoys. The analysis was conducted based on the three main mediation strategies and their sub-parameters to evaluate the process of negotiation and mediation by the United Nations in the Yemeni conflict since 2011 until 2024.

The findings showed that the first strategy, communication-facilitation received the highest evaluation in percentage ranging from, the lowest 42% to the highest 75%. The second strategy, formulation, received the second level in the evaluation in percentage ranging from, the lowest 38% to the highest 77%. Whereas, the third strategy, manipulation, received the lowest ranking in percentage, ranging from, the lowest 31% to the highest 46%.

Table IV.2 The Mediation Strategies of the United Nations in Mediating the Yemeni Conflict

Parameters of Mediation and Mediation Strategies (Adapted from (Bercovitch, 1992, p. 105).		Talks and Agreements Supervised, facilitated, and Mediated by the UN Envoys (2011–2024)								
		The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative Jamal Bin Omar (facilitator)	The National Dialogue Conference (agreement), Jamal Bin Omar (facilitator)	The Peace and National Partnership Agreement, Jamal Bin Omar (facilitator)	The Kuwait Talks, Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed (facilitator)	Stockholm on (Hudaydah agreement), Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Stockholm on (Prisoners exchange agreement), Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Stockholm on (Taiz Agreement), Martin Griffiths (key mediator)	Riyadh Agreement, Hans Grundberg (supervisor)	United Nations Truce Initiative (extendable), Hans Grundberg (initiator)
Communication-Facilitation	make contact with partis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	gain trust and confidence of the parties	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	arrange for interactions between the parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	identify issues and interests	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	clarify situation	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	avoid taking sides	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	develop a rapport with parties	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	supply missing information	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	develop a framework for understanding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	encourage meaningful communication	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	offer positive evaluation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	allow the interests of all parties to be discussed	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		58%	75%	42%	58%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
u	choose meeting side	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	control pace and formality of meetings	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	control physical environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	establish protocol	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	suggest procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	highlight common interests	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	reduce tensions	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓
	control timing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	deal with simple issues first	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	structure agenda	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	keep parties at the table	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	help parties save face	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	keep process focused on issues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		62%	62%	38%	46%	54%	69%	77%	77%	77%
Manipulation	change parties' expectations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	take responsibility for concessions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	make substantive suggestions and proposals	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	make parties aware of costs of nonagreement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	supply and filter information	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓
	suggest concessions parties can make	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	help negotiations to undo a commitment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	reward party concessions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	help devise a framework for acceptable outcome	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	change expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	press the parties to show flexibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	promise resources or threaten withdrawal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
offer to verify compliance with agreement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		38%	31%	31%	31%	38%	38%	46%	46%	46%

These interesting findings presented in Table 4.1 reflect the fact that the UN envoys are equipped with a great knowledge in conflict mediation especially the communication and formulation side. The manipulation side is challenging for them in the Yemeni context due to several factors that will be discussed in the discussion section to follow.

Based on the special envoys work in Yemen, we were able to determine four strategies that the UN special envoys implemented in their mediation processes in Yemen. They are *persuading*, *facilitating*, *encouraging*, and *forgiving* and can be abbreviated as (PFEF).

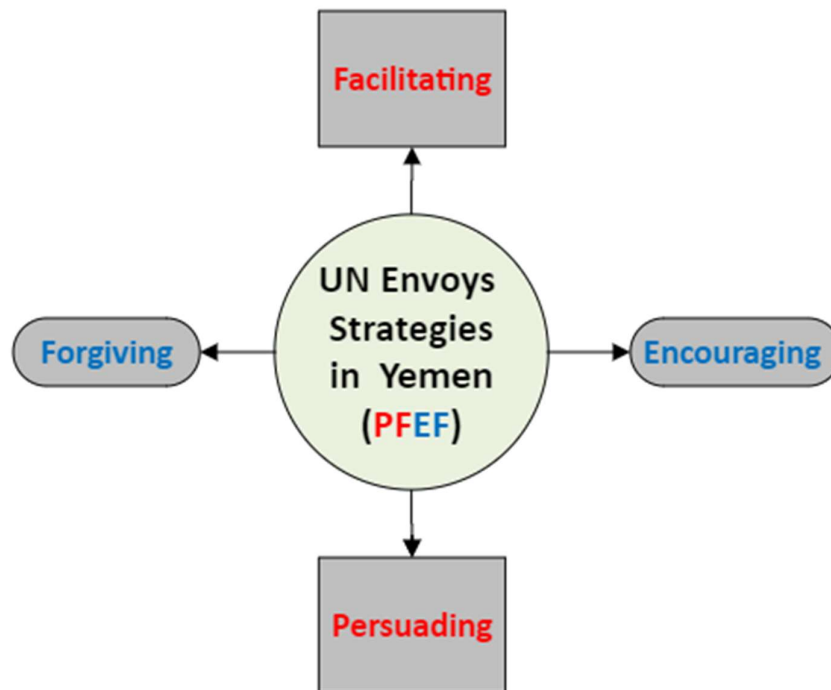


Figure IV.4 The UN Envoys' new strategies in negotiating the Yemeni conflict

The flowchart begins by showing (1) the persuading strategy by which the UN Special envoys engage the conflicting parties in dialogue, (2) Facilitating by which the UN Envoy provides a platform and resources for negotiations, (3) Encouraging by which the UN Special envoy motivate parties to find common ground and compromise, and (4) Forgiving by which the UN Envoy promotes reconciliation and understanding among conflicting parties.

4.2 The Roles and Strategies of the Sultanate of Oman

4.2.1 Mediation Role

Since the breakout of the Yemeni conflict, the Sultanate of Oman does not involve in military actions but it involves in peace talks through two-different stages, namely humanitarian and political. Table 1 presents the Omani role in the Yemeni mediation and negotiation based on secondary and primary data:

Table 4.3 The Roles of the Sultanate of Oman in Mediating the Yemeni Conflict

1.	Humanitarian	As a boarder country with Yemen, Oman opens its doors for Yemenis to seek refuge.	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022, p. 106)
		“... providing much-needed humanitarian assistance”	(Baabood, 2021)
		being a transit country for Yemenis traveling abroad.	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022, p. 106)
		A destination for most of the wounded and injured seek treatments in its hospitals.	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022, p. 106)

2.	Economy	A destination for business owners to invest in the Omani market.	
3.	Politics	A neutral country towards the Yemeni conflict who refused to Join the Saudi-led coalition in 2015.	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Baabood, 2021; Echagüe, 2015; Worrall & Worrall, 2021)
A host country for talks and negotiations between Yemeni-conflict parties.			
A neutral mediator between the proxy conflict parties like Saudi Arabia and Iran.			
A UN facilitator convincing the Houthis for negotiations and truces.			
Hosting direct talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis.			
As peacemaker trying to bring a sustainable resolution of the Yemeni Conflict.			
Prisoners release agreements and or arbitrator in prisoner and hostage exchanges.	(Baabood, 2021; Worrall & Worrall, 2021, p. 144)		
Confidence building by removing obstacles and irritants.	(Worrall & Worrall, 2021, p. 144)		
The role of mediator ‘couriering’ who delivers and holds communications between countries for diplomatic issues.	(Worrall & Worrall, 2021, p. 144)		
While the UN envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed was holding talks	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022)		

		between the parties' conflict to pave the way for the Geneva talks in May 2015, the Sultanate of Oman was hosting a negotiation talks in Muscat between the Houthis and the US concerning the implementation of the Security Council Resolution No. (2216) issued April 14, 2015 that stipulated the withdrew of the Houthis from Sana'a and the cities they seized in 2014.	
		Hosted secret negotiations between the Houthis and the Saudi Arabia in March 2016, and then repeated.	(Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022, p. 106)

Table 1 shows three types of mediation roles on the Yemeni conflict 2011 until the writing of the study. For Yemenis, the sultanate of Oman remains the country of peace and triangularity that maintain 'good neighbor relations' (Baabood, 2021, p. 4).

4.2.2 Strategies of Mediation

A historical context in the relation between the Sultanate of Oman and Yemen determines the current Omani foreign policy and “defining moment in its bilateral relations with neighboring countries” (Baabood, 2021, p. 3). Figure 2 presents the findings concerning the Omani mediation strategies in mediating the Yemeni persistence conflict.

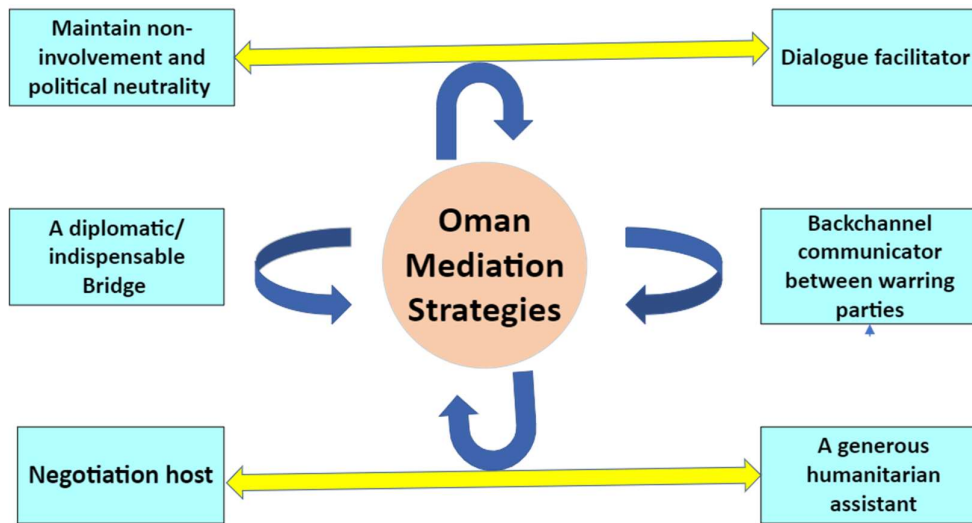


Figure 4.5 Omani Strategies in Mediating the Yemeni Conflict

The six-mediation strategies in Figure 2 illustrates the characteristics of the peacemaking process the Omani foreign policy follows. Each of which completes the other. The most important strategy among the six strategies that many researchers admire is the non-involvement and political neutrality, see (Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Echagüe, 2015; Indahningrum & lia dwi jayanti, 2020; Worrall & Worrall, 2021).

4.2.2.1 Non-involvement and neutrality

The Omani leadership, represented by Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and his successor Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, opposes foreign military intervention in Yemen which allows the Omani foreign policy to be neutral and “promote reconciliation among the warring parties while maintaining good relations with the protagonists, the US, Iran and the GCC” (Baabood, 2021, p. 4). To be precise, there are many factors contribute to the neutrality and non-involvement of the Sultanate of Oman

on the Yemeni conflict, and the best way is to categorize them is based on the theories of International Relations, namely “the constructivism and the traditionalism” (Al Balushi, 2020). From the constructivism point of view factors such as (1) identity, (2) the Omanis Social tolerance, (3) the system of ‘Falaj’; to be concerned about the others’ problems. From the traditional point of view factors such as (1) Forgiveness and pardon based on Islam, (2) trust on dialogue and peace in reducing the situation of the conflict, and (3) avoiding making enemies and enmity.

4.2.2.2 Dialogue Facilitator

This strategy, as it was discussed earlier that the Sultanate of Oman has hosted talks between the warring parties in 1994 during the civil war and has maintained close relation with those parties. During the current conflict, The Sultanate of Oman usually asks for diplomatic and political solutions by hosting official and non-official talks between the Hadi government, the Houthis, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) as well as regional countries involved in the conflict such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and international powers like the United States (US) and some members of the European Union (EU) (Baabood, 2021; Indahningrum & lia dwi jayanti, 2020).

4.2.2.3 A diplomatic indispensable bridge

To be a diplomatic bridge, a mediator, in this case the Sultanate of Oman, is required to maintain relations with national, regional, and

international parties. In the national context, the Sultanate of Oman is able to maintain a good relation with the warring parties in Yemen including the Yemeni legitimate Government, the Houthis (Ansar Allah), the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and other local parties. In the regional context, as Oman is a member of the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC), it should maintain good relations with government involved in the Yemeni conflict such as the Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emarat, and Iran. Internationally, Oman has been as a diplomatic bridge between the Houthis and the United States, and Saudi Arabia and Iran, see (Al Balushi, 2020; Baabood, 2021; Echagüe, 2015).

4.2.2.4 Backchannel Communicator Between Warring Parties

Sometimes, negotiations between conflicting parties ends in a failure. To illustrate that in the context of the backchannel communicator between warring parties strategy, after the negotiations between the Houthis and the Government Side in Geneva, the Houthis delegation team directly headed to the Sultanate of Oman to discuss the failure of the talk. In Oman, the Houthis delegation met the Former Foreign Minister, Yusuf Bin Alawi, where they discussed ways to stop the conflict. Since then, the Oman, through the Ministry of Foreign affairs, began to seek ways to bring the Yemeni warring parties closer for mediation and negotiation under the supervision of the United Nations (Al Balushi, 2020).

4.2.2.5 Negotiation host

The Yemeni crisis seized the opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to be a regional balancer by promoting and hosting dialogue and negotiations between states and non-state actors.

4.2.2.6 A Generous Humanitarian Assistant

In 2015, when the Houthis invade the capital of Yemen and reached the economical city Aden, in the south, many Yemenis fled to various countries including the Sultanate of Oman. Even though Oman has not published exact figures of the total Yemeni refugees in Oman, but research believed that “there are more than 25.000 Yemeni refugees in Oman mainly for southern governorates in Yemen like Hadhramout and Al-Mahrah” (Baabood, 2021, p. 7). In addition, the Sultanate of Oman provides financial aids, food, water, medical supplies and assistance, as well as shelter. From the humanitarian perspective, the Sultanate of Oman facilitates a passage for the Iranian humanitarian aids which is blocked by the Saudi Led coalition. The contribution in the release and exchange of many prisoners and detainees, politicians and their families, detained by militant groups in Yemen. Not only contribute in the release of national detainees but also Oman was able to release international detainees, three Saudis, two Americans and a British national captured by Houthi rebels in September 2015 (Baabood, 2021, p. 7).

These six strategies work altogether to reflect the foreign policy of Oman in dealing with regional and international conflicts, trying to shed peace and conciliation among national warring groups, regional and international powers.

To conclude, the United Nations and the Sultanate of Oman played and still playing a crucial role in the mediations and negotiations between the warring parties in Yemen. To begin with, the United Nations contributed through its four special envoys to Yemen who are utilizing different mediation and negotiation roles and strategies aforementioned in this chapter. Oman, on the other hand, contributed widely in the peacebuilding process, trying to mitigate the conflict and reach a comprehensive conciliation through its smooth foreign politics and the pragmatism of its politicians.

4.3 Reasons Behind the Failure of the Mediation Strategies

After a comprehensive analysis of the Briefings, Resolutions, Press Releases, and the Agreements, Tweets, as well as published articles by the UN Special envoys for Yemen about their mediation strategies for the peacebuilding processes in Yemen, it returns the following reasons that led to a persistence failure of major agreements and talks; (1) the complexity of the Yemeni conflict as well as its context, (2) the mediators' misunderstanding of the Yemeni society, (3) utilizing experts who benefited from the conflict itself, (4) the lack of communication strategies, (5) the inability to conduct pressure upon the regional and international parties, (6) the inability to find a proper mechanism to implement the Resolution 2216, (7) the stubbornness of the warring parties and their unwillingness for concessions, (8) the intervention of regional and

international parties, like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, (9) the persistence counting of the Houthis on military solutions rather than negotiation, (10) the non-involvement of other actors on the negotiations, (11) the lack of commitment to fully implement agreed agreements, and (12) the UN use of bureaucratic strategies than local negotiators.

These twelve-points reflects the weakness of the United Nations special envoys strategies in dealing with the Yemeni conflict.

Al-Eryani, who is a member of the Sana'a Center for Strategies Studies and an advisor to the Special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffith, confirms this:

(...They can commend good behavior, suggest rewards – funding for humanitarian response and early recovery projects – and extend technical support. Above all, they can recommend international recognition for parties to the conflict. Special envoys can also point out bad behavior, reveal misdeeds, uncover criminal acts and recommend sanctions. Perhaps most importantly, they also shape the international community's perception of the warring parties. While peace cannot be achieved until the parties are ready for it, a skilled UN envoy can create the conditions for peace by using these various tools to change the calculus of the warring parties so that peace becomes more profitable than war (Al-iryani, 2021, p. 24).

The findings of this study confirm the UN role in Yemen through its intervene in mediating the Yemeni conflict politically, economic, and through humanitarian assistance. Unlike other conflicts, the Yemeni conflict has been described by the United Nations special envoys to Yemen through their briefings as a complex task, see Jamal ben Omar' briefing S/pv.7381 (United Nations, 2015), and Hans Grundberg briefing's S/pv.8854 , who puts it this way four days after his appointment as Special Envoy for Yemen;

(... my experience with Yemen also makes me painfully aware of the complexities of this conflict. Unfortunately, those complexities multiply as the conflict drags on. I am therefore under no illusions about the difficulty of the task handed to me by the Council. Enabling a resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people, as mandated by the Council, will not be easy. There are no quick wins.(United Nations, 2021a))

4.4 Discussion

This study aimed at revealing the roles of the international mediators, namely the Sultanate of Oman and the United Nations. Research have been done on mediation and mediation strategies concerning the Yemeni context (Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Alkhataf, 2019; Baabood, 2021; Brehony, 2020; Echagüe, 2015; Nyadera & Kisaka, 2020; Palik J & Rustad S, 2019; Ramani, 2020; Riedel, 2020; Vatanka, 2020; Worrall & Worrall, 2021; Zyck, 2014). These studies are important as they tried to come up with a clear framework that the UN special envoys utilized in Yemen and might be used in other conflicts. However, none of these studies have a clear conclusion due to the complexity of the conflict and the persistence failure of the negotiations and agreements. The findings of this study are going to be discussed in line with previous empirical studies, literature on negotiation, mediation, and peacebuilding, and other points of views to come up with a comprehensive.

First, the United Nations is the main international channel for keeping peace and security in conflicting zones as well as disputes settlements worldwide (Peck, 1988, p. 413) through its special Envoys who are extraordinary mediators carrying with them full diplomatic weight of the International community as well as an array of carrots and sticks (Al-iryani, 2021, p. 24).

In addition, the findings concludes that the United Nations' mediation or 'good offices' (Peck, 2010, p. 1) intervention is through facilitating Agreement and Talks, issuing resolutions, and empowering the dialogue or any progress through the General Security Statements within the United Nation's three main-dispute settlement system, namely the power-based approach represented by the Security Council, the right-based approach represented by the International Court of Justice, and the Interest-based approach represented by the Secretary-General and his Representatives (Peck, 1988, p. 413).

Regarding the *talks and agreements*, it is obvious that The United Nations intervened at the beginning of the conflict in 2011 through its special envoy Jamal ben Omar who has supervised, facilitated, and initiated three main agreements between the warring parties in Yemen, namely the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the National Dialogue Conference, and the Peace and National Partnership Agreement. Each of which ends with a failure to deliver a peace process.

Considering the three factors such as 'balancing asymmetric power between the parties, deciding who to include in the negotiation process, and identifying issues and agreeing on an agenda' (Peck, 1988) are major motives on the failure of Jamal Ben Omar's mediations. In his Interview with Peck, Egeland (2001) as cited in (Peck, 1988, p. 424) put it this way 'dealing with asymmetric parties, usually it is a strong government and weak insurgency, but it can be a weak government and a strong insurgency. This asymmetry can lead to moral

dilemma, because if one side is strong, the agreement may end up more favorable to the strong party'. Concerning the power balance, the military balance between the military forces of the Yemeni Government and the militia group 'the Houthis' was not equal; for sure the government's military is the biggest portion. However, this power has been fragmented and its loyalty has been divided between parties and powerful elite who serve internal and foreign interests. This serves the Houthis to be strong insurgency as they began to control important key governments, have the power in the ground to control government institutions, and later the Capital of Yemen Sana'a. When it comes to the second factor *deciding who to include in the negotiation process*, at the first phases of the negotiations, Jamal ben Omar and the GCC, altogether, ignored to involve the Houthis and well as the Southern Hirak in the negotiations, by the Houthis push forward their power towards the capital and the Southern Hirak demands a separation from the North 'deunification'. Concerning the third factor *identifying issues and agreeing on an agenda*, each of these margined groups have

The findings of this study consider the implementation mechanism of GCC initiative, the 'outcome document' of the NDC, the Peace Partnership Agreement is weak and was the hardest task to the Special envoy to Yemen Jamal ben Omar. Research in support of the weakness of the Jamal be Omar implementation mechanism to yield smooth transition, see (Dashela, 2021). Experts in mediation suggests that agreements should be followed by mechanism to manage the inevitable disagreements that might arise during the implementation. Thus, even through the GCC initiative was partially

implemented, it worsens the situation than protects the transaction because it did not include ‘how power will be shared’ (Peck, 1988, p. 430) among all parties including the Youth, the Houthis, and the Southern Hirak. It must be that, Jamal ben Omar, had better carried ongoing negotiations with raising parties during the peacekeeping phase to ensure that new problems will not emerge and affect the implementation mechanism. That is way ‘a strong political structure should be established to manage the peace process,’ for example, in Mozambique, the Supervision and Monitoring Commission was composed of the two parties, as well as representatives of the Organization of Arican Union OAU, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States and chaired by Ajello, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Peck, 1988, p. 430). Therefore, our concern for this issue might be treated within the United Nations’ mediation manual that states that in order to resolve a dispute it is recommended to start ‘at early stage, before it turns into violent conflict, when issues are fewer and more specific; parties more defined; positions less hardened; relationships less damaged; and emotions more contained’ (Peck, 2010, p. 5).

These mediation slips might be seen also in the mediation of Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed during the Kuwait negotiations. The truth must be said that he was able to gain the international attention and support towards the Yemeni conflict and bring the warring parties for negotiations in another atmosphere, outside Yemen. However, his framework for negotiation faced many obstacles as the conflict went beyond the local warring parties to contain international and regional warring parties and proxies, for example Saudi Arabia and Iran, United

States of America and Russia and China. To overcome this complexity, the especial envoy has to ‘establish public commitment in signing agreements, gain support from Friends of the Security-general, and work with regional and sub-regional organizations’ (Peck, 1988, p. 427). Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed was able to gain a regional support like the Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait and International support like the European Union. These states provided him with resources, ideas, and diplomatic assistance to take an advantage to conduct pressure over the warring parties.

When the Martin Griffiths applied these techniques in his mediation in Stockholm, he was able to conduct pressure over the warring parties, the Yemeni government and the Houthis, to sign the Hudaydah agreement. However, deciding who to include in the process of negotiation is the biggest challenge for Jamal ben Omar, Ismail Ould Shiekh Ahmed, And Martic Griffiths (Al-iryani, 2021; Dashela, 2021; Peck, 1988). This issue of, whether to include all the parties, social activists, society representatives or not in a negotiation table or a mediator includes only the groups with guns, still controversial among the experts on international negotiation (Peck, 1988, 2010; Peck & Wertheim, 2014). Experts, who watches with a close eyes towards the Yemeni conflict suggest that the UN envoys should include sufficient representatives of various Yemeni stakeholders in the peace negotiations (Al-iryani, 2021; Dashela, 2021), but Martin Griffiths reduced the multi-layered Yemen conflict to the most visible and powerful actors; the Ansar Allah (the Houthis) and the legitimate Government neglecting the Southern Transitional Council in Aden (Al-iryani, 2021, p. 24).

Our findings confirm that, Hans Grundberg is a promising mediator in mediating the Yemeni current conflict due to his interests and knowledge on the Yemeni affairs precedes his appointment as special envoy. However, many issues worth discussion here. One of the most important points in our finding that attracts our study is his openness to evaluate previous Envoys efforts to learn from their mistakes. An advantage for him is that the warring parties are obvious than his predecessors in the sense that the conflict ranged it climax and has determined all the powerful and less powerful powers, and elites and proxies. Utilizing the international support from the United States and the European Union, Hans has to deal with the parties' issues in a clever way to reach a comprehensive settlement focusing on the security and military aspects; the Southern Transition Council demands to revise the Resolution No. 2210, the Houthis demands the cessation of the coalition's military operations led by Saudi Arabia, and the Islah party as well as the legitimate government demand him to begin from where his predecessors had left (Dashela, 2021, p. 46). However, the Yemenis has a big hope evidenced by the running of the current truce, the peace might be formed within the corridors of the UN council because research insists that 'the permanent members in the UN' Council frequently pursue their geopolitical interests resulted in different standards applied to some different situations' (Peck, 1988, p. 414).

From the international theory concerning the third-party intervention in the internal affairs of other country, it is challenging to convince the so many warring parties, for example, the Houthis backed by Iran, the Southern Transition Council backed by the United Arab Emirates, the Islah party backed from Turkey, the

legitimate government backed by Saudi Arabia. However, thanks to China, the peace deal between the Saudi Arabia and Iran has positively signifies the peace process in Yemen and a ceasefire truce. This study urges the Special envoy to size the opportunity and move forward in the peace process utilizing the international support and the peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as proxy warring parties, to strictly implement the recognized international three references, namely the GCC initiative, the outcomes of the NDC, and the Resolution No. 2216 (Dashela, 2021, p. 48).

Concerning world's largest humanitarian crisis in Yemen, as it is related to the political and economic conflict and the major side effect of the war, many countries consider it an essential to maintain peace in Yemen to be stable, peaceful, and prosperous nation in the Middle East due to its importance in the world peace and trading. For example, the United Kingdom and the Northern Ireland are among the countries who announced their humanitarian assistance to help vulnerable people in Yemen through the United Nation agencies working in Yemen, for more details on humanitarian solutions on Yemen see (Nuzulia, 1967).

Second, unlike the other Gulf states, the Sultanate of Oman played a significant role in the Yemeni conflict through its smooth and comprehensive mediation and negotiation. Its mission is characterized as neutral towards the Yemeni conflict (Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Baabood, 2021; Echagüe, 2015; Indahningrum & lia dwi jayanti, 2020; Worrall & Worrall, 2021). The sultanate of Oman usually refuses foreign military intervention and promote for reconciliation among the warring

factions utilizing its ideational factors and pragmatism of its foreign policy (Baabood, 2021, p. 4). The history of Omani mediation in the Yemeni conflict refers to the era of Yemeni civil war in 1994 when the Sultan Gaboos bin Said invited the president of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh and his Vice president Ali Salim Al Beidh to Salalah, in Oman, to discuss negotiations between them, see (Baabood, 2021, p. 3).

Our findings state three main roles played by the Sultanate of Oman in the Yemeni conflict, namely a humanitarian role, an economy role, and a political role, respectively. To begin with, the sultanate of Oman opened its doors for the Yemenis who seek refuge and being a transit country for both the Yemeni people and the Houthis to leave for negotiations abroad before the current Truce and the opening of the Sana'a airport. More importantly, Oman provides unlimited humanitarian assistance, financially, medically, and direct assistance. Most of the Yemeni soldiers, from all warring parties, as well as civilians left for Oman for treatment in its hospitals. Business owners has moved their investment to Oman and the Omani government facilitated the Yemenis with investment opportunities.

Politically, the Sultanate of Oman stands neutral through the Yemeni conflict. Oman refused to join the Saudi-led coalition launched in 15 March 2015. The first role is a negotiation that took place in Oman in May 2015 between the Houthis and the United States side to implement the Resolution No. 2216 which stipulated the Houthis' withdrawal for Sana'a and other governorates while the UN envoy, Ismail Ould Syeikh Ahmed was preparing for the Geneva Talks. The

second role is when the Houthis delegation returned from the Geneva talks, where they met with the Former Omani Foreign Minister to discuss the failure of the Geneva talks and find ways to stop the armed conflict. These two events paved the way for the Omani side to be involved as a negotiation facilitator and a mediator at the same time. The third role was played when the Saudis searched for a communication channel with the Houthis in May 2016, Oman was the best choice, which hosted secret negotiations in Muscat between the Houthis and the Saudi Side. Hence, the Omani role gain more importance than before. The fourth role when the Houthis hosted the second meeting between the Houthis and US officials led by the former US secretary of State, John Kerry in November 2016, and the third meeting between the same parties in February 2018 that took place in Muscat. These roles made Oman to be the center for negotiations between the Houthis and local, regional, and international warring parties. The fifth role is during the Stockholm agreement concerning the implementation mechanism of the Hudaydah agreement about lifting sanctions on its city and Ports, Oman hosted negotiations between the British Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt and the prominent Houthi leaders in Muscat, March 2019. Further roles took place in Muscat, where the UN envoy conducted instant visits to Oman in 2020 to discuss the revival of the peace process in Yemen, the release of two American citizens held by the Houthis and returning the body of another American after his death in captivity, and the release of two hundred wounded Houthis stranded in Oman.

During the new US administration in 2021, Joe Biden, the new president of the United States urged the Saudi coalition to be stopped in Yemen, and he who

preventing selling weapons for Saudi Arabia. Therefore, Saudi Arabia presented a proposal for ceasefire in Yemen through holding direct meetings between the US delegates and the Houthis in Oman in March 2021. However, because of the unwillingness of each party to concede to the other, the Houthis continued to insist on the need to lift the naval and air blockade of Yemen, while the Saudi side feared that such a step would lead to strengthening the Houthis' position and supporting them with more weapons and equipment from the Iranians (France 24, 2021) as cited in (Dashela, 2021, p. 107).

As the Saudis showed flexibility (Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Baabood, 2021), on March 30, 2021, the Sultanate of Oman announced that it is working in a comprehensive framework for peace in Yemen. However, and as usual, the unwillingness of the warring parties; the Houthis demanded a complete lift of the ports and airports, and the rejection of the legitimate government and the Saudi-led Coalition due to the Houthis strikes on the Saudi depth, and the attacks targeting the city of Ma'rib, Yemen. Therefore, negotiations failed. According to the Emirates Policy Center that these trending issues made Oman a hub for frequent visits by Officials from the US (US envoy to Yemen, Timothy Lenderking), UN envoy (Martin Griffiths) and Saudi Arabia (The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal ben Farhan), and the Houthis to discuss solutions for those issues including unlimited access of the humanitarian needs to all parties, the opening of Sana'a airport, and the ports of Hudaydah as well as a permanent ceasefire (Emirates PolicyCenter, 2021).

Regarding the Omani's political strategies in dealing with the Yemeni conflict, empirical research (Al-iryani, 2021; Al-Sunaidi et al., 2022; Al Balushi, 2020; Al Qaz, 2022; Echagüe, 2015; Indahningrum & lia dwi jayanti, 2020; Worrall & Worrall, 2021) supports our findings that neutrality in one of the most strategies that made Oman a diplomatic communication bridge between warring parties; local, regional, and international proxies, by hosting negotiations and/or facilitate or mediate the Yemeni conflict. In addition, the Sultanate of Oman became a backchannel communicator between warring parties when negotiations being stalled. For example, Oman revives the negotiations between the Saudi side and the Houthis, and the US and the Houthis in different phases, and conducting intensive visits to Sana'a to convince the Houthis to sign an agreement with

Saudis to end the ceasefires and the Houthis drone strikes that threatened the second-largest petroleum company in the world ARAMCO.

Figure 4.6 Saudi Delegates Arrived in Sana'a to Meet the Houthis



Source: 2 Sana'a Center for Strategies Studies

Figure 5.6 shows the President of the Houthi-run Supreme Political Council, Mahdi al-Mashat, receiving the Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed be al-Jaber during a visit by a Saudi-Omani delegation to the Republican Palace in the Capital Sana'a on April 9, 2023 (Center for Strategic Studies, 2023, p. 5).

4.5 Conclusion

The United Nations and the Sultanate of Oman played a crucial role in the negotiations and mediation of the Yemeni conflict. Regarding the roles of the UN envoys, the chapter concludes that different experiences resulted in different

negotiations and mediation frameworks evidenced from the evaluation of the four-
envoys' strategies utilized in Yemen. Hence, the persistence failure of the
agreements between the warring parties might be referred to the warring parties'
unwillingness to fully implement the outcomes of the agreements, the lack of
utilizing the manipulation strategy to ensure a mandatory mechanism and
subjugate all the signed parties to implement the signed agreement, and the less
capability of some special envoys to garner the international support for the peace
in Yemen. On the contrary, the Sultanate of Oman stands behind the UN' efforts
in Yemen by being neutral to all warring parties and support the negotiations
directly and indirectly to maintain stability of its neighbor country, Yemen.