

YEMEN- A FRAGILE STATE AND OVERRIDING INTERNATIONAL STAKES

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ABSTRACT

YEMEN- A FRAGILE STATE AND OVERRIDING INTERNATIONAL STAKES

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The Yemeni conflict, often referred to as the century's worst man-made humanitarian disaster, has caused an unprecedented crisis that has left millions of people suffering from famine, disease, and violence. The conflict has been exacerbated by the involvement of various international stakeholders, each with their own competing geopolitical interests, ultimately devolving into a full-scale civil war. These foreign powers have provided support to different factions within the conflict, often leading to an escalation of violence and suffering for the civilian population. Additionally, the ongoing competition for influence and control in the region has hindered efforts to reach a diplomatic resolution to the war. The situation is further complicated by the involvement of non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, who have taken advantage of the chaos to gain a foothold in the country. Overall, the competing interests and actions of international stakeholders have greatly contributed to the prolongation and intensification of the war in Yemen. While acknowledging the importance of internal dynamics in a civil conflict, this thesis aims to explore the role of overriding international stakes in the escalation of the conflict in Yemen. The study will analyze the involvement of major regional and global powers, under the lens of neorealist theories of offensive realism and international actors and internal conflicts, focusing on the strategic objectives, alliances, and the complex web of interests that prolonged the war. By examining the historical context, socio-political dynamics, and the role of

regional and international actors, this study seeks to highlight the importance of international dynamics in civil conflict and infer that potential solution to end the war is the reconciliation of international actors involved.

Keywords: Yemen Civil War, humanitarian disaster, geopolitical interests, international stakeholders, strategic objectives

ÖZ

YEMEN- KIRILGAN BİR DEVLET VE ULUSLARARASI AKTÖRLERİN MÜDAHALESİ

BANO, Madiya

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Genellikle yüzyılın en kötü insan yapımı insani felaketi olarak anılan Yemen çatışması, milyonlarca insanı kıtlık, hastalık ve şiddetten mustarip bırakan benzeri görülmemiş bir krize neden oldu. Çatışma, aralarında jeopolitik çıkar çatışması olan çeşitli uluslararası paydaşların müdahil olmasıyla daha da kötüleşti ve sonunda bir iç savaşa dönüştü. Bu yabancı güçler, çatışma içindeki farklı gruplara destek sağladı ve bu da genellikle sivil nüfus için şiddetin ve ıstırapın artmasına neden oldu. Ayrıca bölgede süregelen etki ve kontrol rekabeti, savaşa diplomatik bir çözüm bulma çabalarını engelledi. Ülkede tutunmak için kaostan yararlanan terörist gruplar gibi devlet dışı aktörlerin devreye girmesi durumu daha da karmaşık hale getirdi. Genel olarak, uluslararası paydaşların çatışan çıkarları ve eylemleri, Yemen'deki savaşın uzamasına ve yoğunlaşmasına büyük ölçüde katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu tez, bir sivil çatışmada iç dinamiklerin önemini kabul ederken, Yemen'deki çatışmanın tırmanmasında uluslararası aktörlerin rolünü keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, stratejik hedeflere, ittifaklara ve savaşı uzatan karmaşık çıkarlar ağına odaklanarak, Saldırgan Neo-Realizmi ile uluslararası aktörler ve iç çatışmalar literatürünü kullanarak, büyük bölgesel ve küresel güçlerin müdahalesini analiz edecek. Bu çalışma, tarihsel bağlamı, sosyo-politik dinamikleri ve bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerin rolünü inceleyerek, uluslararası dinamiklerin iç çatışmadaki önemini

vurgulamayı ve savaşı sona erdirmek için olası çözümün ilgili uluslararası aktörlerin uzlaşmasını gerektirdiği sonucuna varmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yemen İç Savaşı, insani felaket, jeopolitik çıkarlar, uluslararası paydaşlar, stratejik hedefler

To My Dear Mom and Dad

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQAP	Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula
CAAT	Campaign Against Arms Trade
CIMP	Civilian Impact monitoring Project
EVI	Economic Vulnerability Index
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
FSI	Fragile State Index
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Levant and Syria
NLF	National Liberation Front
NSA	Non-State Actor
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
STC	Southern Transnational Council
TIV	Trend Indicator Value
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program Human
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USSR	Union Soviet Socialist Republics
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WB	World Bank
YEMAC	Yemeni Executive Mine Action Centre
YDP	Yemen Data Project

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Yemen, a country with geo-strategically pivotal location at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is wracked by the civil war and plunged in one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history. The civil war began in 2014 as a domestic power struggle, however there is more to the quagmire that Yemen has been trapped in for decades.¹ The Yemeni conflict is a complex and multifaceted war that has grown increasingly intractable due to the convergence of various geopolitical interests. As the poorest country in the Middle East, Yemen has become the battleground for the competing agendas of regional and global powers, leading to a devastating humanitarian crisis and widespread regional destabilization.

The thesis analyzes the core issues which are responsible for the prolongation of war and sheds light on various parties complicit in this war. While acknowledging the internal weaknesses, the study aims to explore the role of overriding international stakes in the escalation of the conflict in Yemen. By examining the involvement of major regional and global powers and their strategic objectives, alliances, and interests, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors have intensified the violence and prolonged the war. This study analyses the role of international actors from under the lens of neorealist theories of offensive realism pioneered by John Mearsheimer and theory of international actors and internal conflicts by John Stedman. While classic realism emphasizes the role of domestic factors in conflicts, neorealism emphasizes the role of international system in determining the state behavior. As the study focuses more on the implications of external interventions in the trajectory of internal conflicts, the choice of neorealist framework can be justified.

¹ Global Conflict Tracker. "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker," February 7, 2023. <https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen>.

1.1. Background of the Yemeni crisis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is introductory, in which the approach to the research will be explained. In this chapter, I will also talk about why Yemen is so important for the stakeholders involved with a focus on its economic and strategic significance. Then, the implications of war in terms of food insecurity and access will be considered, followed by the brief discussion of how the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the plight of Yemenis with broken health infrastructure and lack of food. In a nutshell, the introduction will end with shedding light on the forgotten victims of the war and evaluate the humanitarian cost of the crisis using facts and figures.

The second chapter of the thesis is further divided into six subparts. This chapter basically provides the historical context and contends how Yemen's historical experiences over the course of centuries rendered it a fragile state. This will be analyzed with the help of weak state literature. To prove this claim in the first part, I will briefly talk about the clash of ideologies and the evolution of Zaydism, which eventually became a major force in Yemeni politics through the Ansarallah movement. Although, Islam is the religion for almost all of Yemen, the religion itself suffers from a historical divide with different ideologies and all these different ideologies play out in the transformation of Yemeni society. Then the second part of this chapter describes how North and South Yemen are quite different from each and were never one state, unlike the case of two Koreas. The next part explains the unification process and the subsequent challenges that evolved with it. The weak societal fabric, ideological differences between North and South Yemen and perceived marginalization of the Houthis paved the way for the Ansarallah movement which erupted in the violent insurgency in Yemen. The first Houthi insurgency took place in 2004 when the Houthi leader was assassinated by the pro-Government forces, prompting a radicalization of the movement.²

² McKernan, Bethan. "Who Are the Houthis and Why Are They Fighting the Saudi Coalition in Yemen?" the Guardian, November 21, 2018.

Up until the Arab spring, the Houthi and government forces were involved in on and off battles and attacks at each other's strongholds. The movement was emboldened by the Arab Spring and Houthis played a significant role in rallying the Yemeni society against the government. For two years, the Yemeni government tried to pacify the situation by promising several reforms, however, it was insufficient to appease the Houthis, who eventually took over the capital city of Sana'a in 2014, forcing the then President Saleh to flee to Saudi Arabia.³

This is where the third chapter begins when Yemen's status plunged from fragile to broken. The Houthi takeover of Sana'a was critical in dunking the country to endless war as it alarmed the neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's desire to reinstall the government and drive out Houthis from Sana'a propelled it to use immense force and weapons in Yemen. Owing to their common religious alignment, Houthis maintained strong ties with Shii Iran and hence Iran vowed to support Houthis against Saudi Arabia. The first part of this chapter presents a brief overview of the Yemeni Civil War which was fueled by external intervention and internal conflicts. In light of this, sectarian divisions, tribalism, and its impact on the conflict will be discussed. Furthermore, the socio-economic factors such as the contest to annex the oil resources for funding the respective propaganda and the interests will be highlighted. The second part of this chapter is an attempt to garner attention to the forgotten victims of the war, the innocent civilians. It begins with evaluation of the humanitarian cost of the conflict and the role of international organizations. The war has hit the civilians the worst-displacement, forced disappearances and refugee crisis has impacted millions of Yemenis. The war has also taken a toll on critical infrastructure causing food insecurity, famine and impacting the healthcare system. The last part of this chapter discusses the role of international organizations in addressing conflict. Hence, the previous chapter explains how over the course of centuries, Yemen evolved as a fragile state, while this chapter informs how in less than a decade, it became a broken state.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/21/who-are-the-houthis-fighting-the-saudi-led-coalition-in-yemen>.

³ Teed, Paul. "Saleh Flees to Saudi Arabia after Palace Rocket Attack." Saleh flees to Saudi Arabia after palace rocket attack, June 5, 2011. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/saleh-flees-to-saudi-arabia-after-palace-rocket-attack-pcw3nrw0tk5>.

The fourth chapter focuses on the external power intervention which includes the analysis of regional and extra-regional actors. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the involvement of the three main regional actors namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. This section highlights how the quest for regional domination motivates the involvement of regional actors in the conflict, exacerbating the crisis. This part, studied under the neorealist framework of offensive realism addresses the question of how the regional actors worsen the conflict. In the first subsection of this section, the Saudi Iranian geopolitical rivalry will be analyzed with theoretical frameworks like offensive realism, balance of power and the desire to pursue regional hegemony. A brief examination of the evolution and play out of this rivalry in the region and its overall impact on middle eastern politics with reference to the events in Bahrain, Iraq, Syria and eventually Yemen will also be included. Although cases of different countries will be discussed, it is only to provide the context to the intensification of this rivalry, the focal point of the analysis remains Yemen.

To analyze the regional geopolitical rivalry, this section is further divided into three parts. Each part focuses on the involvement of different actors namely, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE. Although Saudi Arabia and Iran are the two significant regional actors, involved in years of bitter rivalry, a subsection for UAE is dedicated for the fact that its involvement in the Yemeni conflict has significantly increased over the years owing to its strategic interests which will be discussed in the third section of this chapter. The first part will evaluate the Saudi support to the regime, with reference to the underlying rationale, that is, why supporting the regime is in the interest of Saudi Arabia. The second part highlights the Iranian support to the Houthis, with reference to the underlying rationale and nature of support- logistics, training, weapons (especially the Iranian drones) et cetera. Finally, the last part of this subsection sheds light on the newcomer regional actor, the UAE, who actively participates in the Yemeni conflict. For its size, its active participation in this war is of keen interest. Under the lens of status seeking approach, the Emirati aspirations, the faction that it supports and why, will be discussed.

The next part of this chapter underscores the overriding international stakes in the war, focusing on the extra-regional and global actors. The theory of offensive realism can be extended to analyze the presence of extra-regional actors in the conflict; however, the analysis can be supplemented with Stedman's *internal conflicts and international actors' theory*. The first subsection of this part focuses on the Global power's involvement in Yemen with an emphasis on geopolitical interests. The second subsection of this chapter estimates the military balance to shed light on the complicity of international actors in the war. For this analysis, extensive information from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)'s databases have been extracted. SIPRI compares data on the volume of international transfers of major conventional weapons using a common unit known as trend-indicator value (TIV). The TIV is based on the known unit production costs of a core set of weapons and is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer.⁴

To understand the arms trade in the war, I have chosen to discuss arms imports to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Yemen between 2011-2013 and 2014-2021. Comparing these statistics help relate the exponential increase in the second phase as a direct testament to escalation of war. This part will also include the analysis of arms deals with major suppliers- USA, UK, Russia, Canada, and China. In the first subsection, the western support to the Saudi-UAE coalition is discussed. Drawing from the military balance, it is evident that the major arms suppliers to Saudi Arabia are western countries like Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom, and USA. There are other countries too like Slovakia, Serbia among others, however for the sake of brevity and focus, I have considered only the countries with significant arms export or combat weapons export. The next section discusses the Russo-Sino arms support to Iran which is transferred to the Houthis.

⁴ DataBank. "Glossary," 2012. <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/world-development-indicators/series/MS.MIL.MPRT.KD>.

The first section of chapter four concluded with the playout of regional rivalry, from the second section, it can be inferred that the Yemeni conflict also lies at the heart of great power competition of East versus West, only that it has not garnered much attention that it deserves. The third section of this chapter underlines the motivations for the involvement of international stakeholders. This section identifies economic and strategic interests as prime motivating factors. A brief overview of US policy from under Obama, then Trump and then the Biden administration is presented to underline how differently US administration approached the conflict in the face of changing world order. Under the subsection of competition for resource acquisition, the natural resources and their abundance is discussed with facts and in the next subsection, the most critical factor of the trade routes, with reference to the Bab al-Mandab strait and the Gulf of Aden is discussed.

Finally, the concluding chapter is divided into four sections. The first section underlines the key findings of the research. It also maps the findings of the research with the thesis objectives stated in the first chapter. The second section presents the current developments in the regional political arena. Recently, there have been some very positive developments in the wake of the crisis which include the Chinese-brokered peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia and Oman-brokered prisoner swap deal between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis.⁵ This section is critical as these developments have the potential to change the course of war or even end it if the opportunities presented are effectively capitalized upon by the stakeholders involved with intelligence and strategic thinking. Besides, the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian crisis has profound implications for the Yemeni war, and it has already started to show its repercussions in terms of food insecurity. The third section of this chapter highlights the challenges that obstruct the resolution of the crisis and how the several efforts of truce and de-escalation have failed so far due to the conflicting interests of the stakeholders involved. And the last section of this chapter underlines the prospects for Yemen and the possible post-war reconstruction in the country, thus paving way for further research.

1.2. Scope and objectives of the study

The relevance of the research question- “How overriding international stakes exacerbate the war in Yemen?” lies in the ongoing nature of the Yemeni conflict and the global attention it has garnered due to its catastrophic humanitarian consequences. With the United Nations describing the situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, it is crucial to understand the underlying factors that have contributed to the escalation and perpetuation of the conflict. The scope of this study is to analyze the role of external actors in perpetuating the conflict in Yemen. It aims to identify the various political, economic, and strategic interests that drive international involvement in Yemen and how these interests affect the conflict.

The study will also examine the different international actors involved in the Yemen conflict, including regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as global powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. It will explore the different ways in which these actors are involved in the conflict, including military intervention, arms sales, diplomatic efforts, and humanitarian aid. As the conflict has increasingly become a proxy war for competing regional and global powers, the outcome of the war could have significant implications for the balance of power in the Middle East and beyond.

While acknowledging the intricacies of internal dynamics, the objective of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how international stakes are influencing the Yemen conflict and to highlight the challenges of finding a sustainable solution to the conflict amidst conflicting international interests.

⁵ Saudi, Omani envoys hold peace talks with Houthi leaders in Yemen | Houthis News | Al Jazeera. “Saudi, Omani Envoys Hold Peace Talks with Houthi Leaders in Yemen,” April 9, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/9/saudi-omani-envoys-in-yemen-for-peace-talks-with-houthi-leaders>.

1.3. Significance of Research

The research on "How overriding international stakes exacerbate the war in Yemen" is significant for several reasons.

Firstly, the conflict in Yemen is one of the most complex and protracted conflicts in the world today, and it has resulted in significant humanitarian suffering, with millions of people displaced and in need of urgent assistance. Understanding the role of external actors in perpetuating the conflict is critical to finding a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Secondly, the conflict in Yemen has significant regional and global implications. It has become a proxy battleground for regional powers, with Saudi Arabia and Iran supporting opposing sides in the conflict. The involvement of global powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom has further complicated the conflict and raised questions about their role in promoting peace and stability in the region.

Thirdly, the study will contribute to the academic and policy debates on the relationship between international interests and conflict. It will provide insights into the ways in which external actors pursue their interests in conflict settings and the implications of these actions for conflict resolution.

All in all, an exhaustive analysis of the Yemeni conflict would not only bring attention to the so-called forgotten war but also help identify the bottlenecks in the conflict resolution. This would guide the international organizations, stakeholders, policymakers, and political leaders to work together on finding sustainable solutions to achieve peace in Yemen and ultimately bring an end to the sufferings of the Yemeni people and perhaps create a promising future for the innocent Yemeni children.

1.4. Methodology

To address the research question, this study employs a qualitative research methodology, relying on primary and secondary sources, including academic articles, books, government reports, and data from international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The research is conducted through a combination of

content analysis, case studies, and comparative analysis to examine the various dimensions of the Yemeni conflict and the role of overriding international stakes. I also interviewed several of my fellow colleagues from Middle East Technical University and their friends and relatives back in Yemen to understand the challenges they face in their everyday lives and how they see this conflict.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: A FRAGILE STATE

Yemen is a complex and fragile state due to the clash of different ideologies. Political, ethnic, religious, and geographical divides have dug deep trenches in society on several levels throughout the country. Despite the existence of legislation and institutions that facilitate political representation and participation, the absence of any authentic political affiliation has created a power vacuum that various actors are trying to take advantage of to advance their respective interests.

Political Islam, as represented by the Houthi movement, is a major ideological force in Yemen. The Houthis are a primarily Zaidi Shia faction that has been at odds with the government for decades. The Houthis have been fighting against the government, which is supported by Sunni Arab powers, predominantly Saudi Arabia and the West, and have taken control of the capital, Sana'a, and much of the north.

The Southern Transitional Council (STC), which advocates for greater autonomy or independence for southern Yemen, represents a separate philosophy. The STC, which is primarily made up of people from the south and has the backing of a few tribes and armed forces, has been at odds with the Houthis and the government. The power vacuum and chaos created has provided a breeding ground for several military groups and thus Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State of Levant and Syria (ISIS) could gain a foothold in the country. The deep-seated economic and social issues have also contributed to the fragility of the state.

Foreign military intervention by world powers who do not possess any legal sovereignty over Yemen has reduced the state into rubble by military air strikes over its critical infrastructure. The two *raison d'etres* presented for ruthless strikes and unavailing intervention are to curtail the existential threats to national security and assist the civilians. Nonetheless the extent of destruction has certainly made it worse

for the innocent civilians. Besides, there is more to this conflict than what the eyes can see and what is told to the ears. The undeclared ambitions on controlling the strategic sites like the critical waterways, straits, islands, and annexation of natural resources is often missing from the discourse of those who justify the intervention in the name of national security.

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, and it has been hit hard by years of conflict, displacement, and economic collapse. This has created a sense of hopelessness and frustration among many Yemenis, further fueling the conflict. The ideological conflicts fractured the state, however foreign intervention allowed the extremist groups to gain foothold by providing them with access to arms and weapons. Hence the conflict in Yemen culminated in a civil war that created a humanitarian catastrophe with millions of people in need of support and safety.

2.1. Clash of ideologies- emergence of Zaydism in Yemen

Over centuries, various Islamic ideologies gained ground in Yemen and these diverging ideologies ultimately led to the rise of an armed political group- the Houthis. It is therefore noteworthy to examine its evolution in Yemeni society.

Islam, as a religion, suffered a historical divide of Sunnis and Shiites in its early years. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, there was a disagreement over the succession of leadership of the Islamic Ummah and two groups emerged: Sunnis and the Shiites. Sunnis were a faction that recognized four rightly guided or Rashidun caliphs as the first leaders of Islam after the death of Prophet Muhammad.⁶ The Sunni sub-branches and groups include Salafi, Wahhabi, Shafii, Hanbali, Maliki, al-Qaida, Muslim Brotherhood among others. The Sunni-Shiite divide emerges from the fact that the Shiites recognize only Caliph Ali, Prophets' closest male blood relative, as the first legitimate leader and caliph of Islam after Prophet Muhammad. They believe that the rightful leadership, the Imamate, should have stayed in Prophet Muhammad's family

⁶ Su, I-Wen. "Toward a Sunni Consensus on the Rightly Guided Caliphs." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 142, no. 4 (December 14, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.7817/jaos.142.4.2022.ar032>.

afterwards. The Shiite sub-branches and groups include Zaydi, Twelver, Ismaili, Alawite, Hezbollah, Houthis among others.

This sub-division of religious sects is not unique to Islam, just as the Protestant tradition is subdivided into Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists among others, Sunni and Shiite Islam is also subdivided. Over time, allegiances to different descendants of Ali and his two sons, Hassan and Hussein, split Shiites into sub-branches. And, for instance, the focus of my study, the Houthis, belong to the Zaydi branch of the Shiite Islam which believes in the five rightful Imams after Prophet Muhammed.⁷ To understand the clash of ideologies, the flavors of political Islam and the rise of Houthis in Yemen, it is important to understand the historical facts and underlying beliefs that shape these ideologies. Therefore, the next paragraphs will briefly explain the Islamic movements and ideologies, such as Salafism and Wahhabism, however, to better understand the Yemeni societal fabric, a considerable attention will be devoted to Zaydism, the foundation of the Houthi movement.

Salafism is a movement which emerged within Sunni branch of Islam in the late 19th century as a response to Western imperialism in Egypt.⁸ The movement advocates a return to the practices of the first three generations of Muslims which included Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and their successors, together known as the Salafs. It emphasizes the reliance solely on the Quran, the Sunnah and the consensus of Salafs, thereby ignoring Islamic hermeneutics by Ulamas and other religious leaders.⁹ The Salafist doctrine champions complete implementation of Sharia and outrightly rejects any religious innovations in form of Shrines.¹⁰ Nonetheless, there are variations within

⁷ Abdulmajid, Adib. "Islam and Sectarianism: The Major Split and Its Manifestations." *Journal of Humanities Insights*, June 4, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.22034/JHI.2022.328101.1051>.

⁸ "Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalist Movements in the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey." *Reference Reviews* 14, no. 3 (March 1, 2000): 12–13. <https://doi.org/10.1108/rr.2000.14.3.12.114>.

⁹ Ali, Mohamed Bin. *The Roots of Religious Extremism: Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of Al-Wala' Wal Bara'*. Vol. 9. Imperial College Press Insurgency and Terrorism Ser., 2015.

¹⁰ Trauthig, Inga Kristina. "Salafism in the Maghreb: Politics, Piety, and Militancy." *International Affairs* 96, no. 3 (May 1, 2020): 834–35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa072>.

the Salafists: the Purists who steer clear of politics, the Activists who participate regularly in politics and the Jihadists who are the proponents of armed struggle to restore early Islamic traditions. The majority of the Salafis reside in the Gulf countries, with 46.87 percent of Qataris, 44.8 percent of Emiratis identifying themselves as Salafis.¹¹ Salafism also has a significant following in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Although, academics sought to define the term Salafism as a reaction to imperialism and rejection of Western ideas by highlighting the roots of modernity within the early Islamic civilization and thus associating the movement with the pioneers of Islamism, namely Hasan al-Banna, Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, nonetheless the contemporary Salafism which developed during 1960s, follow a more traditional, strict and literal approach to Islam, and is propagated by Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i, Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen and Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani among others.¹²

Wahhabism was a revivalist movement developed in the arid region of Najd by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century who condemned Sunni practices of veneration of saints and the visiting of shrines as idolatrous impurities and shirk.¹³ Though his ideas were rejected by the masses, he eventually formed an alliance with Muhammad bin Saud, the emir of Ad-Diriyah and the founder of the Saud dynasty, by convincing him that the propagation of the Wahhabi doctrine meant "power and glory" that would generate political legitimacy and obedience for the kingdom.¹⁴ After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Al Saud dynasty conquered the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and propagated the Wahhabi doctrine in the heartland of Islam. With the discovery of petroleum in 1939

¹¹ Izady, Mehrdad. *Demography of Religion in the Gulf*. 2000.

¹² Abu Khadeejah. "Jamal Al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Hasan al-Banna: Modernism, Revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood.," March 23, 2017. <https://abukhadeejah.com/jamal-aldin-afghani-muhammad-abduh-rashid-rida-hasan-albanna-radicals-modernists/>.

¹³ Pike, John. "Wahhabi." Wahhabi, January 9, 2015. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/wahhabi.htm>.

¹⁴ Lacey, Robert. *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. pp. 10–11. Penguin Books, 2010.

and the eventual oil export revenues, Wahhabism was relentlessly promoted through schools, universities, books, media, mosques, scholarships, lucrative jobs for academics and Islamic scholars. And ultimately, empowered the Wahhabi ulama to gain control of the education, law, public morality, and religious institutions in the 20th century.¹⁵ Although the Al Saud dynasty is the political guardian of the Wahhabi doctrine, it is simultaneously dependent on the Wahhabi ulama who legitimize the rule of the Al Saud dynasty by permitting the doctrinally objectionable actions such as the import of modern technology and weaponry, contracts with non-Muslims, for the sake of the consolidation of the power.¹⁶ The Saudi regime is also heavily dependent on the Wahhabi establishment to suppress religious dissent against its unpopular policies. However, the recent crises in modern history: such as the seizure of the Holy Mosque by militants in 1979, deployment of US troops against Iraq (a fellow Muslim state) in 1991 Gulf war, the World trade Centre attacks of 2001, together with the alignment of Kingdom with the western bloc has, to a large extent, eroded the Wahhabi credibility and created enormous distrust within Saudi Arabia and in the rest of the Muslim world.¹⁷ The distinction between Wahhabism and Salafism is sometimes misty as the terms are used interchangeably by many politicians and sometimes, even by academicians. However, there is a clear distinction between the two and an American scholar, Christopher Blanchard, rightly remarks that Wahhabism is "a conservative Islamic emanating from and centered in Saudi Arabia", while Salafism is "a more puritanical Islamic movement that developed at various times and in various places within the Islamic world."¹⁸ It can be inferred that Wahhabism a more strict and Saudi form of Salafism.¹⁹

¹⁵ Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad the Trail of Political Islam*. pp. 61-62. 2004.

¹⁶ Commins, David. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. p.208. Vol. 50. Library of Modern Middle East Studies, 2009.

¹⁷ Commins, David. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. p.156. Vol. 50. Library of Modern Middle East Studies, 2009.

¹⁸ Blanchard, Christopher M. "The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya." *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya* - UNT Digital Library, March 19, 2016. <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc821516/>.

¹⁹ Murphy, Caryle. "For Conservative Muslims, Goal of Isolation a Challenge." *Washington Post*, September 5, 2006.

Ahmad S. Moussalli, a Lebanese political scientist puts it even more concisely, contending that Wahhabism is a subset of Salafism, according to him, all Wahhabis are salafists, but not all salafists are Wahhabis.²⁰

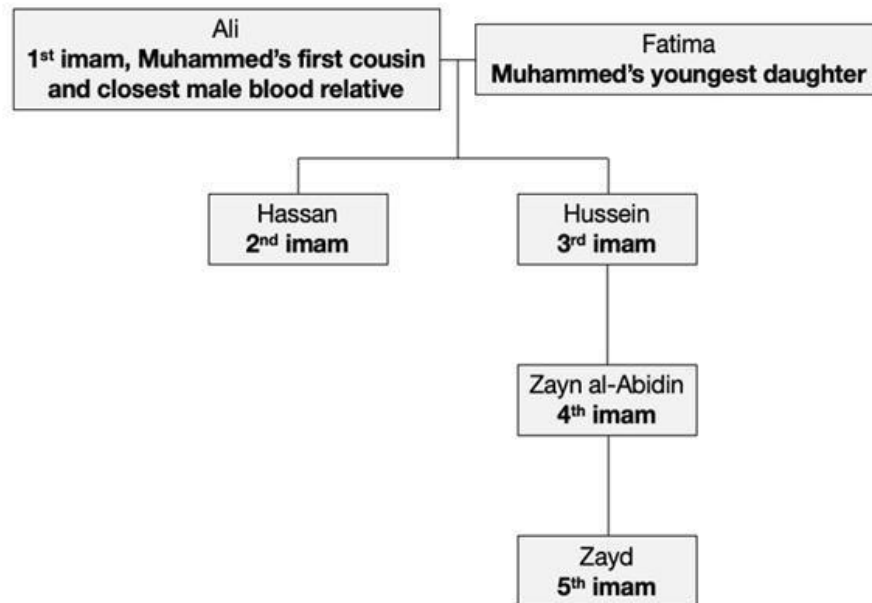


Figure 2.1 Zaydi Lineage.²¹

Zaydism is a moderate branch of Shi'ite Islam that diverged from other branches in a dispute over succession to the imamate. Zaydis favored Zayd ibn Ali, grandson of Husayn, as fifth imam, hence they are also referred to as Fivers. The Zaydi branch developed around 740 CE in Kufa (city in Iraq) as a result of Zayds' revolutionary active position against the Umayyad dynasty. The epicenter of the Zaydi movement shifted to central Asia and to parts of today's eastern Iran, after Yahya, the son of Zayd fled from Kufa to Khurasan (parts of today's Northeast Iran and Central Asia). Yahya was eventually captured and killed by Umayyads in 743 CE. Later, in the Abbasid period, the Zaydis were led by Isa, another son of Zayd. In the middle of the 9th century, the Zaydis concentrated their activities in areas distant from Abbasid influence and founded the Zaydi state in Tabaristan (Mazandaran) in northern Iran and

²⁰ Moussalli, Ahmad. "Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who Is the Enemy?" *A Conflict Forum Monograph*, January 2009.

²¹ Fondazione Internazionale Oasis. "Framing Yemen's Zaydi Shi'a," July 28, 2019. <https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/framing-yemen-s-zaydi-shi-a>.

Yemen in 864 and 897 CE respectively. During the Safavid rule in Iran, most Zaydis converted to Twelver Shi'ism. Today, the geographical distribution of Zaydis is concentrated mainly in Yemen. Compared to the Ismaili and the Twelver branches of Shi'ism, their influence has been limited. Zaydi is the closest of all Shi'i factions to Sunnis as they accept the legitimacy of Abu Bakr and Umar and disapprove Sufism. According to the Zaydi beliefs, the qualifications for imamate include personal piety, descentance from Ali and Fatimah and the ability to take up swords either for defense or offense. They do not recognize hereditary line of Imams and rule out the legitimacy of infant or underage imams and hidden imam, Mahdi. They support the doctrine of hijra, that is, to emigrate from a land ruled by unjust and non-Zaydi rulers.

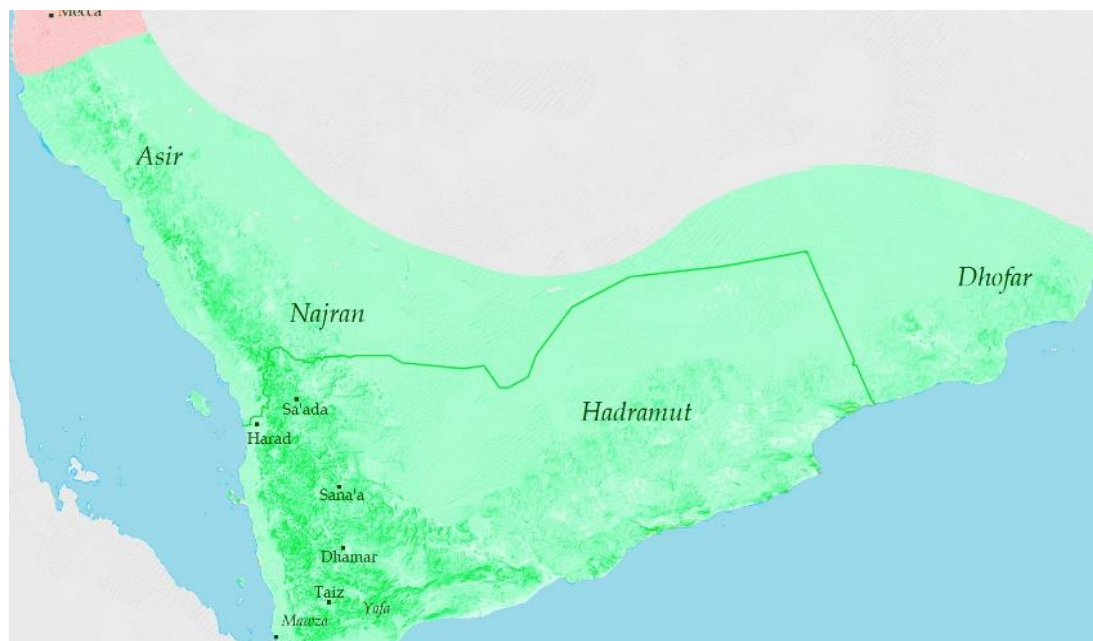


Figure 2.2 Yemen under Mutawakkilite kingdom in 1675 A.D.²²

The Zaydi imamate was established in northern Yemen in 897 CE by Yahya bin Husayn al-Hadi Ila'l-Haqq, who was the descendent of Hasan and founded Hadawiyya legal school, the only legal school of those times, in Yemen. His descendants fought amongst themselves for imamate and hence were not acknowledged as imams by the

²² Wikiwand. "Yemeni Zaidi State." Accessed March 24, 2023. https://wikiwand.com/en/Yemeni_Zaidi_State.

wider population, undermining the Zaydi rule. After a chaotic leadership crisis, Ahmad al-Mutawakkil restored the imamate in the late 12th century and promoted Zaydi unity. In 1174 AD, the Ayyubids from Saudi Arabia occupied Yemen and authority of the imam was severely restricted, nonetheless, limited Zaydi rule prevailed. During the imamate of al-Mu‘ayyad Bi’llah Yahya in 14th century, the Zaydis forged close relations with the Sunnis by acknowledging that the early caliphs among the companions of prophet deserved respect in proportion to that to Imam Ali, in an attempt to form doctrinal rapport with Sunnis, and hence they were able to expand their rule in the Sunni lowlands. However, the traditional Zaydi hostility against the Ismailis and the Sufis prevailed. The most enduring Zaydi imamate was established by the Qasimids, pioneered by Mansur Bi’llah al-Qasim, which ruled during 1597–1872 CE, this period, however coincided with the First Ottoman period (1538–1635) and ended with the Second Ottoman period (1872–1918) in Yemen. With the collapse of the Ottoman empire after the First World War, the Qasimi Zaydi imamate was re-established as the Mutawakkilite kingdom in 1918 and this dynastic rule lasted until 1962.²³

2.2. Pre-unification Yemen: North and South

In the previous section, evolution of ideologies that create the social fabric in Yemen were analyzed, however, in order to trace the roots of current conflict and the extent of fragility, it is imperative to examine the historical background of Yemen as a nation state. Yemen was split into two independent states before it was united in 1990: the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the north.²⁴ Although the labels "north" and "south" may indicate a divide similar to that of Koreas, in reality, the two *Yemens* had never been legally united before to 1990 and evolved along divergent political and religious lines.

²³ Madelung, Wilferd. "Zaydiyya." The Institute of Ismaili Studies, January 1, 2022. <https://www.iis.ac.uk/learning-centre/scholarly-contributions/encyclopedia-articles/zaydiyya/>.

²⁴ Dresch, Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen*. pp. 120. 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780521790925>.

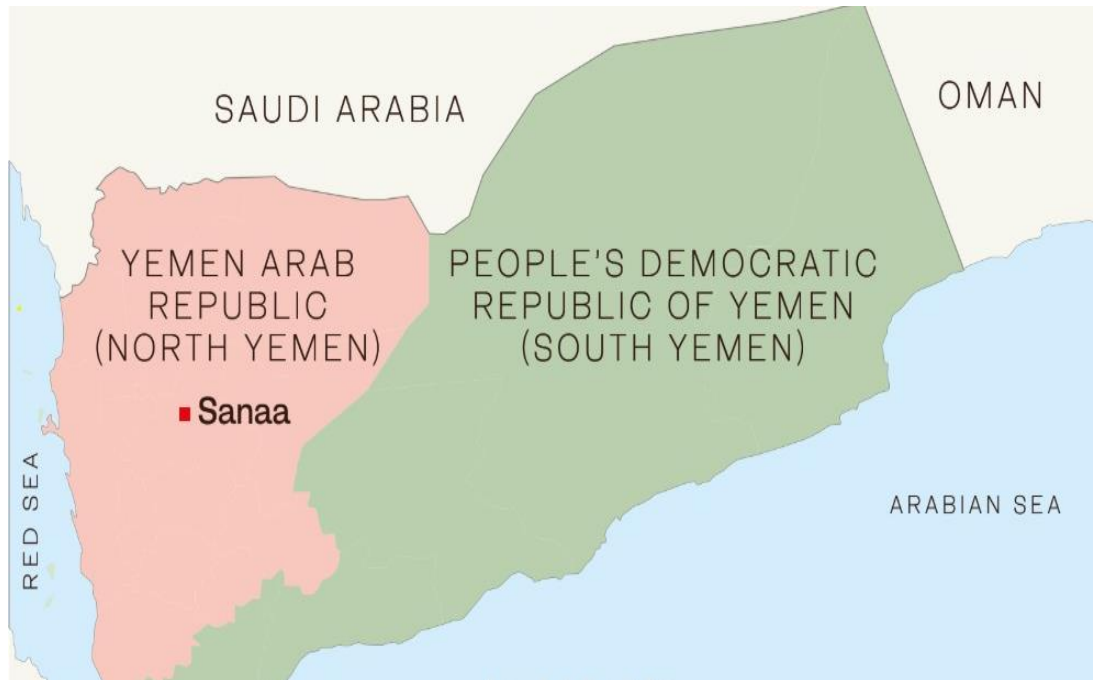


Figure 2.3 North and South Yemen, prior to the Yemeni unification.²⁵

Imam Yahya established Islamic control over North Yemen in 897 AD. He united the tribes in northern Yemen under Zaydism, a branch of Shi'ism that both the Houthis and former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh both hail from. For more than a millennium, Yahya's descendants ruled the imamate, except during a brief period in the 12th century. The imamate established in the North, was separated from the southern part of Yemen. In 1962, following a wave of Arab nationalism, the Zaidi Imamate was ousted by a military revolution, and a state of North Yemen was created.

On the other hand, for the large part of its history, South Yemen was ungoverned due to sparse population and inhabitable conditions. It was under Ottoman and Ayyubid rule for a brief period, but eventually fell under the British empire in the 19th century. The British sought a territory on the Arabian Peninsula in a bid to facilitate their trade with India. Initially, they attempted to create an agreement with the Zaydi imamate to

²⁵ Arab News. "Power-Sharing Agreement: A New Page in the History of Yemen," November 6, 2019. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1579871/middle-east>.

establish an encampment on its land, but the talks fell through. The British later took control of Aden, the future capital of South Yemen, and annexed it to British India in 1839. In 1937, Aden was made a crown colony, and in 1963, Britain acquired the whole area that would become South Yemen, establishing a protectorate known as the "Federation of South Arabia."²⁶ The Federation of South Arabia was promised independence by the British by 1968, but Yemenis quickly rebelled against the British. The insurgency was initiated by the Arab nationalists, who established the National Liberation Front (NLF). The nationalists used guerilla warfare to fight the British throughout this four-year battle, an event that came to be known as the "Aden Emergency" and claimed roughly 2,000 lives. By November 1967, the British had departed Aden, and the NLF had defeated rivals to seize power and create the People's Republic of Yemen. Eventually, a hardline Marxist minority within the NLF gained control and changed the name of the nation to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen—a satellite state of the USSR. Hence, in 1967, South Yemen became the only Marxist-Leninist state in the Arab world.²⁷ With its inclusion in the USSR camp, the Yemeni lands were drawn to the Cold War where the YAR was predominantly backed by Saudi Arabia and the United States, while the PDRY received support from the Soviet Union and its allies.²⁸ The two Yemeni states experienced a tumultuous relationship marked by intermittent conflicts and border clashes, fueled by ideological differences, regional rivalries, and external powers' influence.²⁹ However, despite the stark difference in demographics and diverging political ideologies, both countries favored unification. One such attempt was envisaged by Ibrahim al-Hamdi, a colonel who came to power in YAR (North Yemen) after overthrowing the regime of Abdul Rahman al-Iryani in a bloodless coup d'état on June 13, 1974.³⁰ His short-lived

²⁶ Dresch, Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen*. pp. 35. 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780521790925>.

²⁷ Halliday, Fred. *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987*. Vol. Series Number 21. Cambridge Middle East Library, 2010. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511622366>

²⁸ Brehony, Noel. *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia*, 2011.

²⁹ Phillips, Sarah. *Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*. Routledge, 2017.

³⁰ Burrowes, Robert D. "The Yemen Arab Republic and the Ali Abdallah Salih Regime: 1978-1984." *Middle East Journal* 39, no. 3 (1985): 287–316. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4327125>.

presidency was revolutionary in terms of economic development and political agendas he advanced. During the interviews that were carried out as part of this research, some Yemenis mentioned that most of the robust institutions and infrastructure that exist today like the schools, universities, healthcare centers, roads, industries among others were established during his presidency. He was a visionary leader who sought to end tribal alliances, instituted financial reforms to end corruption and reduce the dependence on Saudi Arabia. He also abolished the ministry of Tribal Affairs which he considered as an impediment to social advancement of his country. His brief stint as the President was remarkable for Yemen's growth as the country's GDP rose from 21.5 percent in 1974 to 56.1 percent in 1977.³¹ During the same period, the per capita income of YAR increased by 300 percent. He was a visionary and sought to lay the groundwork for a modern government based on law and order. His ambitious plans could not come to fruition as he was assassinated on October 11, 1977, along with his brother in the house of his then-Vice President Ahmad al-Ghashmi, just two days before his scheduled visit to South Yemen to negotiate the terms of unification.³² Since his presidency threatened tribal alliances and involvement of Saudi Arabia in Yemen's internal affairs, it is alleged that his assassination was planned by Saudi Arabia.³³ His assassination was never investigated, the only people who could explain the motivations behind his assassinations were al-Ghashmi and Saleh who were themselves assassinated in 1978 and 2017 respectively before anything behind the murder of al-Hamdi could be revealed.³⁴

³¹ Aljamra, Helal. "Assassinated President Al-Hamdi Remains Yemen's Founder in the People's Collective Memory." *Inside Arabia*, April 2, 2019. <https://insidearabia.com/president-al-hamdi-yemen-collective-memory/>.

³² Day, Stephen W. "Yemenis Still Want Answers about Ibrahim Al-Hamdi's Assassination." *Yemenis still want answers about Ibrahim al-Hamdi's assassination | Opinions | Al Jazeera*, March 26, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/3/26/yemenis-still-want-answers-about-ibrahim-al-hamdis-assassination>.

³³ Jamestown. "The Unseen Hand: Saudi Arabian Involvement in Yemen," March 24, 2011. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-unseen-hand-saudi-arabian-involvement-in-yemen/>.

³⁴ France 24. "Ali Abdullah Saleh: The Deposed President Who Ruled Yemen for over Three Decades," December 4, 2017. <https://www.france24.com/en/20171204-ali-abdullah-saleh-deposed-president-who-ruled-yemen-over-three-decades>.

Al Hamdi was a visionary whose story is hidden in the annals of history and his assassination still remains a mystery. During the Arab spring protests in 2011, people carried placards with his image and remember his legacy decades after his assassination is a testament to the fact that he is mourned as a widely respected national hero.³⁵

2.3. The unification process and subsequent challenges

In the years preceding unification, both YAR and PDRY were involved in intermittent clashes. In October 1972, the fighting erupted between the two Yemens, where Saudi Arabia supplied arms to YAR and USSR assisted PDRY.³⁶ The conflict ended with the Cairo agreement signed on October 28, 1972, that laid the groundwork for the unification of two Yemens.³⁷ As discussed in the previous section, the process of unification was accelerated during the Hamdi presidency (1974-77), however after his death, the process stalled.

In 1979, it was alleged that PDRY was supplying aid to rebels in the North and hence clashes erupted again in February 1979.³⁸ The conflict also oversaw the involvement of foreign powers with Saudi Arabia and Taiwan supporting the YAR and Soviets providing aid and intelligence to PDRY.³⁹ Yemen and Saudi Arabia share a long and complex history of involvement which plays out even today. It is purported that King Abd al-Aziz ibn-Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia said on his deathbed the good or

³⁵ Abdullah, Khaled. *A Woman Holds a Poster of Yemen's Late President Ibrahim al-Hamdi during a Protest Demanding Former President Saleh's Immunity Be Stripped*, in Sanaa. March 28, 2013.

³⁶ Gause, F. Gregory. *Saudi-Yemen Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influences*, 1990. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780231070447>.

³⁷ Unification of Yemen: The Cairo Agreement, 1972. "Unification of Yemen: The Cairo Agreement, 1972," n.d. <https://al-bab.com/albab-orig/albab/yemen/unity/unif1.htm>

³⁸ Herrmann, Richard K. *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Russian and East European Studies, 1985.

³⁹ Hudson, Michael. *The Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration*. Edited by Michael C. Hudson, 1998. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780231111386>.

evil for us will come from Yemen.⁴⁰ This statement speaks volumes of Saudi's obsession with Yemen and explains its intricate involvement. In his book, "Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence" Gregory Gause explains how Saudi Arabia tried to keep YAR strong against the threats from PDRY, but also keep it weak enough to not pose a threat to the kingdom.⁴¹ The unity of YAR and PDRY was certainly not in the interest of Saudi Arabia who preferred a weak and dependent neighbor rather than a strong contender.

The unification of Yemen was perceived as a challenge by Saudi Arabia. The two Yemens were different on various grounds. On the religious front, the North was conservative, while the South was socialist and secular. As for the economic Systems, YAR had an agrarian economy, while PDRY was heavily dependent on oil exports. Education was more widespread in the South, and the country had a higher literacy rate than the North. Besides, the Southerners were concerned that joining the densely populated North would force the domination of North over the South as the population of PDRY was merely 3 million as opposed to 12 million in YAR.⁴² Hence, all attempts of unification were marred either by internal grievances or external insecurities, primarily Saudi Arabia's.

Nonetheless, the exploration of oil in Marib governorate of the YAR and the Shabwa governorate of the PDRY brought about the convergence of interests and presented an opportunity to uplift their economies. In 1988, Yemeni lands became a battleground for Cold War playout when the American Hunt Oil Company was involved in oil exploration in the North, while Soviet Technoexport was involved in the South. There were accusations of carrying out seismic surveys on each other's territory which led to

⁴⁰ Hollen, Christopher. "North Yemen: A Dangerous Pentagonal Game." tandfonline, July 13, 2009. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01636608209477321?journalCode=rwaq20>.

⁴¹ Gause, F. Gregory. *Saudi-Yemen Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influences*, 1990. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780231070447>.

⁴² Bolyston, Alexander. "North and South Yemen: The Marriage That Wasn't Meant To Be?" Georgia Political Review, April 29, 2015. <https://georgiapoliticalreview.com/north-and-south-yemen-the-marriage-that-wasnt-meant-to-be/>.

border clashes in March 1988.⁴³ To pacify the situation, Libya's Colonel Gaddafi and Palestine's Yasser Arafat mediated to organize a North-South summit in Taiz on April 16, 1988.⁴⁴

During the summit, the then-President Saleh referred to the border conflict as a "legacy of colonialism and the imamate" and urged the South to consider unification:

*The only solution is to attain unity ... Unity will assist our people and nation because it opposes division, racism, and all remnants of colonialism. Enemies of our people and our Arab and Islamic nations do not want the unification of our capabilities and resources because their interests lie in our division. It is easy for enemies to strike at us when we are divided. The enemies are doing their best to maintain the partitioning of the homeland, but we must shoulder the responsibility and take a genuine step towards the restoration of Yemeni unity.*⁴⁵

The president of PDRY, Ali Salem al-Beidh acknowledged to make unification a historic event, he was however, cautious and diverted the conversation to deeper cooperation:

We emphasize the importance of paying further attention to creating economic integration, expanding trade, activating economic and social development plans, promoting the existing joint establishments and economic projects, and establishing other projects that will create a great many relations and common material interests. Such relations and interests will give momentum to the issue of unity. Moreover, our coming work should pay further attention to the issues

⁴³ Dunbar, Charles. "The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects." *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 3 (1992): 456–76. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328466>.

⁴⁴ Reissner, Johannes, and Joseph Kostiner. "The Struggle for South Yemen." *Die Welt Des Islams* 34, no. 2 (November 1994): 295. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1570940>.

⁴⁵ Whitaker, Brian. "The Birth of Modern Yemen." *al-bab.com*, May 2009. <https://al-bab.com/birth-modern-yemen-chapter-2>.

of facilitating citizens' movement and exchanging newspapers, books, and publications.

Eventually, the cooperation between the two enhanced, unification talks gathered momentum, new agreements were formed, and a joint exploration area was established by Hunt Oil Company and Exxon. In May 1988, the Yemeni Company for Investment in Mineral and Oil Resources (YCIMOR) was established.⁴⁶ In November 1989, the draft unity constitution was accepted by both the parties and the border area of 2200 sq km between the Marib and Shabwa governorate was demilitarized to create a joint investment zone. Furthermore, the movement of citizens between YAR and PDRY was instituted solely on the basis of personal identity cards. These developments eventually culminated in the unification and declaration of the Republic of Yemen on May 22, 1990.⁴⁷ Although the process was fraught with difficulties, it was a historic opportunity to end the long-standing tensions between the two states. Nonetheless, the deep-seated economic, political, and social disparities between the two regions persisted.⁴⁸ However, soon after unification, the rifts between the two transpired and escalated the tensions. In the unified Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the leader of North Yemen, was chosen as president, while Ali Salim al-Beidh, the leader of South Yemen, was chosen as vice president.

During the transitional era, both the South Yemeni dinar and the North Yemeni rial were still accepted as legal money. When the dinar was taken out of circulation in 1991, 26 rials were swapped for one dinar. The Republic of Yemen's first coins, referred to as Yemeni rials, were released in 1993. Sana, the former capital of the YAR, became the capital of the Republic of Yemen. The "United Republic" by the South was adopted as the nation's anthem. Both September 26 and October 14 are observed as Revolution Days, with the former honoring the revolt of the YAR against the imams and the latter honoring the revolution of the PDRY against the British Empire.

⁴⁶ Dunbar 1992: 459-60.

⁴⁷ New York Times. "2 Yemens Become One, and Celebrate.," May 23, 1990. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/23/world/2-yemens-become-one-and-celebrate.html>.

⁴⁸ Brehony, Noel. *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia*, 2011.

November 1, which was observed in the YAR as Independence Day from the Ottoman Empire, November 30 is commemorated as Independence Day in the PDRY as it was the day it was freed from British rule.⁴⁹

The first political crisis that the unified Yemen was to face was in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis when Yemen declined to join the coalition forces of 39 countries, led by the West to fight against Iraq in the Gulf War 1991. As a consequence, Saudi Arabia expatriated approximately 800,000 Yemenis, which led to a tremendous decline in remittances and placed a huge burden of unemployment on Yemen's limited resources, causing an economic crisis in Yemen.⁵⁰ In April 1993, the first parliamentary elections took place, and the new parliament was strongly dominated by the North. The Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) was the most popular party of PDRY, however in the new coalition government, it won only 69 out of the total 301 seats and became a minority.⁵¹ After the discovery of a new oil field in Hadramout governorate (part of former PDRY), the southerners began to view the unification as a planned conspiracy to appropriate the oil reserves of the South by the North to achieve its own development objectives.⁵²

Disputes within the alliance led to Vice President Al-Beidh's self-imposed exile to Aden in August 1993.⁵³ The overall security situation also deteriorated as political rivals settled scores and tribal forces took advantage of the unrest. On February 20,

⁴⁹ Whitaker, Brian. "The Birth of Modern Yemen- Mechanism of Unification." al-bab.com, May 2009. <https://al-bab.com/birth-modern-yemen-chapter-4>.

⁵⁰ Foad, Hisham S. "The Effects of the Gulf War on Migration and Remittances." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1551539>.

⁵¹ International Monetary Fund. "Republic of Yemen: Selected Issues." *IMF Staff Country Reports* 01, no. 61 (2001): 1. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781451840780.002>.

⁵² Choueiri, Nada, Klaus-Stefan Enders, Yuri Vladimirovich Sobolev, Jan Walliser, and Sherwyn Williams. "Yemen in the 1990s: From Unification to Economic Reform." International Monetary Fund, May 3, 2002.

⁵³ Ambrose, Stephen E. "A Theorist Fights: Emory Upton in the Civil War." *Civil War History* 9, no. 4 (1963): vi-364. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cwh.1963.0029>.

1994, the agreement of commitment and accord was signed in Amman, Jordan, as the conclusion of ongoing discussions between the leaders of the north and south. Despite this, fighting got worse and erupted into a civil war in early May 1994.⁵⁴ The fighting was chaotic as the armed forces of PDRY and YAR were not yet institutionalized as one unit. On May 21, 1994, southern leaders declared their secession and founded the Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY), but the new state was not acknowledged by the international world. The secessionists asserted that “before unification, we were one people in two states, but after unification, we became two peoples in one state” and hence demanded a return to previous arrangement of two separate states.

End Yemen War, Return to like Before



Figure 2.4 Southern Hirak Movement.⁵⁵

Eventually, the southern secessionists lost Aden on July 7, 1994. Many of the southern soldiers and commanders fled as other resistance fell apart. The presidential council was abolished in 1994 as a result of modifications to the unity constitution. On October 1, 1994, the Parliament chose President Ali Abdallah Saleh to serve a five-year term.

⁵⁴ Hedges, Chris. “In Yemen’s Civil War, South Fights On, gloomily.” *New York Times*, May 16, 1994. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/16/world/in-yemen-s-civil-war-south-fights-on-gloomily.html>.

⁵⁵ Southern Hirak Movement. “Before Unification, We Were One People in Two States, but after Unification, We Became Two Peoples in One State.” Accessed March 24, 2023. <https://www.southernhirak.org/2016/12/before-unification-we-were-one-people.html>.

According to the constitution, the President would henceforth be chosen by the people from a field of at least two candidates chosen by the legislature. In September 1999, Yemen held its first direct presidential elections under a new political structure. President Ali Abdullah Saleh won and was given a five-year term. Constitutional modifications passed in 2002, increased the presidential election by two years and hence postponed the next presidential election to 2006. Due to underrepresentation in the Parliament, the southerners remained disillusioned, and the 1994 Civil War revealed the long-standing rift between North and South Yemen. It further exacerbated these divisions, as the southern forces' unsuccessful attempts to secede from the unified state, resulted in the consolidation of power by the northern elites and the marginalization of the southern population.⁵⁶

2.4. The Ansarallah movement and its origins

Ansarallah movement, now referred to as Houthi movement emerged in the early 1990s as a religious and cultural revivalist group among the Zaidi Shia population in northern Yemen.⁵⁷ The movement was developed under the leadership of Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi who belonged to the Zaydi school of the Shiite Islamic thought. The movement was initially a reaction to the perceived marginalization of the Zaidi community and the growing influence of Sunni Islamist ideologies, particularly Salafism, in the region⁵⁸. The Houthis gradually evolved into a political and military organization, engaging in a series of conflicts with the Yemeni government between 2004 and 2010.⁵⁹ The Houthi insurgency was fueled by various factors, including historical grievances, regional identity, economic marginalization, and the Yemeni state's weak governance capacity.

⁵⁶ Salisbury, Peter. "Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian 'Cold War.'" Chatham House, February 18, 2015. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150218YemenIranSaudi.pdf.

⁵⁷ Alley, April Longley. "The Rules of the Game: Unpacking Patronage Politics in Yemen." *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 385–409. <https://doi.org/10.3751/64.3.13>.

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ Hill, Ginny. *Yemen Endures: Civil War, Saudi Adventurism and the Future of Arabia*, 2017.

Additionally, the movement's anti-imperialist and anti-American rhetoric resonated with a broader segment of the Yemeni population dissatisfied with the government's alignment with the United States and its policies in the region. The movement began as a political struggle under the agenda of combating economic underdevelopment, corruption and political marginalization and supporting a more democratic and non-sectarian government in Yemen. The religious offshoot of the movement presented Ansarallah as the defenders and revivers of Zaydi religion and culture. However, in 2004, it turned into violent insurgency after its leader Hussein al-Houthi was assassinated along with a number of his guards by the Yemeni army in Sa'ada.⁶⁰



Figure 2.5 Ansarallah Movement rallying symbol.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Juneau, Thomas. "Iran's Policy towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment." *International Affairs* 92, no. 3 (May 2016): 647–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12599>.

⁶¹ Al Jazeera. "Houthis Celebrate Birth of Prophet Muhammad," January 25, 2013. <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2013/1/25/houthis-celebrate-birth-of-prophet-muhammad>.

Today, the movement is led by his brother Abdul-Malik al-Houthi.⁶² In 2003, the Houthis adopted the slogan "God is great, death to the US, death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam", and have since then condemned the Arab collusion and US-Israel conspiracy theory through its media outlets.⁶³

The roots of the movement, however, are deeper and can be traced back to the time when the Mutawakkilite kingdom of Yemen was abolished in 1962. As explained above, Northern Yemen was ruled by Zaydi religious leaders for almost a thousand years, from 897 AD, until the abolition of monarchy in 1962.⁶⁴ The Zaydi monarchy was toppled by the Egyptian-backed revolutionary military officers, with Soviet assistance and a republic with an Arab nationalist government was established. The transition to the republican state was, however, far from smooth. It plunged Northern Yemen into eight years of civil war that ended in 1970. After the republican coup d'état, the Zaydi royalists fled to the mountains near the Saudi border and fought the civil war to regain the control of Northern Yemen. The royalists were backed by Saudi Arabia and Israel against Egypt and the Soviet Union who supported the republicans. Ultimately, the republicans emerged victorious from the war, forcing the Zaydi retreat from the political scene of Yemen. The Saudis resolved their differences with Egypt after the June War with Israel in 1967. Though the Saudi interest in Yemeni politics prevailed, the Egyptian involvement in the region declined after their Arab coalition suffered a humiliating defeat in 1967 Arab Israeli war.⁶⁵

⁶² ReliefWeb. "Yemen: The Conflict in Saada Governorate - Analysis - Yemen," July 24, 2008. <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-conflict-saada-governorate-analysis>.

⁶³ Taqi, Abdulelah. "Houthi Propaganda: Following in Hizballah's Footsteps." *The New Arab*, April 12, 2015. <https://www.newarab.com/opinion/houthi-propaganda-following-hizballahs-footsteps>.

⁶⁴ Schmitz, Charles, and Robert D. Burrowes. *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, 2018.

⁶⁵ Youssef, Aboul-Enein. "The Egyptian-Yemen War (1962-67): Egyptian Perspectives on Guerrilla Warfare." *The Free Library*, January 1, 2004. [https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Egyptian-Yemen+War+\(1962-67\)%3A+Egyptian+perspectives+on+Guerrilla...-a0116585276](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Egyptian-Yemen+War+(1962-67)%3A+Egyptian+perspectives+on+Guerrilla...-a0116585276).

In 1978, Ali Abdallah Saleh, a Zaydi republican general seized power after a series of coups. He was every bit of a notorious and opportunist leader, who ruled, rather misruled Yemen for the next 33 years. A graduate of political coups and maneuvers, he was known for his remarkably clever sectarian politics and often changed sides as it served his interests. It is quite challenging to present Yemen under his rule, for the fact that neither his domestic, nor his foreign policy was ever consistent, which is one of the reasons that Yemen witnessed an emergence of numerous factions and is mired in an intractable conflict. While in power, Saleh knitted factions and a web of alliances to maintain a precarious balance of power. He knew how to cope up with them as he was the one who created them, but today after his death, every faction has its own Saleh. In terms of foreign policy, he supported Iraq in the Gulf war 1991, survived a Saudi-backed Civil War in 1994. His relationship with Saudi Arabia and the USA was complicated- in the 1990s, he was against the USA, but in the 2000s, he aligned with the USA against al-Qaida.⁶⁶ After defeating Zaydi royalists in an eight-year long Civil War that ended in 1970, the Arab republican government severely repressed Zaydis, perceiving them as a threat because of their ties to the ancien regime.⁶⁷

In a bid to reduce the dominance of Zaydis in the northern region, Yemeni government played the sectarian card and encouraged Muslims from Sunni branches of Salafism and Wahhabism, with links to Saudi Arabia to settle in territories that belonged traditionally to Zaydis.⁶⁸ Besides, in the decades that followed 1970s, Saudi Arabia sought to increase its influence in Yemen to benefit from the strategically important geography which was at the heart of the international trade routes.⁶⁹ To achieve its objectives, Saudi Arabia too, embarked on funding a Salafi Wahhabi group in

⁶⁶ Soufan, Ali. “I Will Die in Yemen.” “I Will Die in Yemen” - The Atlantic, December 5, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/yemen-saleh-al-qaeda-houthi-saudi-arabia-iran/547487/>.

⁶⁷ Charles, Schmitz. “The Huthi Ascent to Power.” Middle East Institute, September 15, 2014. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/huthi-ascent-power>.

⁶⁸ Freeman, Jack. “The al Houthi Insurgency in the North of Yemen: An Analysis of the Shabab al Moumineen.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 11 (October 30, 2009): 1008–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903262716>.

⁶⁹ Winter, Lucas. “Fragile State: Yemen in Conflict.” *Current History* 109, no. 731 (December 1, 2010): 395–400. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2010.109.731.395>.

Yemen's northern province of Sa'ada, to convert Zaydi locals to Salafis. This was the convergence of interests of the Yemeni government and Saudi administration, and the result was the suppression of Zaydis. The most successful of the institutions that propagated Salafi doctrine was a teaching institute, Dar al-Hadith, developed by Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi, a Yemeni cleric educated in Saudi Arabia. Dar al-Hadith was established in the early 1980s in the town of Dammaj in Sa'ada Province. And by the 1990s, the joint republican and Saudi campaign seemed to be successful as the Salafis became powerful in the area. After the merger of North Yemen with South Yemen in 1990, to form the Republic of Yemen, though Zaydis remained a majority in the capital city Sana'a and in the Northern and Western provinces of the country, in terms of overall population, they became a minority to the Salafis.⁷⁰

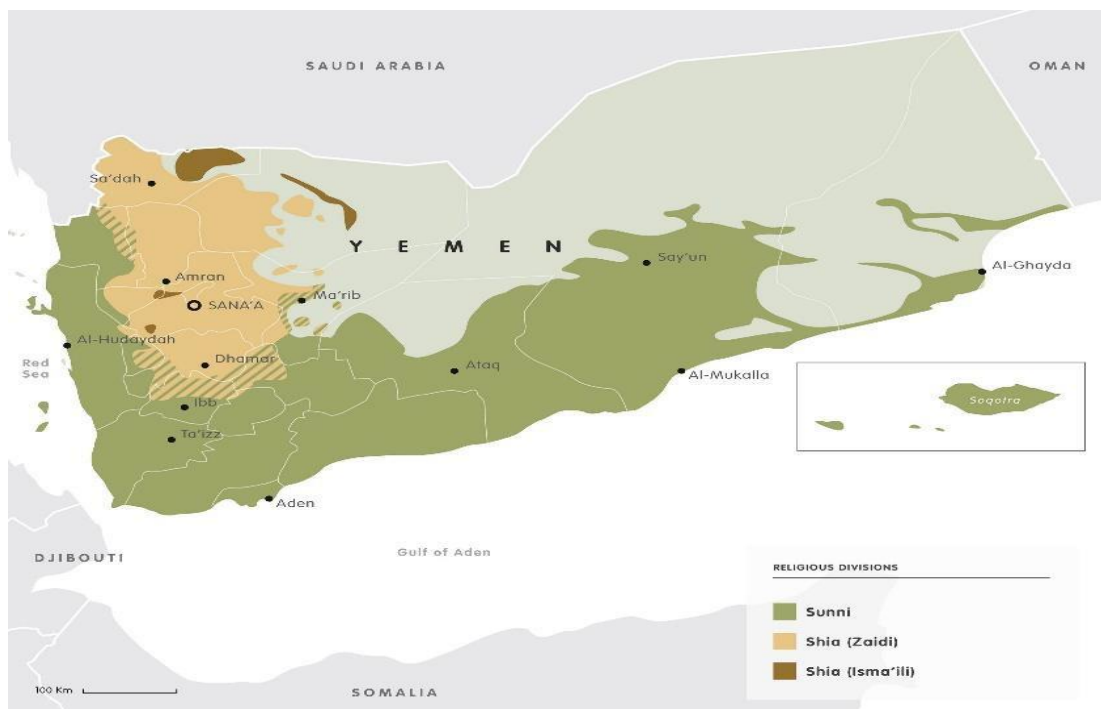


Figure 2.6 Religious divisions across geography in Yemen.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Baron, Adam. "Mapping the Yemen Conflict." ECFR, October 19, 2015. <https://ecfr.eu/special/yemen/>.

⁷¹ *ibid*

It is widely believed that the Houthi insurgency, a grass-root movement began as a symbol of Zaydi resistance to growing Salafi influence in the north of Yemen, as by 1990s, the newly emerged religious group became uncompromisingly strong to compete with the traditional Zaydis.⁷² In 1994, Saudi Arabia, with the help of its Salafi base in Yemen, supported southern secessionist bid in 1994 which evolved into a Civil War that was eventually quashed by Saleh.⁷³ As the politics unfolded, the increased Salafi influence not only alarmed Zaydis, but also made the then President Saleh fearful. Saleh then deployed his classic strategy of playing factions off against each other to weaken the Salafi dominance. He now supported the Houthis to counter Salafis, by allowing Hussein al-Houthi to run for parliament under his ruling party. Eventually to Saleh's regret, Hussein al-Houthi turned against him in 2004. An armed conflict broke out between the Houthis and the Yemeni government in Sa'ada that year and led to the killing of Hussein al-Houthi in September 2004. Since then, the movement was renamed from Ansarallah to Houthi movement as a tribute to their late leader.

2.5. Violent Houthi insurgency after 2004

The violent insurgency in Yemen that erupted after 2004 is rooted in a complex mix of political, economic, and social factors. The Houthi movement emerged in the 1990s as a response to what they perceived as discrimination and marginalization by the central government in Sanaa, which they saw as dominated by Sunni elites. They believed that the government was not providing adequate representation and resources to the northern region, including the Zaidi Shia community. The Houthi movement also opposed the government's alignment with the United States and Saudi Arabia and accused the government of being corrupt and oppressive. They saw themselves as defenders of the Zaidi Shia community and as a force for social justice and political reform.

⁷² Schmitz, Charles. "The Rise of Yemen's Houthi Rebels." BBC News, February 28, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31645145>.

⁷³ Bonnefoy, Laurent. "Deconstructing Salafism in Yemen." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 3, 2010. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/deconstructing-salafism-in-yemen-2/>.

Additionally, the Houthi movement has historical grievances dating back to the 1960s, when the Zaidi imamate was overthrown, and the new republican government marginalized the Zaidi Shia community. While it is true that former President Ali Abdullah Saleh was a Zaidi Shia, the Houthi movement viewed him as part of the corrupt Sunni-dominated government and opposed his rule. And now we come back to the Sunni-Shi'a split which currently characterizes the conflict in Yemen. As previously mentioned, North Yemen had long been home to Zaydi Shi'a Muslims and the first president of a unified Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was a Shi'a Muslim himself. Shi'a Muslims make up about 40 percent of Yemen's population, but they are almost all concentrated in what used to be North Yemen, where the capital Sana'a and most of the population of Yemen is located. The former South Yemen, however, is overwhelmingly Sunni and is also home to a number of socialists who reject being linked to North Yemen's religious past. Now, although he originally fought the Houthis, Saleh, ousted from office in 2012, chose to support the Houthis for a brief period to continue the legacy of Shi'a domination in a unified Yemen, clearly disregarding the concerns of southerners.

Although the conflict started as a power struggle, initially between the forces loyal to Ex-President Saleh and the Houthis, and then Saleh's forces were replaced by Hadi loyalists. However, the involvement of foreign powers in the conflict, rendered the characterization of the 'conflict' as less applicable and hence the conflict was characterized as a civil war. The United States and Saudi Arabia claimed to have sided with Hadi loyalists because Houthi advances have halted their campaign against AQAP, seen as the "most dangerous" branch of al-Qaeda. But, as previously stated, the Houthis are just as determined to wipe out AQAP as the U.S. or Saudi Arabia are since they are Shi'a. So why are two groups with identical goals fighting each other? The answer is regional tensions and separatist sentiments that have been brewing ever since the unification of Yemen. Although the Houthis had been active since the early 2000s, the election of Hadi, a southerner and Sunni Muslim, was the final piece of evidence for the rebels that the Shi'a in northern Yemen were losing ground to the Sunni majority. Even though Saleh had opposed the Houthis before, he was a northerner and ruled Yemen for 22 years before his stepping down. Saleh solidified Shi'a and northern domination of all of Yemen while southerners were relegated to a

lesser status. The Houthis are not trying to establish something new but rather continue what has been the norm for Yemen since its unification. Even though a split at this time may devastate the underdeveloped South Yemen, this civil war suggests that the split may be inevitable unless the two regions find a common ground in terms of power-sharing and political representation.

As discussed above, Yemen has a history of tribal conflict, poverty, and government corruption, which have contributed to the instability. Additionally, the government has struggled to maintain control of the country's northern and southern regions, which have long sought greater autonomy. The insurgency was initially led by the Houthi rebellion in the north, which began as a protest movement against the government's policies but quickly escalated into a full-blown armed rebellion, further exacerbated by the Arab Spring and the civil war between the Houthis and the government, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)'s involvement. The years between 2004 and 2010 are marred by sporadic violence between the Houthi forces and Saleh's administration, there have been, in total six wars between them and one between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia.

The first phase of the violence began in June 2004, when Yemeni security forces killed approximately 100 Houthi supporters.⁷⁴ This was a breakdown and led to the radicalization of the movement. The assassination of their leader, Hussein al-Houthi on September 10, 2004, by the government forces served as the oil in fire. Since then, the movement is led by his brother, Abdul Malik al-Houthi.⁷⁵ Between March and April 2005, another 1,500 people were killed during the clashes between government forces and the Houthis. The fighting came to a halt when Abdullah al-Ruzami, the Houthi military commander surrendered to Yemeni authorities after a mediation deal

⁷⁴ BBC NEWS | Middle East. "Clashes 'leave 118 Dead' in Yemen," July 3, 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/3863463.stm.

⁷⁵ Whitaker, Brian. "Yemeni Forces Kill Anti-US Cleric." the Guardian, September 10, 2004. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/11/yemen.brianwhitaker>.

on June 23, 2005.⁷⁶ However, later that year in November, clashes broke out between pro-government Hamdan tribe, led by Abdullah al-Awjari and pro-Houthi tribes. In 2006, with the re-election of Saleh, the government released more than 600 captured Shi'a fighters as a goodwill gesture.⁷⁷ The casualties in 2006 were significantly low and there seemed prospects of a compromise between the Houthis and the Yemeni government.

The second phase of violent clashes broke out in early 2007, when between January 28 and February 1, three coordinated attacks were carried out by the Houthis on government facilities, killing in total 22 Yemeni soldiers.⁷⁸ In retaliation, government launched a major offensive, involving 30,000 troops against the militias, killing 200 soldiers and 260 militias.⁷⁹ On June 16, 2007, a ceasefire agreement was mediated by Qatar and as per the terms of this agreement, the rebel leaders agreed to lay down arms and go into exile in Qatar in exchange for the release of rebel prisoners held by the government.⁸⁰ The ceasefire was not to last forever and in April 2008, the armed clashes resumed. On May 2, 2008, a horrific bombing at the Bin Salman Mosque in Sa'dah after Friday prayers, killed 15 worshippers, neither the government, nor the Houthis pledged involvement.⁸¹ On August 11, 2009, the government launched

⁷⁶ Pike, John. "Houthi / Shabab al-Moumineen (Believing Youth)." Global Security Organization. Accessed March 2, 2023. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/shabab-al-moumineen.htm>.

⁷⁷ Reuters. "Yemen Tells Shi'ite Rebels to Disband or Face War," January 29, 2007. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL29146293>.

⁷⁸ Yemeni soldiers killed in fighting | News | Al Jazeera. "Yemeni Soldiers Killed in Fighting," March 18, 2007. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2007/3/18/yemeni-soldiers-killed-in-fighting>.

⁷⁹ Chicago Tribune. "Clashes with Shiite Rebels Kill 100 in 5 Days in Yemen," February 19, 2007. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/os-xpm-2007-02-20-mworld20-5-story.html>.

⁸⁰ Al-Haj, Ahmed. "Yemen's Government, Shiite Rebels Negotiate End to 3-Year Conflict." The Seattle Times, June 17, 2007. <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/yemens-government-shiite-rebels-negotiate-end-to-3-year-conflict/>.

⁸¹ France 24. "Dozens of Casualties in Yemen Mosque Blast," May 2, 2008. <https://www.france24.com/en/20080502-dozens-casualties-witnessed-yemen-mosque-blast-yemen>.

Operation Scorched Earth, employing fighter aircraft and tanks, against Houthis.⁸² This operation led to the displacement of thousands of civilians as well as Houthi supporters in the northern Sa'ada province.

The third phase of insurgency evolved with clashes between the Houthis and Saudi security forces, and hence the conflict took an international dimension.⁸³ On November 4, 2009, it was reported that the Houthis attacked the Saudi border, killing one of the Saudi border guards and seizing Al Khubah village.⁸⁴ On one hand, the Houthis alleged Saudi's collusion with Yemeni government against them, while on the other hand, Yemen's government accused Iran of aiding the Houthis in their rebellion. It was claimed by Houthis that the US involvement in the conflict began in December 2009, when it launched 28 air raids in Sa'dah, Hajjah and Amran provinces.⁸⁵ On January 1, 2010, a conditional cease-fire was offered by the Yemeni government. The five conditions of the cease-fire were the surrender of mountain strongholds, the re-establishment of safe passage on roads, release of all the detained civilians and soldiers, return of all military and public equipment seized by Houthis and a withdrawal from all local authority property. And on January 25, Abdul Malek al-Houthi accepted the conditional truce to prevent further civilian casualties but warned that Houthis would retaliate if an offensive was launched either by the Yemeni government or the Saudis.⁸⁶ Though the truce was accepted by both the parties, it was

⁸² Common Dreams. "Yemen: Hundreds Unlawfully Arrested in Rebel Conflict," October 24, 2008. <https://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2008/10/24/yemen-hundreds-unlawfully-arrested-rebel-conflict>.

⁸³ Yemen rebels show 'seized' Saudi | News | Al Jazeera. "Yemen Rebels Show 'Seized' Saudi," November 9, 2009. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/11/9/yemen-rebels-show-seized-saudi>.

⁸⁴ BBC News. "Yemen Profile - Timeline," November 6, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>.

⁸⁵ Relief Web. "US/Yemen: Investigate Civilian Deaths from Airstrikes - Yemen," December 17, 2013. <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/usyemen-investigate-civilian-deaths-airstrikes>.

⁸⁶ Al Jazeera. "Yemen Rebels Renew Ceasefire Offer," January 30, 2010. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/1/30/yemen-rebels-renew-ceasefire-offer>.

never honored on the ground and the clashes between the Houthis against both Saudi and Yemeni forces continued.

It is quite challenging to review all the incidents- car bombings, on-ground clashes, border tensions with the Saudis among others. However, the crux of the above analysis is that the violent Houthi insurgency was just an antecedent to the upcoming Civil War. There were already tensions in Yemen and the Arab Spring created a power vacuum which served to harbor those tensions and empowered non-state actors. For the Houthis, the Arab Spring was an opportunity to institutionalize their influence by seizure of government facilities. As the Houthi insurgency took roots from the Ansarallah movement of the 1990s, the roots of the Arab Spring and the ultimate Yemeni Civil War of 2014 can be traced with the insurgency that began in 2004. Thus, before the Arab Uprisings and ongoing Civil War, Yemen had experienced several episodes of conflict and external powers have been present all along.

2.6. The Arab Spring and its implications for Yemen

The Arab Spring, a wave of popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, significantly impacted Yemen.⁸⁷ It started in Yemen on January 27, 2011, when a demonstration by over 16,000 protesters took place in Sana'a.⁸⁸ The mass protests, initially driven by demands for socio-economic reforms and political freedom, eventually led to the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled the country for over three decades.⁸⁹ Although President Saleh announced on February 3 that he would neither re-run for election in 2013, nor would he pass the power to his son, the protesters were not satisfied and held another demonstration on

⁸⁷ Juneau, Thomas. "Yemen and the Arab Spring: Elite Struggles, State Collapse and Regional Security." *Orbis* 57, no. 3 (June 2013): 408–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2013.05.004>.

⁸⁸ The Irish Times. "Yemenis in Anti-President Protest," January 27, 2011. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/yemenis-in-anti-president-protest-1.870787>.

⁸⁹ Brubaker, Dr. Rebecca. "Things Fall Apart: Holding the Centre Together through Yemen's 2011 Popular Uprising." *United Nations*, April 2018. <https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2753/PD-Yemen.pdf>.

February 3, 2011.⁹⁰ The Houthi participation in the Arab Spring began with the announcement of Houthi support by Abdul Malik al-Houthi for the pro-democracy protests on February 27, which prompted large crowds of Houthis to join protests across Northern Yemen.

As mentioned above, the Arab Spring was an opportunity for the Houthis to consolidate their presence in Yemen's political scene. Their approach was gradual. Initially, they focused on gaining power in their stronghold- the Sa'ada Province. On March 19, 2011, the Houthis engaged in a battle with the pro-government forces of Sheikh Uthman Mujalli in Sa'ada.⁹¹ After almost a week of fighting, Houthis forced the local governor to flee and declared their own administration of Sa'ada Province on March 26, 2011.⁹² Later on, July 8, the Houthis, emboldened with the capture of the Sa'ada Province, embarked on an expedition to capture the neighboring Al-Jawf Province. The Houthis encountered opposition from the Islah party, an off-shoot of Muslim Brotherhood and an alleged client of Saudi Arabia in Yemen.⁹³ Fighting in Al-Jawf continued for more than four months and both the Houthis and their opposition suffered high casualties, in various clashes, including in a car bombing in August that killed 14 Houthis. Al-Jawf governorate eventually fell to Houthis in late October 2011.⁹⁴ Certainly, with the capture of a second province in just months after the Arab Spring in Yemen, it can be inferred that the Houthis were able to greatly exploit the turbulence in the country to advance their influence. In November, the

⁹⁰ BBC News. "Yemen Protests: 20,000 Call for President Saleh to Go," February 3, 2011. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12353479>.

⁹¹ ReliefWeb. "Sa'ada Now Safer than Sana'a, Say Refugees - Yemen," June 1, 2011. <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/saada-now-safer-sana-say-refugees>.

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ Taylor, Letta. "Yemen's Hijacked Revolution." Yemen's Hijacked Revolution | Human Rights Watch, September 26, 2011. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/09/26/yemens-hijacked-revolution>.

⁹⁴ Islam Times. "Houthis Close to Control Hajjah Governorate, Amid Expectations of Expansion of Control over Large Parts of Northern Yemen," November 9, 2011. <https://www.islamtimes.org/en/news/112627/houthis-close-to-control-hajjah-governorate-amid-expectations-of-expansion-over-large-parts-northern-yemen>.

Houthis then turned their eye to the third province- Hajjah where they encountered the pro-government Kashir and Aahm tribes. They seized control of the Ash Sharaf District and gained access to the sea through the port of Midi. By gaining control of important highways in the Hajjah province, the Houthis secured a route to the capital Sana'a.⁹⁵

Meanwhile, Saleh, on November 23, 2011 signed a power-transfer agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh.⁹⁶ Under the provisions of this agreement, Saleh assented to transfer his power to his Vice-President, Mansur al-Hadi within 30 days, in exchange for immunity from prosecution.⁹⁷ The GCC deal was seen as an attempt to install a pro-Saudi government by many of the protesters and the Houthis.⁹⁸ The GCC initiative failed to address the root causes of Yemen's fragility and grievances of various segments of the population, including the Houthis, southern separatists, and marginalized groups.⁹⁹ The transitional government's weak governance capacity, combined with rampant corruption, political infighting, and a deteriorating economy, provided fertile ground for the escalation of the conflict.¹⁰⁰ The Houthi movement capitalized on the chaotic situation and the public's disillusionment with the transitional government to expand its influence and control, eventually seizing

⁹⁵ Al-Dawsari, Nadwa. "The Houthis and the Limits of Diplomacy in Yemen." Middle East Institute, May 6, 2021. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/houthis-and-limits-diplomacy-yemen>.

⁹⁶ Rashad, Marwa. "Yemen's Saleh Signs Deal to Give up Power." U.S., November 23, 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-idUSTRE7AM0D020111123>.

⁹⁷ Yemen's Saleh agrees to transfer power | News | Al Jazeera. "Saleh Signs Power Deal," November 24, 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/11/24/yemens-saleh-agrees-to-transfer-power-2>.

⁹⁸ McDowall, Angus. "Sectarian Hate Takes Root as Yemen Anti-Houthi Forces Push on Sanaa." U.S., October 21, 2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-marib-insight-idUSKCN0SF1AF20151021>.

⁹⁹ Lackner, Helen. "Yemen in Crisis: Road to War." PenguinRandomhouse.com, April 30, 2019. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/607053/yemen-in-crisis-by-helen-lackner/>.

¹⁰⁰ Muslimi, Farea Al. "Yemen's Stalled Political Transition Only Empowers Islamist Radicals." The National, August 7, 2013. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/yemen-s-stalled-political-transition-only-empowers-islamist-radicals-1.313911>.

the capital, Sana'a, in September 2014. This marked the beginning of the current phase of the Yemeni conflict, which has since evolved into a complex and devastating humanitarian disaster. On February 21, 2012, a presidential election was held in Yemen, winning 99.8% of the vote, al-Hadi took the oath of President in Yemen's parliament.¹⁰¹ However, the power transition was far from smooth as the GCC deal was undermined by Saleh and his allies and rejected by the Houthis. The power vacuum thus created, led to the alignment of some tribal groups with the Houthis, of some with the Islah party and emergence of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the south of Yemen. Between November 2011 and April 2012, 600 casualties were reported in the Hajjah province.¹⁰² While the clashes were ongoing in Hajjah and al-Jawf Provinces, Houthis sought to increase their influence in the capital city of Sana'a. In September 2012, they took advantage of the Anti-US protests of 2012 release of the innocence of Muslims and spread their own propaganda through posters in the capital. Some Sunni groups also alleged that the Houthis have used the protests as a means to smuggle weapons and fighters from their strongholds to Sana'a.

Although the Houthis were keen on capturing Sanaa, their strategy was to first consolidate their control over Sada, al Jawf and Hajjah Provinces before marching for Sanaa. Meanwhile they were also seeking a strategic alliance to reach the capital city. Seemingly surprising, Saleh formed an alliance with his former enemy, the Houthis and rendered his support. This alliance was possible as both the Houthis and Saleh were side-lined in the GCC power-sharing agreement, and the former President was still bent on clinging to power. Eventually 2014 heralded the beginning of Houthi takeover of Sanaa, known in popular culture as the Battle of Sanaa. The Houthis together with the pro-Saleh groups, held demonstrations against increased fuel prices in Sanaa on August 18, 2014. The demonstrations turned violent on September 9,

¹⁰¹ Kasinof, Laura. "Yemen Swears in New President to the Sound of Applause, and Violence." *New York Times*, February 25, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/world/middleeast/abed-rabu-mansour-hadi-sworn-in-as-yemens-new-president.html>.

¹⁰² Winter, Lucas. "Yemen's Huthi Movement in the Wake of the Arab Spring." *Combating Terrorism Center*, August 23, 2012. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/yemens-huthi-movement-in-the-wake-of-the-arab-spring/>.

2014, when pro-Houthi protesters marched on the cabinet office and were fired upon by security forces, killing seven protesters. There were further clashes between the Houthis and the Sunni hardliners of Islah Party on September 18, when the Houthis tried to seize control of Yemen TV. Finally, September 21, 2014, marked the fall of Sana'a, when the Houthis captured the government headquarters.¹⁰³

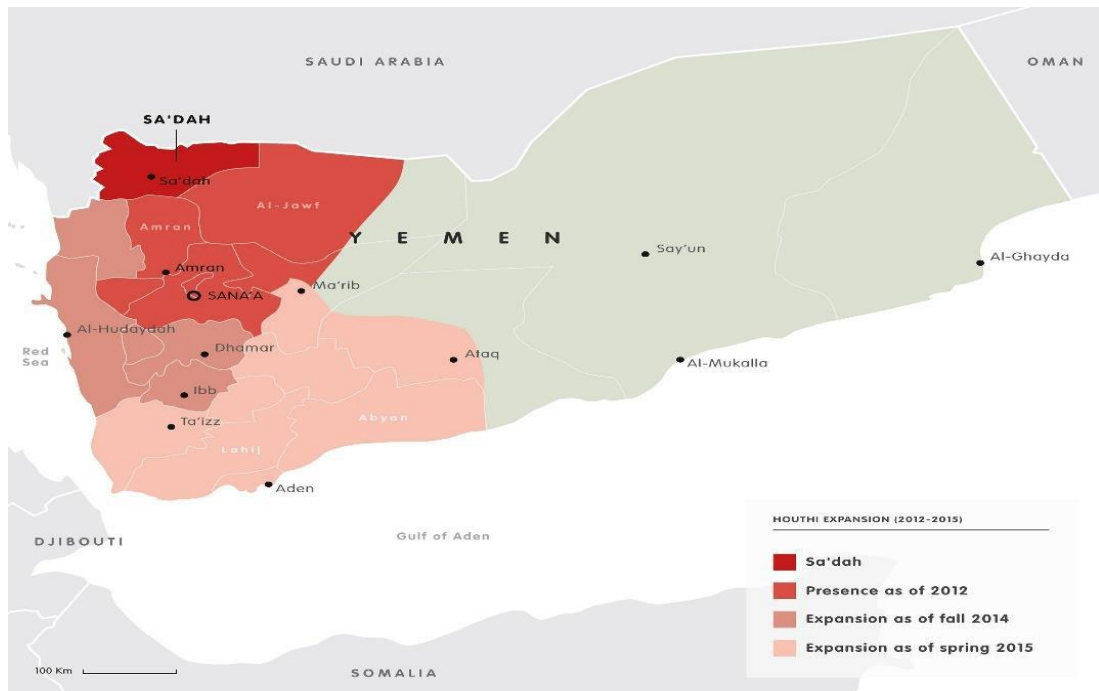


Figure 2.7 Houthis gradual expansion in Yemen.¹⁰⁴

The Houthi capture of Sanaa led to the resignation of Prime Minister Mohammed Basindawa and the fall of GCC-installed Hadi government.¹⁰⁵ For Saudi Arabia, this was the last straw and from then on, began external or rightly so, international intervention, that devolved the Tribal armed clashes to a full-scale Civil War.

¹⁰³ Karasik, Theodore. "The Fall of Sanaa: What next for Yemen?" Al Arabiya English, September 22, 2014. <https://english.alarabiya.net/views/news/middle-east/2014/09/23/The-fall-of-Sanaa-What-next-for-Yemen->.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

¹⁰⁵ Agency, Anadolu. "Yemen Shiite Rebels Seize Government HQ, PM Resigns." Daily Sabah, September 20, 2014. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/2014/09/21/yemen-shiite-rebels-seize-government-hq-pm-resigns>.

CHAPTER 3

YEMEN: DEVOLUTION TO A BROKEN STATE

This chapter is a continuation of the above analysis, in that Yemen's devolution from a fragile state to a broken state is analyzed. Since the Arab Spring, Yemen has been on a trajectory towards becoming a "broken state". Its complex society already rendered it fragile, however, socio-economic, and political factors combined to generate unprecedented violence and chaos that made foreign intervention viable. The tribal conflict made it difficult for the government to exercise control over law and order. Furthermore, widespread poverty and economic inequality coupled with government corruption generated dissatisfaction among the population, which contributed to its political instability. These political and socio-economic dynamics can be well understood with the help of several indicators.

According to UNs triennial review of 2021, Yemen is one of the Least Developed Countries in the world with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of 752 USD, much below the average of 1,274 USD for LDCs.¹⁰⁶ It is the poorest country in the Arab world. It has a high Economic and environmental vulnerability Index (EVI) of 35.1, measured across several indicators such as remoteness, victims of disaster, trade competitiveness among others.¹⁰⁷ According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Yemen's Human Development Index (HDI) in 2021, was 0.455 and was

¹⁰⁶ "2021 Triennial Review of the List of LDCs." *United Nations*, January 2022. https://www.un.org/technologybank/sites/www.un.org.technologybank/files/lcds_graduation_review_2021_for_info.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Three criteria used to determine Least Developed Countries status: Per capita income (gross national income per capita), Human assets (indicators of nutrition, health, school enrolment and literacy) and Economic vulnerability (indicators of natural and trade-related shocks, physical and economic exposure to shocks, and smallness and remoteness). (—Handbook on the Least Developed Country Category: Inclusion, Graduation and Special Support Measures, 2018, 6–7, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wpcontent/uploads/sites/45/2018CDPhandbook.pdf>.)

ranked 183 among 191 countries.¹⁰⁸ According to the World Bank’s Rule of Law indicator which takes into account Voice and Accountability; Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law; Control of Corruption as its parameters, Yemen ranks 182 among 191 countries.¹⁰⁹

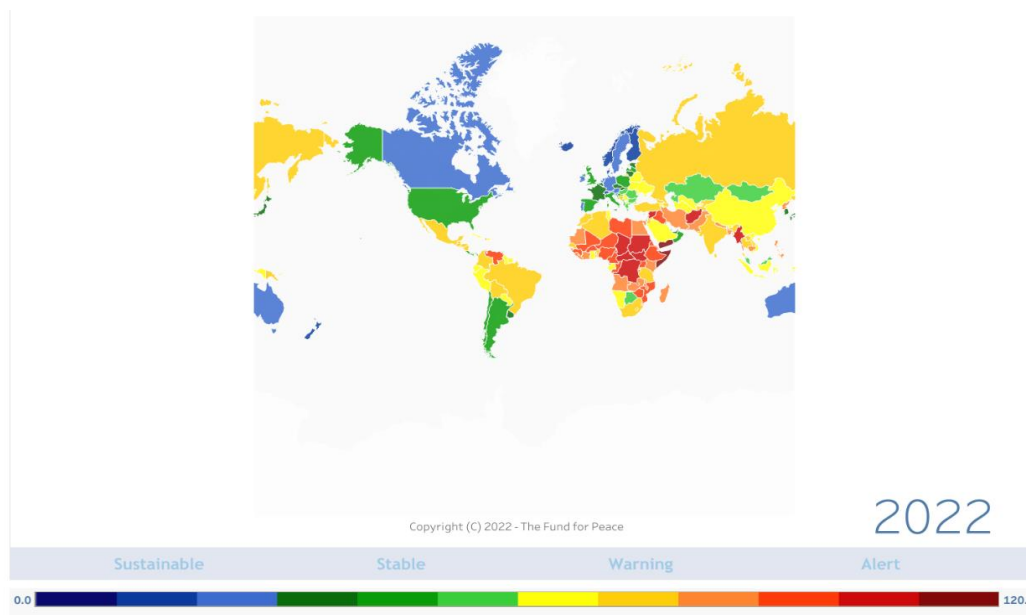


Figure 3.1 Mapping the Fragile State Index (FSI)

And as per the Fragile State Index (FSI) which measures risk and vulnerability in 179 countries with a score in a range of 0-120, higher score indicating higher fragility, in 2022, Yemen ranks as the most fragile state in the world with the highest score of 111.7.¹¹⁰ These indicators speak volume of Yemen’s socio-economic and political degradation.

¹⁰⁸ TheGlobalEconomy. “Yemen Human Development - Data, Chart,” January 2022. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Yemen/human_development/.

¹⁰⁹ World Bank. “Worldwide Governance Indicators | DataBank,” November 1, 2021. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators/Series/RL.EST>.

¹¹⁰ TheGlobalEconomy. “Yemen Fragile State Index,” 2022. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Yemen/fragile_state_index/.

After its long-time authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh was ousted in 2011, the transition of power was not smooth, and the Houthis saw an opportunity to seize control of the northern region. Houthi takeover of the capital jeopardized the interests of Saudi Arabia and hence it decided to intervene. Following the Saudi intervention, Iran began to support the Houthis against its main regional rival. Eventually, it attracted foreign intervention that made the power struggle protracted and provided a breeding ground for several militia groups, devolving into a tribal conflict. The war has led to a humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced, and facing food and medical shortages. It also destroyed the country's infrastructure, as well as led to its economic collapse. These factors have combined to create a situation in which Yemen is now considered a "broken state", characterized by a lack of effective government, widespread violence, and a humanitarian crisis.

3.1. Yemen civil war 2015

After losing the hold of the capital Sanaa, in 2015, al-Hadi attempted to announce a new federal constitution. He was opposed by the Houthis and Saleh fled to Saudi Arabia as the Houthis tried to arrest him. The ouster of the Hadi government from Sana'a led to the intervention of western-backed and Saudi-led coalition in Yemen in March 2015. The coalition included Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Senegal with logistical support from the USA, UK, and other western countries. Saudi Arabia asserted the protection of its southern border, the restoration of the Hadi government and the containment of Iran as its objectives for intervention in Yemen. Initially, the intervention succeeded in driving out Houthis from Aden in the South and Marib in the Northeast of Sanaa. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the chaos, AQAP established a mini state in Mukalla, east of Yemen in 2016. To get rid of the AQAP, UAE backed the secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC), a southern separatist group. In 2017, the Houthis fired missiles deep into the Saudi territories. Realizing the weakening position of the Houthis against the Saudi-led coalition, Saleh again switched sides. As he tried to escape Sanaa, in a bid to collude with the Saudis, he was captured by the Houthis and killed on December 4, 2017.



Figure 3.2 Control of key fronts as of June 2019.¹¹¹

Since the onset of external intervention, there have been attempts by the Saudi-led coalition forces to gain the control of strategic sites such as the ports which handle aid and commercial imports of Yemen. The UAE announced its intention to withdraw from the coalition in 2019, however its participation only increased recently with its special forces on ground in Yemen. In 2020, a power-sharing agreement was brokered between the Saudi-backed Hadi government and the UAE-supported STC. On December 30, 2020, the Houthis carried out a bomb attack at Aden international airport that killed 28 people, moments after a plane carrying members of the recently formed Yemeni government landed.¹¹² In January 2021, the Trump administration designated the Houthis as a terrorist group, which was widely condemned by Human Rights organizations asserting that this move would only stifle humanitarian efforts. Hence,

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² McKernan, Bethan. "Aden Airport Blasts Attack 'Directed at Yemen Government.'" *the Guardian*, December 30, 2020. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/30/aden-airport-blasts-kill-16-in-attack-directed-at-yemen-government>.

the newly elected Biden administration reversed this designation in February 2021.¹¹³ Although the coronavirus pandemic led to a temporary halt in fighting, nonetheless a permanent cease-fire remains a distant reality. Over the course of these nine years, the conflict has left 80 percent of the population dependent on aid for survival and killed approximately 100,000 people. Both the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition have been accused of indiscriminate attacks on civilians. According to Yemen Data Project (YDP), as of 2021, at least 30 percent of estimated 24,000 coalition bombings have hit civilian targets, causing almost two-thirds of reported civilian deaths.¹¹⁴

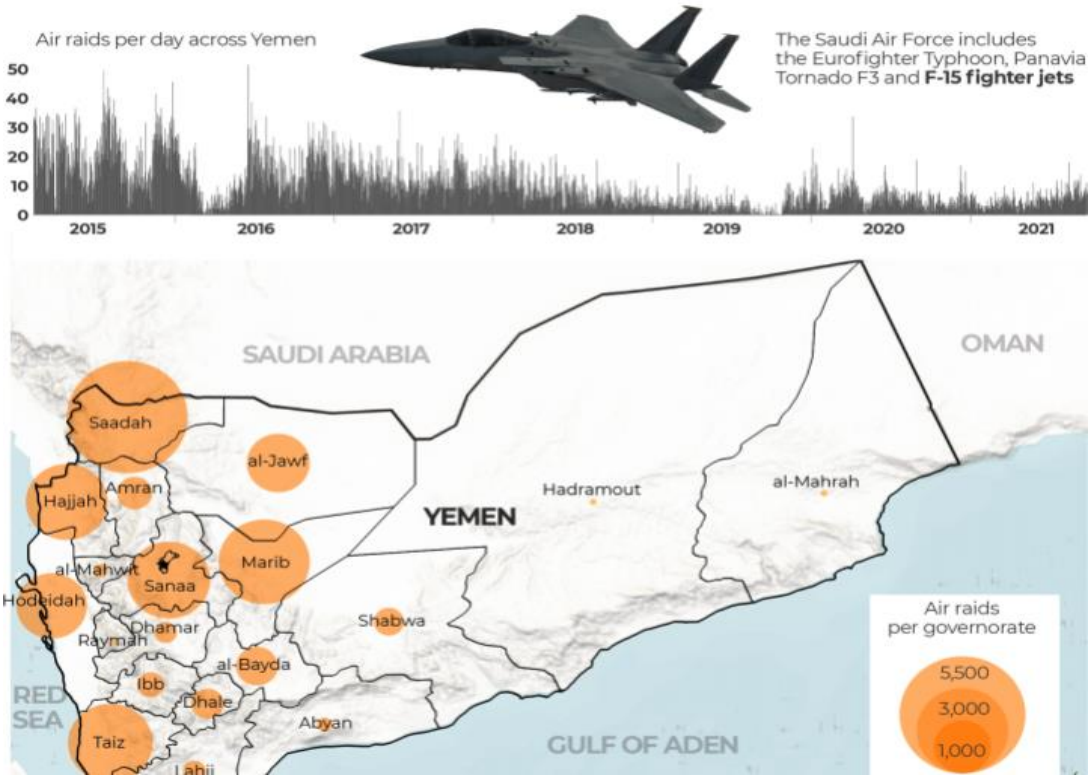


Figure 3.3 Extent of Air raids by Saudi-led coalition as of 2021.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Stepansky, Joseph. “Biden Admin Ends Trump-Era Houthi ‘Terrorist’ Designation.” Al Jazeera, February 16, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/16/biden-admin-ends-trump-era-houthi-terrorist-designation>.

¹¹⁴ yemendataproject.org. “Yemen Data Project.” Accessed January 16, 2023. <https://yemendataproject.org/index.html>.

¹¹⁵ Haddad, Mohammed. “Infographic: Yemen’s War Explained in Maps and Charts.” Al Jazeera, February 9, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/yemens-war-explained-in-maps-and-charts-interactive>.

Over 4 million Yemenis, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), are displaced within Yemen, while 280,000 have applied for refuge abroad.¹¹⁶ The UN has referred to this as the world's biggest humanitarian catastrophe, pushing the poor nation to the verge of starvation. Of Yemen's 29 million people, 24 million require humanitarian aid, and 20 million face food insecurity. Saudi Arabia has been unsuccessful in achieving significant dominance on ground despite constant air raids. Additionally, the coalitions' efforts to unify President Hadi's forces with the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) against the Houthis have been mostly ineffective, leaving the opposition bitterly split.

3.1.1. Sectarian Divisions and their Impact on the Conflict

Yemen's population is diverse in terms of religious affiliations, with the majority being Sunni Muslims and a significant minority being Zaidi Shia Muslims. Although sectarian divisions often caused friction in the society, it was not historically a major source of conflict in Yemen, however the ongoing crisis has increasingly taken on sectarian dimensions. The Houthi movement's Zaidi Shia identity and its perceived ties with Iran have contributed to the sectarian narrative of the conflict, further exacerbated by the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition and its regional Sunni allies.¹¹⁷ However, it is essential to recognize that the Yemeni conflict is not solely driven by sectarianism. Other factors, such as historical grievances, regional identities, tribalism, and socio-economic marginalization, have played significant roles in shaping the conflict dynamics. Government capacity in Yemen to establish legitimacy and address the core conflicts is extremely limited due to tribal relations and traditions that Yemenis have relied on to regulate conflict and establish justice for centuries. State and rule of law institutions are not only weak and ineffective but also widely untrusted. Tribal law has effectively handled conflicts between various tribes, between

¹¹⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) . “About OCHA Yemen,” September 5, 2022. <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen>.

¹¹⁷ Henderson, Simon. “The Rising Menace From Disintegrating Yemen.” WSJ, March 23, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/simon-henderson-the-rising-menace-from-disintegrating-yemen-1427153488>.

tribes and extractive companies, and between tribes and the government.¹¹⁸ It has successfully prevented and resolved conflicts over resources, development services, and land among others. Nationally, tribal mediators have played an important role in promoting political dialogue and building consensus among political groups. Although it may seem that tribes and the tribal system have been an impediment to state building and development in Yemen, there is more to the tribal alliances in Yemen than what the eyes can see. While there are tribal leaders who have been a part of the corrupt patronage network that undermined the state, there are often instances where government forces withdrew, tribes took responsibility and managed to provide a reasonable level of security within their territories and along the main roads that connect tribal governorates. Hence there are two sides to a coin, tribes have played an important role in holding Yemen together in the face of increasing political conflicts and harsh economic conditions. Tribalism is a deeply entrenched aspect of Yemeni society, with tribes playing a crucial role in governance and social organization. Tribal affiliations often supersede other identities, such as religious or regional affiliations, and can influence political alliances and the course of the conflict. The Yemeni state has historically relied on a patronage system to co-opt tribal leaders, providing them with resources and political influence in exchange for their loyalty and support.¹¹⁹ However, this system has also contributed to the fragmentation of the state and the entrenchment of corruption and patronage politics.¹²⁰

In the context of the current conflict, tribes have played a significant role in shaping alliances and power dynamics, with some tribes supporting the Houthi movement or the internationally recognized government, while others have sought to remain neutral or pursue their interests. The fluid nature of tribal alliances and the potential for fragmentation pose significant challenges for achieving a sustainable resolution to the

¹¹⁸ Caton, Steven C. "Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict." *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review* 9, no. 2 (December 1, 2018): 230–34. <https://doi.org/10.5325/bustan.9.2.0230>.

¹¹⁹ Alley: 392

¹²⁰ Philips, Sarah. "Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis." *Routledge* 76, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 102–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/hisn.12030_5.

conflict. According to a prominent Yemeni analyst, Abdul-Ghani al-Iryani, the Houthi-Salafi strife could further poison the once-relaxed relations between Shi'ites and Sunnis in Yemen, already strained by Iranian-Saudi rivalry.¹²¹ Iryani asserts that the sectarian identities were exploited by the ex-president Saleh to achieve his political ambitions. He explains that even though the Houthis were well-represented in Yemen's political, military, and tribal elites, for a long time, they kept their faith out of national politics - even as Salafi influence began to rise in mosques funded by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf neighbours. However, increased economic deprivation and political marginalization prompted them to voice their concerns. The government's radical military stance to crush their demands radicalized the movement. Although the conflict began as a political struggle, over time it has been intricately sectarianized.

3.1.2. Socio-economic factors contributing to the conflict

The Yemeni population has long suffered from widespread poverty, unemployment, and a lack of access to basic services, such as education, healthcare, and clean water. The unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, coupled with widespread corruption and the capture of state resources by political and tribal elites, has contributed to a sense of marginalization and disenfranchisement among various segments of the population.¹²²

The Houthi movement, southern separatists, and other armed groups have capitalized on these grievances to mobilize support and advance their agendas. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict and the collapse of the Yemeni state have exacerbated the country's socio-economic challenges, creating a vicious cycle of violence, deprivation, and instability. Conflicts over the ownership of resources not only account for a significant portion of the armed conflict (including grievances over wealth distribution and marginalization), but they have also exacerbated political disputes over the control of

¹²¹ Shuja Al-Deen, Maysaa. "The Houthi–Tribal Conflict in Yemen." *Carnegie Endowment*, April 23, 2019. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78969>.

¹²² Bonnefoy, Laurent, and Cynthia Schoch (ed.), 'The Yemeni State's Many Divisions', *Yemen and the World: Beyond Insecurity* (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Feb. 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190922597.003.0003>

institutions at the national and governorate levels. Control over important economic resources, such as oil and gas extraction and production facilities, ports, roads, and other crucial infrastructure, is a key factor in military dynamics. The destruction of vital infrastructure and production capacity, the monopolistic control of a small number of gatekeepers to crucial economic sectors, the presence of numerous internal and external trade barriers, the dissolution of central banking institutions, and an increase in economic autonomy, particularly in oil-producing governorates, are some of the main effects of the conflict. Different parties to a conflict use the economy as a tool to strengthen their own position. COVID-19 also impacted Yemen adversely as it was accompanied with a sharp decline its two main economic lifelines- oil, remittances, and essential imports because of broken global supply chains. The conflict's political, military, and economic aspects currently constitute an integrated set of interests and goals rather than three separate operational domains. This is especially relevant to how various parties and associated military units operate war economies that give priority to funding war efforts as well as the personal enrichment of important individuals. Additionally, it has a significant impact on the conduct of the banking system and monetary policy. Yemen's technocrats have the ability to run the country's economy, but conflicts at the highest levels of politics make their work difficult. The conflict in Yemen has intensified due to factors related to the global economy, which has also given rise to rent-seeking and monopolistic behaviour. To prevent greater public awareness of the connection between arms sales and the escalation of the Yemeni conflict after 2015 and their associated humanitarian consequences, it is alleged that some UN member states are influencing policy within the UN. The embargo is rather more effective in areas under Houthi control, suggesting that such instruments are more influenced by rent-seekers' economic goals.

3.2. Humanitarian cost of the conflict and role of international organizations

The convergence of multiple factors as severe financial and economic instability, stifling war, pandemic, and skyrocketing food prices have exposed Yemenis to famine and displacement. Since 2015, more than 3.6 million Yemeni citizens have been displaced. Despite an ongoing civil war, since 2015 of the total 233,000 deaths,

131,000 have been related to non-armed conflict-related factors, such as food insecurity and lack of access to healthcare services.¹²³

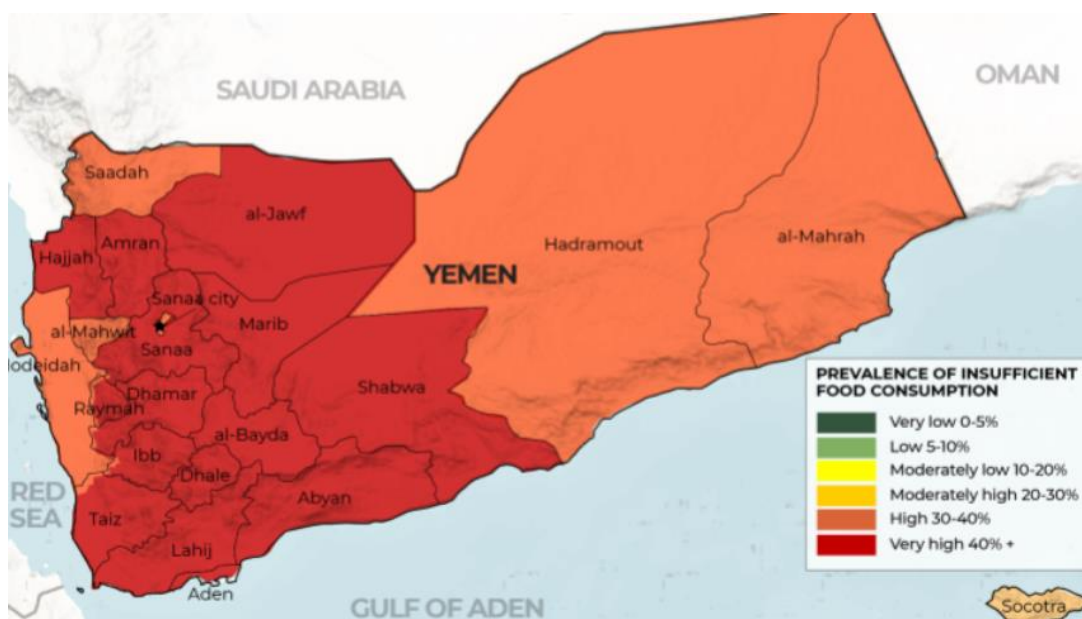


Figure 3.4 Extent of Food insecurity by region as of 2020.¹²⁴

The permanent closure of Yemen's air, maritime, and land ports in 2018, thereby isolating 27 million people propelled the food crisis as Yemen imports almost 90 percent of its food.¹²⁵ The closure of ports has resulted in a notable increase in food prices and a predictable strain on the availability of food, so substantially raising the likelihood of widespread starvation in Yemen. Additionally, the Yemeni riyal's depreciation since 2015 has contributed to a rise in food costs and decline in purchasing power. Even though 80 percent of Yemenis rely on humanitarian

¹²³ Wennmann, Achim, and Fiona Davies. “Economic Dimensions of the Conflict in Yemen.” *OCHA*, October 19, 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/economic-dimensions-conflict-Yemen-october-2020-wennmann-davies-eu-ocha-undp.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Haddad, Mohammed. “Infographic: Yemen’s War Explained in Maps and Charts.” *Al Jazeera*, February 9, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/yemens-war-explained-in-maps-and-charts-interactive>.

¹²⁵ Hanna, Taylor, David K. Bohl, and Jonathan D. Moyer. “Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery.” *ReliefWeb*, November 23, 2021. <https://www.undp.org/yemen/publications/assessing-impact-war-yemen-pathways-recovery>.

assistance, the United Nations has reduced food supply to Yemen owing to a shortage of finances. The World Food Program (WFP) has stated from January 2022 that 8 million Yemenis will get "just half" of the agency's daily minimum ration. The organization highlighted that it would require more than a billion dollars in 2022 to provide food aid to Yemeni households in need. Flooding is another significant element leading to increased food costs. In October 2008, April 2020, and July 2021, floods repeatedly harmed both private and public property, as well as food supplies. Yemen's susceptibility to malnutrition has been exacerbated by several obstacles, such as the civil war's ongoing instability, the continuing fall of humanitarian supplies, disrupted supply chain systems, declining purchase power, and inflation. International organizations such as UN, through its WFP wing has been delivering food relief on the ground in Yemen, providing food and financial assistance for 13 million people, however, since March 2020, its funding has significantly reduced due to the escalation of political crisis and allegations of misuse of funds. The provision of aid is a short-term solution; hence it is important for the international organizations to pressurize the involved parties to resolve the debilitating conflict.

3.2.1. Famine, food insecurity, healthcare system, and the spread of diseases

Yemen, facing unprecedented food security crisis, is one of the most impoverished countries in the Arabian Peninsula, with nearly 80% of the population living below poverty line. According to UN, approximately 23 million people (two-thirds of the total population) need urgent humanitarian assistance, making it the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. With a GDP of 23.49 billion USD in 2018, Yemen contributes only 0.02 percent to the global economy.¹²⁶ Even with humanitarian aid, about 45 percent of the population, still lack access to food. Concretely, 47,000 people have been pushed into complete famine, and 11 million have food insecurity that is approaching crisis levels.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ World Bank. "World Bank GDP Data," 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org>.

¹²⁷ Center for Preventive Action. "War in Yemen | Global Conflict Tracker," February 7, 2023. <https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-yemen>.

In 2022, 23.4 million people were estimated to need humanitarian assistance in 2022, 12.9 million of whom were estimated to be in acute need, 19 million people were food insecure, 17.8 million people lack access to safe water and adequate sanitation services while 21.9 million people lack access to basic healthcare.¹²⁸ Endemic violence, a deteriorating economy, mounting food insecurity and recurring disease outbreaks have all but collapsed the country's health system. Across Yemen currently, 46 percent of all health facilities are only partially functioning or completely out of service due to shortages of staff, funds, electricity, medicines, supplies, and equipment. Another detrimental effect of food insecurity is the spread of diseases. Cholera has been rife in Yemen since its breakout in 2016. More than 320,000 cholera cases and 1,700 fatalities were recorded by the WHO in 2017, with an estimated one million cases in 2018.¹²⁹ There is certainly a strong link between poor health and susceptibility to cholera as majority of the children who contracted cholera were originally malnourished and weak. Civil war and the resulting economic crisis not only tax the crumbling healthcare system but also exacerbates already existing socioeconomic disparities and raise death rates, particularly for youth. Some of the long-term impacts include poor child learning and cognitive development, mental problems in mothers, chronic illnesses including asthma, and suicidal thoughts. Some have resorted to child labour, early marriage, or begging to fulfil basic needs.

3.2.2. Impact on civilians- disappearances, displacement, and refugee crisis

Another devastating consequence of the Civil is the displacement of civilians both internally and externally. According to the UNHCR, approximately 4 million people have been internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict, and many have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, such as Djibouti, Somalia, and Ethiopia. This

¹²⁸ ReliefWeb. "Yemen: As Global Food Insecurity Crisis Escalates, Hope Shrinks for Millions Already Suffering from Extreme Hunger | IFRC," July 10, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-global-food-insecurity-crisis-escalates-hope-shrinks-millions-already-suffering-extreme-hunger-enar>.

¹²⁹ Families in despair as cholera outbreak spreads across Yemen | UNICEF. "Families in Despair as Cholera Outbreak Spreads across Yemen," July 18, 2017. <https://www.unicef.org/stories/families-despair-cholera-outbreak-spreads-across-yemen>.

massive displacement has further fuelled the humanitarian crisis, with millions struggling to procure necessities.¹³⁰ Besides what is already discussed of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen, there are several dimensions to the suffering of the civilians in the zero-sum game in Yemen. Hundreds of men have been abducted in Yemen, as per the report by Abigail Fielding-Smith in the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.¹³¹ According to family members and local human rights activists, individuals in uniform enter the houses and forcefully takeaway the male members of the family. The Bureau has received reports from desperate parents who wonder about their sons' whereabouts and have nowhere to turn for assistance. These findings are confirmed by a study published by a team of UN experts detailing enforced disappearances in the UAE-controlled parts of south Yemen. The soldiers are thought to be part of the UAE-controlled Elite Forces militia. It is alleged that the captives are held in secret jail location near the al Riyyan airport in southeast Yemen, where they are supposedly jammed into metal shipping containers and are questioned to gather information to guide the raids and air strikes. In 2015, UAE intervened in Yemen along with a coalition led by Saudi Arabia, it has since worked in coordination with the US to fight the Yemeni branch of al Qaeda (AQAP) in the southern port city of Mukalla. Although it is presumed that Elite Force arrests are an attempt to round up al Qaeda suspects, it often, perhaps mistakenly, targets civilians. As AQAP was the de facto government of the city for a year, most of the residents technically worked for the group at some point. Abu Ali says this was the case with his son. "He was married, he needed work, so he worked," said Abu Ali. "Al Qaeda was controlling everything." Some people are also being apprehended for being members of Islah, a Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated political movement. Nonetheless, the reports of disappearances raise questions USs choice of allies in its fight against Islamic extremism and its

¹³⁰ International Organization for Migration. "Yemen: Millions of Displaced Persons and Migrants Desperate for Aid Amid Funding Shortfalls," September 22, 2021. <https://www.iom.int/news/yemen-millions-displaced-persons-and-migrants-desperate-aid-amid-funding-shortfalls>.

¹³¹ Fielding Smith, Abigail. "Kidnapped and Never Seen Again: UAE Accused of Forced Disappearances in Yemen." The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, June 8, 2017. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-06-08/disappearance-and-torture-uae-forces-accused-of-widespread-abuse-in-yemen>.

complicity in the war. It is alleged that the prisoners are subjected to violence, stripped, and are held in containers with temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius. The recruitment of child soldiers by the Houthis is yet another detriment has been widely condemned by international organizations, however it remains widespread depriving innocent children of their future.¹³²

Besides poverty, food insecurity, disappearances, lack of healthcare and economic decline, the war has yet another devastating impact on the lives of Yemenis- ruthless planting of mines. Since 2018, according to the Civilian Impact monitoring Project (CIMP), over 1,800 civilians have been injured or killed in Yemen's explosive Remnants of War (ERW) – 689 of whom were women and children. It is estimated that land mines would continue to impact the 31.8 million Yemenis for years to come.¹³³ Many people and vital livestock have been maimed by mine-related accidents resulting from anti-personnel mines. Although the Yemeni Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC), with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cleared hundreds of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in the area, mines are so pervasive that it is impossible to clear them completely.

3.2.3. Role of international community in addressing the humanitarian crisis

In 2022, approximately 7.8 million Yemenis benefited from the provision of medical equipment, supplies, and other support by international funding. The agencies involved were WHO and 44 Health Cluster partners (4 other UN agencies, 39 international and local NGOs, and Yemen's Ministry of Public Health and Population). However, the funding was considerably below what was needed to meet the identified

¹³² Al Jazeera. "Houthis Continue to Recruit Child Soldiers, despite Yemen Truce," June 16, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/16/houthis-continue-to-recruit-child-soldiers-despite-yemen-truce>.

¹³³ CIMP. "The Long-Term Price of Yemen's Conflict," November 13, 2022. <https://yemen.un.org/en/176836-long-term-price-yemen%E2%80%99s-conflict>.

and urgent health needs of over 12.6 million people.¹³⁴ The underfunding of the Health Cluster in Yemen in 2023 will lead to 1,000 unsupported health facilities, 10 million persons including 7.9 million children without needed access to health services; 1.1 million children with acute malnutrition facing deteriorating health or death; and 2.9 million women of reproductive age lacking maternal, child, and reproductive services. Across Yemen currently, 46 percent of all health facilities are only partially functioning or completely out of service due to shortages of staff, funds, electricity, medicines, supplies, and equipment. In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided life-saving medical and healthcare services to 12.6 million Yemenis – 62 percent of last year’s Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The World Health Organization (WHO) takes a holistic approach, focusing on improving the health of the most vulnerable sections and providing long-term support for Yemen's national health system and Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP). WHO invests its resources on rehabilitating existing health care facilities, setting up laboratories, creating disease outbreak surveillance system, and improving health information management.

Given that humanitarian aid is a significant economic sector in Yemen, it forms an important element of the conflict's economic dimension. Together with remittances and oil income, total aid, which generates roughly USD 4 billion annually, is a crucial economic sector and source of foreign currency. The supply of humanitarian aid has been influenced by both foreign and local parties to the Yemeni war in an effort to further their own objectives. A large portion of Yemen's population has access to vital health and subsistence services only because of the humanitarian aid provided by the donor countries and international organizations. Food insecurity, responses to disease outbreaks, and social safety nets for marginalized and minority communities are the main areas of attention for humanitarian actors. International humanitarian aid provide a significant portion of Yemen's population with important life-sustaining assistance, including 13–14 million individuals for food aid and support for 2.5 million

¹³⁴ WHO. “Yemen’s Health Crisis: WHO Calls for Increased Funding to Save Millions of Yemenis,” February 26, 2023. <https://yemen.un.org/en/220929-yemen%E2%80%99s-health-crisis-who-calls-increased-funding-save-millions-yemenis>.

malnourished children. Recently, the distribution of aid in northern Yemen have gotten more challenging. These challenges are a result of the numerous obstacles on several levels. Many local political players see foreign humanitarian organizations as competitors in their quest for legitimacy and seek to regulate the distribution of food and other necessities to the areas under their control. Additionally, they restrict access to aid in order to preserve clientelist political ties or finance security activities. It is also alleged that the local groups sell aid to secure funding for advancing their propaganda. These allegations have forced international humanitarian actors to strengthen their risk management strategy and hence caused a significant decline in allocation of humanitarian aid to Yemen.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE OVERRIDING INTERNATIONAL STAKES

The Civil War already in its ninth year has ravaged the lives of 33 million people. Many different groups on a global scale have gotten involved in a bid to further their own strategic objectives and allay their respective fears of national security. The local parties involved are the Hadi Government forces, the Houthis and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) backed by their regional supporters as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) respectively. As discussed in the previous chapters, the case of sectarianism, tribalism and historical context certainly plays a role in the conflict. However, it would be reductionist to solely access the conflict on those parameters as paramount.

4.1. Regional actors- Quest for Regional Domination

This section refers to John Mearsheimer's offensive realism to examine state interests. It would largely focus on Saudi Arabia and Iran's longstanding rivalry of regional dominance, frequently referred to as a proxy war in the literature. This term is often employed to contextualize the relationship as they support competing actors in different conflicts without being in open conflict. Yemen's civil war escalated from a power competition between local players into a wider regional conflict driven by external powers. It has been called the "cold war" of the Middle East's newest front.

The war in Yemen would be seen as part of the power politics of the two major superpowers in their pursuit of regional hegemony from an offensive realist perspective. The relative gains of power are executed through proxy, in this case, the Iranian support to Houthis and Saudi-led coalition support to the Hadi government. The Saudi Iranian geopolitical rivalry plays out in Yemen through the support of opposing factions in the ongoing civil war. According to a report "Twenty-first century proxy warfare" by Candace Rondeaux and David Sterman, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya,

Ukraine, Syria, and Yemen have become the battleground for proxy warfare.¹³⁵ For several decades, this rivalry has been studied under the lens of theory of balance of power and pursuit of regional hegemony. Although both the frameworks have been useful in understanding this complex relationship, offensive realism presents a stronger case for more aggressive participation by the stakeholders involved. Offensive realism, a neorealist approach pioneered by Mearsheimer in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* contextualizes the political interests, shifts in power dynamics, and provides the fundamental assumptions needed to define the power-acquiring goals of the two competing states.¹³⁶

Mearsheimer explains why countries compete for power and pursue self-interest, assuming that powerful states countries to be obsessed with expanding their dominance and aiming for hegemony. This is seen in Saudi Arabia and Iran's stated goals of becoming regional superpowers. Before analysing the proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a careful examination of offensive neorealism and its contrast with its defensive counterpart introduced by Kenneth Waltz would help to view the current dynamics under the lens of theoretical framework. The tenets that lie at heart of the offensive neorealism theory are:

1. Great powers are the main actors in world politics.
2. Anarchy defines the current state of the international system.
3. All players have offensive military capability.
4. States cannot know with absolute certainty intentions of other states.
5. All states pursue their own survival first and foremost.

¹³⁵ Rondeaux, Candace, and David Sterman. "Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare: Confronting Strategic Innovation in a Multipolar World." *New America*, February 20, 2019. <http://newamerica.org/international-security/reports/twenty-first-century-proxy-warfare-confronting-strategic-innovation-multipolar-world/>.

¹³⁶ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780393020250>.

6. States are rational actors, capable of devising effective tactics that increase their chances of survival.

Offensive realism is much like defensive neorealism, in that it assumes an anarchy in international order with no supranational central authority to enforce accountability or control the use of force. States are presumed to be rational actors and are uncertain of intentions of other states. The anarchic nature exacerbates uncertainty, forcing states to prioritize their own survival above everything else. And uncertainty is heightened by the fact that all states are presumed to be rational and want to maximize their own self-interest, implying all states have same objective. According to Mearsheimer, increased strength decreases the threat to survival and hence states are motivated to increase their authority as a defence mechanism against this constant danger of attack to its survival. Hence, they often resort to military tactics to ensure their survival.

However, the two frameworks differ in their evaluation of the behaviour of major powers in international system and at the question of power projection. Defensive neorealism assumes all pursuits of power towards attaining a sufficient level of self-security, and then the focus shifts to power balancing with other actors to assure continued dominance.¹³⁷ However, its offensive counterparts asserts that states do not get satisfied with status-quo and engage in inter-state competition which eventually leads to conflict and war as a potential outcome. Furthermore, they argue that if a state gets too much power, it becomes a threat to other players which results in an alliance against the powerful state. In Mearsheimer's view, the need for more power is incessant, and ever desirable. He believes that presence of anarchy in the international system does not allow for the status quo to prevail and drives states to seek ever-increasing levels of power in pursuit of hegemony.

Hence, to accumulate power, the states strengthen their military and tend to be aggressive as their survival is insured only by annihilating any potential threats.

¹³⁷ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*, 1979. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9780075548522>.

Fundamentally, potent, and capable military bolsters the states to undertake adventurism only for the sake of obliterating *perceived* threat.



Figure 4.1 Involvement of regional actors in Yemen.¹³⁸

The Saudi Iranian rivalry in Yemen is further complicated by the presence of other actors and their respective interests, such as the UAE, which has also played a significant role in the Yemen conflict and has its own set of interests. This geopolitical rivalry has led to a prolonged and devastating civil war in Yemen, which has created a humanitarian crisis, with millions of people in need of assistance and protection. The war has also allowed Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS to gain a foothold in the country, further exacerbating the situation. Regardless the conflict has taken on a broader regional dimension, with the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia playing a crucial role in shaping the course of the crisis.

¹³⁸ Haddad, Mohammed. "Infographic: Yemen's War Explained in Maps and Charts." Al Jazeera, February 9, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/yemens-war-explained-in-maps-and-charts-interactive>.

4.1.1. Saudi support for the regime

Saudi Arabia's interests in Yemen are multifaceted and include both strategic and security concerns and it has a history of intervention in Yemen's internal affairs as discussed in the previous chapter. The Saudis provide backing for a range of forces in the complex Yemeni environment including tribal groups and former military units, often utilizing networks structured by Yemen's Islah party. Some of the main interests are for its continued offensive in Yemen in support of installing the Hadi government are- Border security, countering the regional power shifts and protecting the oil rich region.

Firstly, Yemen shares a long border with Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government is concerned about the potential for instability and violence spilling over from Yemen into its own territory. Secondly, Saudi Arabia sees Yemen as a battleground in its ongoing geopolitical rivalry with Iran. The Saudi government contends that Iran supports the Houthi rebels in Yemen, and it sees the conflict as an opportunity to counter Iran's influence in the region.¹³⁹ Thirdly, Yemen is situated near a strategically important waterway, the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, through which a significant amount of the world's oil passes. Saudi Arabia sees the control of this strait as crucial to its own economic interests as it relies heavily on oil exports. And finally, the protection of its southern provinces as Saudi Arabia's southern provinces are home to a large number of Yemeni immigrants, and many of these immigrants have family ties to Yemen. The Saudi government is concerned about the potential for instability in Yemen to affect these communities and create a security threat. And lastly, its desire to pursue regional dominance as it is a regional power, and it sees the stability and security of the region as crucial to its own interests. It sees its involvement in the Yemen conflict to maintain its dominance in the region and protect its own national security.

¹³⁹ Wintour, Patrick. "Why Is Saudi Arabia in Yemen and What Does It Mean for Britain?" the Guardian, March 8, 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/08/why-saudi-arabia-in-yemen-what-does-it-mean-for-britain>.

The Saudi-led coalition that included the United Arab Emirates and other regional allies, intervened in the conflict in 2015 to restore the internationally recognized government and counter the perceived Iranian influence in Yemen, however since then the landscape of interests has evolved significantly.¹⁴⁰ Comparing the Saudi and UAEs interests, for Saudi Arabia, the intervention has been more ideological and strategic in nature, to curtail Houthi (and by extension, Iranian) power in the country while UAEs intervention is primarily motivated by economic and political power. Both sides have opposing interests and are pursuing different strategies in Yemen.

4.1.2. Iranian support to Houthis

Iran's support for Yemen's Houthi rebels is driven by a number of factors, including strategic and ideological concerns. Though Iran has apparently had limited military coordination with the Houthis since 2004, it significantly increased its backing in the wake of Houthi advances in Yemen in 2014. Nonetheless, the extent of Iranian support for the Houthis is debatable, and Iran's influence is nowhere like as strong as it is in Syria or Iraq. Iranian involvement in the Yemeni conflict is motivated by three primary factors.

While Saudi Arabia has been providing military, financial, and logistical support to the government and has been leading a coalition of countries in a bombing campaign against the Houthis since 2015, Iran, on the other hand, is believed to be providing political, financial, and military support to the Houthis.¹⁴¹ This includes providing weapons and training to the Houthi fighters, as well as political support in the form of diplomatic recognition. Iran has also been accused of providing the Houthis with missile and drone technology, which the group has used to target Saudi Arabia. Iran's role in the conflict is controversial, while some analysts argue that Tehran's support

¹⁴⁰ Smith, Ben. "Yemen's Fragile Peace Process." *UK Parliament*, March 27, 2019. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8536/>.

¹⁴¹ Nichols, Michelle, and Jonathan Landay. "Iran Provides Yemen's Houthis 'lethal' Support, U.S. Official Says." *U.S.*, April 21, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-usa-idUSKBN2C82H1>.

for the Houthi movement has been limited and opportunistic, others contend that Iran has provided significant military and financial assistance to the group.

One of the main reasons is to counter the influence of Saudi Arabia in the region. Iran sees Yemen as a battleground in its ongoing geopolitical rivalry with Saudi Arabia and it believes that by supporting the Houthi rebels, it can counter Saudi Arabia's influence in the region.¹⁴² Iran also sees the Houthi rebels as a useful proxy in the region. The Houthis are a predominantly Shia group and share some ideological similarities with Iran. Iran sees the Houthis as a way to exert its influence in the region without having to directly intervene.

Another reason for Iran's support for the Houthis is to gain access to the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which are strategically important waterways. The control of these waterways would give Iran a significant advantage in its ability to project power in the region and access to the international trade routes. Finally, Iran's support for the Houthis can also be seen as an attempt to challenge the United States and its allies in the region. For Iran, the conflict in Yemen as an opportunity to challenge the US and its allies and to demonstrate its ability to shape the political and security landscape in the region.¹⁴³

4.1.3. Emirati aspirations in the regional affairs

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been a part of the Saudi-led coalition involved in the Yemen conflict since 2015, yet referring to the Saudi Emirati coalition can be misleading as the UAE has backed different actors than its “elder brother” Saudi Arabia, mostly relying upon southern secessionists and Salafist forces. UAE backed forces have at times come into conflict with Saudi backed forces in large part due to the UAE's greater opposition to expressions of political Islam and particularly

¹⁴² Al-Sulami, Dr. Mohammed. “Yemen’s Role in Iran’s Strategic Plan.” Arab News, January 24, 2022. <https://arab.news/rj28n>.

¹⁴³ Ramani, Samuel. “How Is Iran Responding to Biden’s Policy Shift on Yemen?” Middle East Institute, March 9, 2021. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/how-iran-responding-bidens-policy-shift-yemen>.

militarized political Islam. UAE has had a complex and evolving role in the conflict, and its interests and objectives have shifted over time.¹⁴⁴ It has also revised its foreign policy to project a more active role in world affairs as part of its status-seeking approach.

The UAE's primary involvement in the Yemen conflict is to counter the influence of Iran in the region. It perceives Iranian support to the Houthi rebels in Yemen as a threat to the status-quo for the gulf monarchies and sees its engagement in the conflict as a method to undermine Iran's influence in the area. Another reason for the UAE's involvement in the Yemen conflict is to protect its own security. The UAE is concerned about the potential for instability and violence in Yemen to spill over into its own territory.

The UAE has also had economic interests in Yemen, particularly in the southern port city of Aden as it invested in the development of the which is a gateway for trade and commerce in the region.¹⁴⁵ In the past, the UAE has supported several different factions in the Yemen conflict, including the government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a separatist group which seeks greater autonomy or independence for southern Yemen. However, in recent years, the UAE has reduced its military presence in Yemen and has shifted its focus to support of the STC and other southern separatist groups.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith. "Yemen on the Brink: How the UAE Is Profiting from the Chaos of Civil War | Ghaith Abdul-Ahad." *the Guardian*, December 21, 2018. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/21/yemen-uae-united-arab-emirates-profiting-from-chaos-of-civil-war>.

¹⁴⁵ D. Johnsen, Gregory. "The UAE's Three Strategic Interests in Yemen." Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, February 24, 2022. <https://agsiw.org/the-uaes-three-strategic-interests-in-yemen/>.

¹⁴⁶ TRT World. "Why Are Saudi and the UAE Competing in Southern Yemen?," May 13, 2020. <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-are-saudi-and-the-uae-competing-in-southern-yemen-36281>.

4.2. Extra-regional actors

The allegation of western complicity in the Yemeni conflict is no surprise. This section highlights the overriding international stakes and collective interests of global powers that lay at the junction of this war. To analyse these dynamics with a theoretical perspective, the neorealist theory of international actors and internal conflicts pioneered by John Stedman in his seminal article would complement the theoretical framework of offensive realism discussed in the previous section.¹⁴⁷ The theory of international actors and internal conflicts sets the following assumptions:

1. The principal actors in international relations are states.
2. States are a whole and cannot be broken down into smaller subcategories.
3. To address intrastate conflicts, it is vital to address developments within state.

Stedman asserts that the wars that start internally, have several external factors and multiple layers. He explains that the wars that start as a domestic struggle are often exacerbated by the international actors as they exploit internal weaknesses to advance their respective interests and hence evolve as a full-scale civil war. Stedman classifies the influence of external players to unintended and purposive actions in conflict escalation. A faulty judgment made owing to an inadequate assessment of the situation fall under the category of unintended actions, while specific assistance for certain organizations or groups involved in a conflict is an instance of purposive actions. It is noteworthy that as globalization picked pace, that is, from 1990 onwards, there has been a significant increase in the number of civil wars across the globe. Since internal stability within a country heavily influence the affairs of its neighbours and hence counter-reactions from neighbouring countries are quite likely. Some of these reactions are to avert the spill-over such as the burden of having to host refugees fleeing from the conflict torn country or reap strategic gains. In Yemen's case however, its geographical location as it sits on the heart of world trade routes, the internal conflict has garnered sufficient intervention from most global powers. This intervention has been in form of unintended as well as purposive action.

¹⁴⁷ John Stedman, Stephen. "International Actors and Internal Conflicts." *Rockefeller Brothers Fund*, 1999.

Another danger that Stedman points out is that often external actors do not have an accurate assessment of the situation on ground, hence their interventions may fuel escalation and civilians may often become prospective targets because of information asymmetry. In Yemeni Civil war, as mentioned in chapter three about the case of Mukalla city, civilians have been wrongfully targeted by military forces for their perceived membership to an organization. The inability to distinguish between hostile fighters and non-military civilians frequently leads to unfortunate events with serious repercussions. Furthermore, another factor that contributes to the conflict is that the domestic warring groups are often linked with external players through financial or military support. And lastly, Stedman highlights that often the external player's gain from domestic struggle and intensification of conflict outweigh against the no conflict scenario.

4.2.1. Global power's involvement: geopolitical interests and power dynamics

Yemen's Civil War has witnessed the involvement of major world powers including but not limited to United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.



Figure 4.2 External intervention in 2017.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Al Jazeera. "UN Blasts Saudi Coalition for Children Deaths in Yemen," August 18, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/8/18/un-saudi-coalition-attacks-kill-many-children-in-yemen>.

Table 4.1 Involvement of global powers in Yemen

Country	Involvement
Saudi Arabia	Leads the coalition of Arab states in support of the Hadi government, conducts airstrikes on Houthi strongholds
United Arab Emirates	Supports Southern Transitional Council (STC), deployed troops, provided military and financial support to the Yemeni government
Iran	supports the Houthis by providing weapons and training
United States	Indirect participation through regional allies, provides military support, including intelligence sharing, logistical support, and weapons sales, to Saudi Arabia and the UAE
United Kingdom	provides arms sales and military support to Saudi Arabia and the UAE
France	provides arms sales and military support to Saudi Arabia and the UAE
Russia	accused of supporting the Houthis through Iran
China	provides diplomatic support and arms to Saudi Arabia

The west, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, have been complicit in the Yemen war through their support for the Saudi-led coalition, which has been fighting against the Houthi rebels since 2015. Both superpowers have provided the Saudi-led coalition with a wide range of military, financial, and logistical support which includes weapons sales, intelligence sharing, and mid-air refuelling for coalition fighter jets. The US and UK have been criticized for providing arms to Saudi Arabia, since the Saudi-led coalition's airstrikes have been responsible for many civilian deaths

and widespread destruction in Yemen. U.S. asserts that the end-goal for this assistance is to restore the UN-recognized government of Yemen and preserve Saudi territorial integrity from incursion by Yemen-based Houthi rebels. Deepening Iranian support for the Houthi rebels has also reinforced U.S. concern for Yemen's trajectory.

The Saudi-led coalition's operations in Yemen have led to civilian casualties and collateral damage, prompting concerns from the international humanitarian community and U.S. Congress. Recent congressional and administration debate surrounding U.S. support for the coalition has raised important questions and implications about how the United States increasingly relies on partners to achieve common security objectives in complex operating environments. The majority of U.S. assistance has consisted of aerial targeting assistance, intelligence sharing, and mid-flight aerial refuelling for Saudi and UAE aircraft.¹⁴⁹ Secretary of Defense James Mattis has emphasized that U.S. support is focused on improving coalition processes and procedures, emphasizing the laws of armed conflict and best practices for reducing civilian casualties. General Joseph Votel has reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to Saudi Arabia, stating that U.S.-backed initiatives are intended to reduce civilian casualties and enhance the effectiveness of the overall campaign.¹⁵⁰ Although a joint resolution introduced in the Senate in late February would have removed U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities in or affecting the Republic of Yemen, the overall Senate blocked the resolution on March 20, raising important questions about U.S. support for the Saudi intervention in Yemen.¹⁵¹ Secretary Mattis warned that restrictions on U.S. military support could have the opposite of the intended effect of increasing civilian casualties, undermining counterterrorism efforts, and reducing U.S. influence with Saudi Arabia.

¹⁴⁹ Robbins, Timothy, Hijab Shah, and Melissa Dalton. "U.S. Support for Saudi Military Operations in Yemen." CSIS, March 23, 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-support-saudi-military-operations-yemen>.

¹⁵⁰ Pawlyk, Oriana. "General Argues to Continue Refueling Saudi Planes in Yemen Fight." Military.com, March 14, 2018. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/03/13/general-argues-continue-refueling-saudi-planes-yemen-fight.html>.

¹⁵¹ Widakuswara, Patsy. "White House Defends Support for Saudis in Yemen War." VOA, December 17, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/white-house-defends-support-for-saudis-in-yemen-war-/6880474.html>.

Over the course of the conflict, the US policy has evolved significantly. While Obama administration was initially reluctant to support its regional ally Saudi Arabia at the onset of Saudi-led intervention in March 2015, he did eventually agree to authorize the provision of logistics and intelligence to the *operation Decisive Storm* to arrest the Houthi advance and install the Hadi government in Yemen.¹⁵² And after Donald Trump won the election in January 2017, the US policy became aggressively in favor of Saudi-led coalition. Trump not only approved the intelligence and logistical support but also engaged with the coalition members militarily. As discussed in the above chapter, it was during his administration that several arms deals were closed. He also authorized the sale of some weapon systems that Obama administration had previously blocked for the coalition. He also listed the Houthis as a terrorist organization and designated global terrorists in January 2021. The rationale for such a move was provided by the then secretary of State, Mike Pompeo as a move to deter Iranian support to Houthis.¹⁵³ This policy was criticized heavily by the international humanitarian agencies as such a designation would adversely impact the humanitarian crisis and deter any prospects of constructive negotiation and peacebuilding.¹⁵⁴ After much criticism, the move was reverted by the Biden administration in February 2021. On February 4, 2021, President Joe Biden also announced that its administration would curtail US military support for the operations conducted by the Saudi-led coalition.¹⁵⁵

The United Kingdom has been a significant supplier of weapons to Saudi Arabia, including during the Yemen war. The UK government has approved the sale of a wide range of military equipment to Saudi Arabia, including fighter jets, helicopters,

¹⁵² Day, Stephen W. "America's Role in the Yemen Crisis." *America's Role in the Yemen Crisis* | SpringerLink, February 11, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35578-4_4.

¹⁵³ BBC News. "Yemen War: US to Designate Houthi Rebels as Terrorist Organisation," January 11, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55579211>.

¹⁵⁴ UN. "United States' Designation of Houthi Militia as Foreign Terrorist Organization Risks Expediting Large-Scale Famine in Yemen, Speakers Warn Security Council | UN Press," January 14, 2021. <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14410.doc.htm>.

¹⁵⁵ Stepansky, Joseph. "Biden Admin Ends Trump-Era Houthi 'Terrorist' Designation." *Al Jazeera*, February 16, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/16/biden-admin-ends-trump-era-houthi-terrorist-designation>.

missiles, and bombs.¹⁵⁶ The UK has faced significant criticism for its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, particularly in light of the kingdom's role in the Yemen conflict. Typhoon and Tornado aircraft, Paveway bombs, and Brimstone and Stormshadow missiles are some of the weapons exported by the UK to the Saudi-led coalition members. It is argued that these weapons have been used in airstrikes that have killed thousands of civilians and caused widespread destruction in Yemen. In January 2023, the published value of UK arms licensed for export to the Saudi-led coalition is £9.4 billion, of which £7.9 billion goes to Saudi Arabia alone. It was however calculated by Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), that the real value of arms sold to Saudi Arabia is over £23 billion, while the value of sales to the Coalition as a whole (including UAE and other countries) is close to £25 billion.¹⁵⁷ The cost of trainings and technical support that BAE Systems (a British multinational arms, security, and aerospace company) provides to the Royal Saudi Air Force in Saudi Arabia is excluded from this estimation. In January 2023, the UK court ruled that the government's decision to continue arms sales to Saudi Arabia was illegal as it failed to properly assess the risk of the weapons being used to commit war crimes in Yemen.¹⁵⁸ Although the UK government had already announced a review of its arms export controls in 2020, no changes were ever made to its arms policy despite pressure and criticism from human rights groups. In 2022, the British arms exports to Saudi Arabia was over a billion-pound sterling.¹⁵⁹ The West has therefore come under fire for its support to regional allies with arms but also for failing to take any action to end the conflict, ease the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, or punish those who violated human rights and committed war crimes. Both the United States and the United Kingdom have

¹⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch. "UK: Court to Rule on Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia," January 31, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/31/uk-court-rule-arms-sales-saudi-arabia>.

¹⁵⁷ CAAT. "UK Arms to Saudi Arabia," January 26, 2023. <https://caat.org.uk/homepage/stop-arming-saudi-arabia/uk-arms-to-saudi-arabia/>.

¹⁵⁸ Al Jazeera. "UK Gov't Facing High Court Battle over Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia," January 31, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/31/uk-govt-facing-high-court-battle-over-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia>.

¹⁵⁹ The Guardian. "UK Arms Sales Reach Record £8.5bn as Global Tensions Escalate," May 21, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/21/uk-arms-sales-reach-record-85bn-as-global-tensions-escalate>.

provided support to the Saudi-UAE coalition in Yemen for a variety of reasons. Some of the main reasons are the economic interests, particularly in oil and gas, and it sees its relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE as important for maintaining access to these resources. Another reason is countering terrorism, the West sees the Saudi-UAE coalition as an important partner in the fight against terrorism, particularly against groups such as AQAP and ISIS. The coalition has been active in targeting these groups in Yemen and the West sees its support as a way to counter the threat of terrorism in the region. Thirdly, and perhaps the most important reason for supporting the Saudi-UAE coalition is the bid to counter Iran.¹⁶⁰ The West sees Iran as a destabilizing force in the region and it sees its support for the Saudi-UAE coalition as a way to counter Iran's influence in the region. Moreover, western countries have military and strategic interests in the region, and it sees the Saudi-UAE coalition as an important partner in maintaining stability and security in the region. And finally, western countries have political and diplomatic considerations so as to maintain good relationships with regional allies as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to not lose out on the great power competition against Russia-China-Iran axis.

4.2.2. Military balance

Air raids are conducted by the military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which also includes participation by Egypt, Morocco (until 2019), Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Qatar (until 2017) and Bahrain. The military coalition is backed by the United States and the United Kingdom, amongst other western nations, with the U.S. providing intelligence and logistical support and the UK supporting the coalition in every practical way short of engaging in combat. Both the U.S. and the UK have military personnel deployed at the Saudi command-and-control centre for coalition airstrikes. On one hand, both the US and the UK have supported the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi rebels since 2015, however, on the other hand, Iran, Russia and China have indirectly supported the Houthis. Their support has enabled the war to continue and has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, and they have failed to

¹⁶⁰ Beauchamp, Zack. "Why the Hell Is the US Helping Saudi Arabia Bomb Yemen? A Brief Guide." Vox, October 14, 2016. <https://www.vox.com/world/2016/10/14/13269580/us-bombing-yemen-houthis>.

hold those responsible for war crimes and human rights abuses accountable. Despite the catastrophic circumstances in Yemen, countries that produce weapons continue to supply the warring sides with weapons. Although the political pressure to curtail the arms sales has tremendously grown, and several countries have pledged to no longer provide arms, the precise interpretation of these commitments is often uncertain. According to SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database (ATDB), the most developed western economies are a key source of armaments to rival groups in Yemen.¹⁶¹

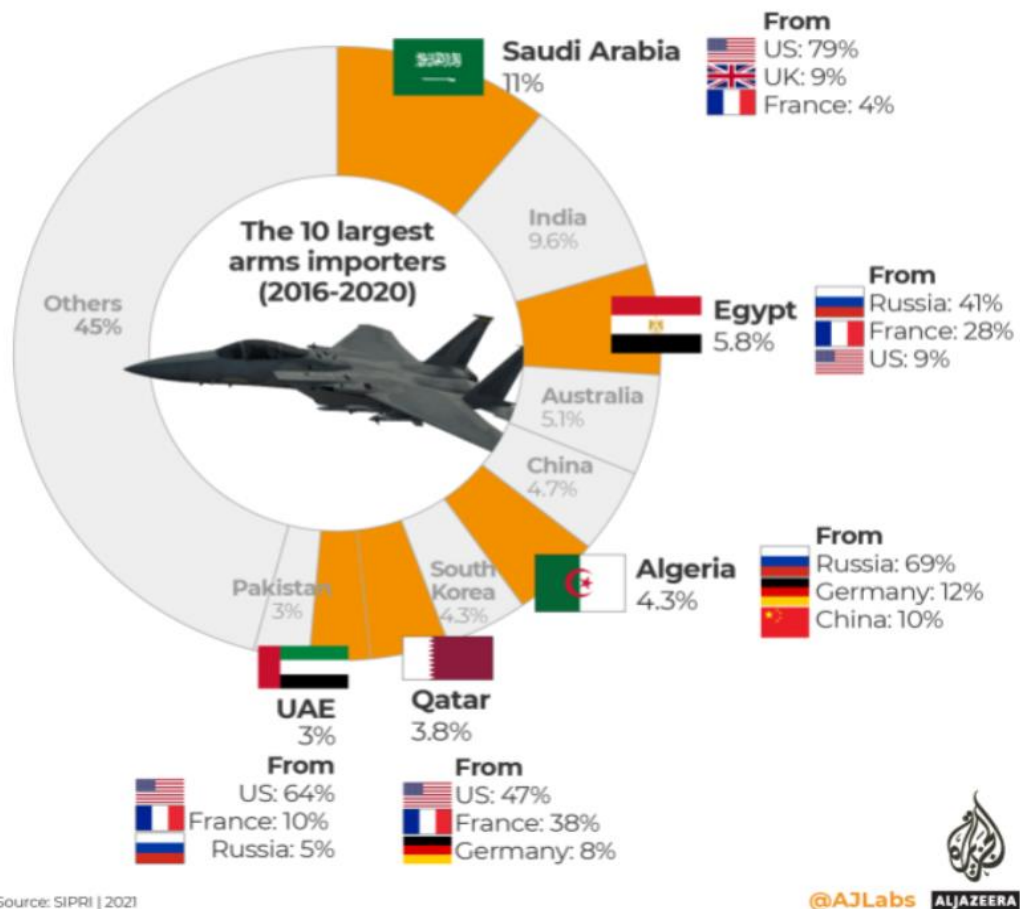


Figure 4.3 Military spending by the Middle Eastern countries and their main suppliers.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ All information on specific arms deals is from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

“SIPRI Arms Transfers Database | SIPRI,” 2022. <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

¹⁶² *ibid*

4.2.2.1. Western support to the Saudi-UAE coalition

The war in Yemen is a complex and multifaceted conflict and the West has been widely criticized for its relentless arms exports to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Table 4.2 Arms suppliers to countries intervening in Yemen

Supplier/ Recipient	Bahrain	Egypt	Jordan	Kuwait	Morocco	Saudi Arabia	Sudan	UAE
USA	Ord: 238 Del: 120 TIV: 15	Ord: 1,289 Del: 1,772 TIV: 831	Ord: 847 Del: 422 TIV: 125	Ord: 987 Del: 923 TIV: 476	Ord: 1,193 Del: 129 TIV: 291	Ord: 14,249 Del: 7,226 TIV: 3679	No arms sales	Ord: 2,455 Del: 2,867 TIV: 1,586
UK	Lic: 33 TIV: 0	Lic: 164 TIV: 0	Lic: 40 TIV: 1	Lic: 30 TIV: 0	Lic: 8 TIV: 0	Lic: 5,093 TIV: 1,593	No arms sales	Lic: 436 TIV: 0
France	Ord: 1 Del: 7 TIV: 0	Ord: 6,608 Del: 2,846 TIV: 1,605	Ord: 1 Del: 3 TIV: 0	Ord: 338 Del: 20 TIV: 9	Ord: 180 Del: 155 TIV: 10	Ord: 1,060 Del: 2,199 TIV: 218	No arms sales	Ord: 574 Del: 768 TIV: 503
Germany	Lic: 7 TIV: 0	Lic: 463 TIV: 196	Lic: 26 TIV: 13	Lic: 161 TIV: 0	Lic: 20 TIV: 0	Lic: 885 TIV: 16	No arms sales	Lic: 306 TIV: 31
Italy	Lic: 65 Del: 0 TIV: 0	Lic: 50 Del: 12 TIV: 8	Lic: 18 Del: 1 TIV: 0	Lic: 8,526 Del: 2 TIV: 0	Lic: 25 Del: 3 TIV: 0	Lic: 758 Del: 240 TIV: 154	No arms sales	Lic: 403 Del: 216 TIV: 87
Spain	Lic: 0 Del: 25 TIV: 0	Lic: 143 Del: 271 TIV: 144	Lic: 33 Del: 7 TIV: 0	Lic: 0 Del: 1 TIV: 0	Lic: 76 Del: 60 TIV: 0	Lic: 671 Del: 682 TIV: 196	No arms sales	Lic: 61 Del: 23 TIV: 0
Sweden	Lic: 0 Del: 0 TIV: 0	No arms sales	Lic: 2 Del: 1 TIV: 0	Lic: 10 Del: 9 TIV: 0	No arms sales	Lic: 0 Del: 2 TIV: 0	No arms sales	Lic: 1,258 Del: 21 TIV: 82
Russia	TIV: 0	TIV: 43	TIV: 0	TIV: 48	TIV: 0	TIV: 0	TIV: 102	TIV: 0
China	TIV: 4	TIV: 0	TIV: 8	TIV: 0	TIV: 0	TIV: 14	TIV: 39	TIV: 0
Other	TIV: 7	TIV: 61	TIV: 284	TIV: 21	TIV: 0	TIV: 452	TIV: 39	TIV: 238

Lic: Value of individual export licenses granted for arms sales 2015-2016, US\$ million (a zero indicates a figure of less than \$0.5 million)

Ord: Value of orders for arms 2015-2016, US\$ millions (a zero indicates a figure of less than \$0.5 million)

Del: Value of delivery of arms 2015-2016, US\$ millions (a zero indicates a figure of less than \$0.5 million)

TIV: SIPRI Trend Indicator Value of deliveries of major conventional weapons 2015-2016, millions.

The table demonstrates the contribution of several countries to the Saudi-led coalition's supply of weapons. While the US and EU applied sanctions and arms embargo on Sudan, it procured arms from China and Russia. Russia provided Sudan with combat and transport helicopters and China has provided a number of land systems, surface-to-air missiles, and six FTC-2000 trainer/combat aircraft, implying that when one major power backs out, another gets to cash in the opportunity of making profit from

the arms industry.¹⁶³ These measurements are useful because they assess various facets of arms transfers policies and however, the data is not available for all countries and for each transaction. Nonetheless, these figures for licenses and orders do provide an indication of recent decision-making and impending or upcoming transfers, figures for deliveries (both SIPRI and cash value) measure recent transfers. The SIPRI numbers are accessible for all nations, but they only include main conventional weapons, leaving out details of the arms trade between each nation and without a monetary measurement.

According to the latest SIPRI report, Saudi Arabia was the world's second largest arms importer in 2018–22 and received 9.6 per cent of all arms imports. The USA supplied 78 per cent of Saudi Arabian arms imports in the period, which included the delivery of 91 combat aircraft with hundreds of land-attack missiles and over 20 000 guided bombs. In 2018–22, the UAE was the 11th largest arms importer globally, importing hundreds of air defence missiles and over 20 000 guided bombs from the USA. Kuwait's arms imports increased by 146 per cent between 2013–17 and 2018–22, mainly due to the delivery of 28 combat aircraft and 218 tanks from the USA and 6 combat aircraft from Italy. Unsurprisingly, the USA is either the top or second provider of armaments to all of these nations, albeit Bahrain's acquisitions are rather modest. Each of the EU exporters is a sizable supplier to one or more of the coalition's other members. Saudi Arabia, the UK's single-largest importer, is supplied by the country in second place. A significant portion of the Saudi Air Force's fleet operating in Yemen is made up of British Tornado and Typhoon aircraft. Significant quantities of arms have also been licensed by the UK for Egypt. With \$2.8 billion worth of armaments sent to Egypt in 2015–16, including a frigate, two helicopter carriers for the Mistral, and 24 Rafale combat aircraft, France is the country's largest arms supplier. With approximately 2 billion dollars in sales, including armored vehicles, air defense systems, and aircraft components, France is also a big supplier to Saudi Arabia. It also has important orders and/or supplies to Kuwait, Morocco (another small-scale buyer), and the UAE.

¹⁶³ *ibid*

Germany has a smaller involvement but, according to SIPRI statistics, has made major sales to Egypt (armored vehicles and submarines) and has granted licenses for a sizable amount of military hardware to Saudi Arabia (including naval patrol craft), Egypt, the UAE, and Kuwait. Regarding the export license amount mentioned, Italy and Kuwait reached an agreement in 2016 to deliver 28 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Kuwait for EUR7.8 billion. Significant amounts are also produced for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The \$1.3 billion purchase of two Erieye Airborne Early Warning and Control systems, which may be crucial in an aerial campaign, led to Sweden's substantial license to the UAE. Spain, in addition to being a large supplier to Egypt and (relatively) Morocco, has jumped on the Saudi bandwagon along with the most of the others. Transport aircraft make up the majority of Spain's arms shipments to Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In 2017, Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led coalition and Saudi alleged Qatar's supplying of weapons to Houthis which strained the ties between two countries and caused severe diplomatic rift. Hence, although a Gulf country, Qatar has formed a recent regional axis with Turkey and Iran. Following the military buildup trend in the region, it became the third largest arms importer in the world as its arms imports increased by 311 per cent between 2013–17 and 2018–22. Its main suppliers in 2018–22 were the USA, which accounted for 42 per cent of Qatari arms imports, France (29 per cent) and Italy (14 per cent). Qatar's arms imports in 2018–22 included 36 combat aircraft from France, 36 from the USA and 8 from the UK, as well as 3 frigates from Italy.¹⁶⁴

All Western exporters, with the exception of Sweden, are major arms suppliers to Saudi Arabia, and all are major arms suppliers to the UAE, with the exception of Germany and Spain. The Netherlands, Jordan's principal supplier, is the only coalition member whose name is missing from the list. Additionally, Israel and the United Arab Emirates provide the nation with a large share of its armaments. Members of the

¹⁶⁴ Wezeman, Pieter D., Justine Gadon, and Siemon T. Wezeman. "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2022," March 13, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.55163/cpns8443>.

coalition have received combat aircraft from the US, UK, France, Italy, Sweden, and Germany, as well as vital aerial subsystems and naval vessels that may be useful to the blockade.

4.2.2.2. Russo-Chinese support to Iranian Houthi coalition

Russia, China and Iran are often accused of building a new axis for arms trade. According to a report by Matthew Karnitschnig, it is asserted that China and Russia are advanced in secret negotiations with Iran to replenish the Iran's stock of a crucial chemical compound used to launch ballistic missiles. This would be a flagrant violation of UN sanctions and possibly assist Moscow in replenishing its depleted rocket stock. Ammonium perchlorate, or AP, is the primary component in solid propellants used to power missiles, and Tehran has held concurrent negotiations to acquire large amounts of it with officials and government-controlled entities from both countries, including the state-owned Russian chemical maker FKP Anozit, according to the diplomats.¹⁶⁵ In 2022, Iran placed an order for 24 combat aircraft from Russia, its first significant procurement of combat aircraft since the early 1990s.¹⁶⁶

According to a report in The Wall Street Journal, the UN discovered that thousands of weapons recently recovered in the Arabian Sea most likely originated from a single port in Iran, providing further proof that Tehran is trafficking weapons to Yemen and other countries.¹⁶⁷ Iranian rapprochement to Russia has been evident in other regional proxy wars that predate the Yemeni conflict. The Syrian Civil war has also set Iran

¹⁶⁵ Karnitschnig, Matthew. "Iran in Secret Talks with China, Russia to Acquire Sanctioned Missile Fuel." POLITICO, April 12, 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-ukraine-war-xi-jinping-china-russia-in-secret-talks-to-supply-iran-missile-propellant/>.

¹⁶⁶ "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2022 | SIPRI," March 13, 2023. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2023/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2022>.

¹⁶⁷ Iran 'likely' smuggling weapons to Yemen: UN report | Military News | Al Jazeera. "Iran 'Likely' Smuggling Weapons to Yemen: UN Report," January 9, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/9/iran-likely-smuggling-weapons-to-yemen-confidential-report>.

and the Gulf states against each other, while Iran, along with Russia has provided military support and weaponry to the Bashar al-Assad administration, and the Gulf states have supported various rebel factions, including Islamist ones. The Saudi-led and largely Sunni military alliance, often dubbed as the “Arab Nato” is seemingly evolving in a bid to contain Iranian regional aspirations, however excessive military buildup has alarmed several regional countries like Iraq.¹⁶⁸

4.3. Economic and Strategic interests

Yemen’s economic importance rises from the fact that it has oil and gas reserves that attract international energy companies and its development and aid dependence on donor countries who aim to pursue their vested economic interests in its future developmental trajectory. Its range of natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, are of interest to foreign investors. Since, the country has an underdeveloped infrastructure, which presents opportunities for investment in areas such as transportation, power generation, and water management.

As for its strategic importance, Yemen’s geographic location at the Bab-el-Mandeb strait is critical for access to oil, global trade, investment, and military bases which will be discussed comprehensively in chapter four. Hence, a careful evaluation of Yemen’s strategic value in terms of access to oil and critical waterways like the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait for global trade is needed. Undoubtedly, the control of this strait would give the controlling party significant leverage over the flow of oil and global trade, particularly with respect to the flow of goods to and from the Middle East and Africa. Furthermore, Yemen's location at the center of world trade and geography makes it an important place for military bases that are used to project power in the region, protect sea lanes and monitor the movements of ships and submarines.

As for its economic importance, Yemen has modest oil and gas reserves, which have attracted the interest of international energy companies. The country's proven oil

¹⁶⁸ Beaumont, Peter. “The \$18bn Arms Race Helping to Fuel Middle East Conflict.” the Guardian, April 23, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/23/the-18bn-arms-race-middle-east-russia-iran-iraq-un>.

reserves are estimated at around 3 billion barrels, while its natural gas reserves are estimated at 17 trillion cubic feet. Although these reserves are not as substantial as those of its neighbours, they still have the potential to impact global energy markets and contribute to the international stakes in the conflict. Furthermore, as Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, with a large portion of its population dependent on humanitarian aid for survival. International aid organizations and donor countries have a vested interest in Yemen's stability, as its ongoing conflict has led to a humanitarian crisis and hindered development efforts. This interest contributes to the international stakes in the Yemeni conflict, as various parties seek to secure their investments and influence the country's future trajectory.

As for its strategic importance, it stems from Yemen's geographic location at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a critical choke point that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and, by extension, the Indian Ocean. The strait is crucial for global trade and energy supply, as it is a primary maritime route for oil and gas shipments from the Middle East to Europe and Asia. Regional power struggle is yet another important factor that render Yemen strategic, which, as discussed in the above chapters has fueled a proxy war between the Iran and Saudi Arabia, as both seek to expand their influence in the region and establish a foothold in this strategically significant country.

4.3.1. Competition for resource acquisition

According to a report by Kais Makhoulf, in Yemen, the redistribution of oil revenues has long been a contentious issue, with several parties contesting on its acquisition. The breakdown of law rendered several factions competing for controlling oil wells. Several IED strikes on convoys transporting oil from one region to another, which were linked to parties seeking oil income, has often resulted in casualties. The significance of oil income increases even more when the warring factions in the conflict are looking for sources to finance the war.¹⁶⁹ The Houthis having a very strong presence in the oil-rich city of Marib, have been eyeing to conquer Shabwa which is

¹⁶⁹ Makhoulf, Kais. "Competition for Oil Sales Threatens Vessels in Yemen." Risk Intelligence, November 4, 2022. <https://www.riskintelligence.eu/analyst-briefings/competition-for-oil-sales-threatens-vessels-in-yemen>.

the second most oil-producing city.¹⁷⁰ The control of oil-rich regions is critical as it could change the course of war. It would not only provide a source of revenue to fund their agendas but would also provide sufficient political capital for peace and truce negotiations.

4.3.2. International trade routes and Bab al-Mandab strait

At the heart of these tensions lies the Red Sea, one of the world's most valuable trade routes, and the Bab al-Mandeb strait, a chokepoint determining entry and exit to the route. Unless the course of the conflict is turned, the ongoing dynamics risk creating waves of instability felt across and beyond the Horn of Africa. The access to waterways is a critical aspect and often a game-changer in most conflict as it defines the power-balances. In 2017, the Houthis lost the battle of Dhubab, a city that overlooks the Bab al-Mandab strait. Following the defeat, they lost access to the strait. The strait is not important as a primary supply line for aid, but is also notorious for smuggling alcohol, weapons, and other armoured vehicles. Another important infrastructure is the port of Hodeidah, which has often been a battleground and witnesses a tough tussle between the Houthis and the government forces. As Yemen lies at the heart of international trade, ensuring the security of strategic waterways is crucial for the global economy, as it is a key route for oil and cargo shipments between Asia, Europe, and the Americas.¹⁷¹ The conflict in Yemen has raised concerns about the stability of the strait and the potential impact on international shipping and energy markets.

¹⁷⁰ Alasarar, Fatima Abo. "The Houthis' Retaliation for Shabwa." Middle East Institute, January 19, 2022. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/houthis-retaliation-shabwa>.

¹⁷¹ Cordesman, Anthony H. "The War in Yemen: Hard Choices in a Hard War." *The War in Yemen: Hard Choices in a Hard War*, May 9, 2017. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-yemen-hard-choices-hard-war>.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The protracted conflict in Yemen has led to urgent, widespread humanitarian and development crises and resulted in significant damage to the economy, physical infrastructure, service provision, health, and education systems, as well as social fabric. It has also caused hundreds of thousands of deaths. While many of these are the result of war's direct violence, others are due to the war's indirect effects, including a lack of food and degraded living conditions.

5.1. Key findings

The objective of this study was to understand how overriding international stakes affect the war in Yemen. In order to explore it, the study analysed the situation from a Neo-realist perspective and used the theoretical framework of John Mearsheimer's theory of Offensive Realism and John Stedman's theory of international actors and internal conflicts. While analysing the internal dynamics and external drivers of the conflict, it can be safe to conclude that while internal dynamics play a critical role in all conflicts, once such conflicts emerge, external intervention worsen it, prolonging it often devolving into a full-scale civil war. The involvement of several stakeholders makes the resolution of conflicts difficult. Yemeni Civil War is a clear case of that. Despite several attempts of peace negotiation, the war has been continuing for almost a decade. This war has exposed the internal inconsistencies that had brewed in Yemen for several centuries and were taken advantage of by its political administration for decades. The Ex-President Saleh who presided the country for 33 years had exploited the historical weaknesses of Yemeni state for his own ends and hence after the breakout of the conflict Yemen devolved from a weak state to a broken state.

By comparing the current reality in Yemen to a scenario where no conflict ever occurred, it has been estimated that by the end of 2023, Yemen would have lost a cumulative US\$126 billion in potential gross domestic product (GDP) since 2015,

more than 15.6 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty and the conflict will lead to 377,000 deaths – nearly 60 per cent of which are indirect and caused by issues associated with conflict like lack of access to food, water, and healthcare. These deaths are overwhelmingly made up of young children who are especially vulnerable to under and malnutrition. In 2021, a Yemeni child under the age of five died every nine minutes because of the conflict. The impact of the conflict continues to be devastating. If conflict continues, it will become even more destructive. If war in Yemen continues through 2030, it is estimated that 1.3 million people will die as a result, with more than 70 per cent of those deaths being from indirect causes and more than 22 million people forced into poverty. The cost of the conflict for all parties has been great. While the road to peace is likely to be difficult, the consequences of continued war are clear, and hope remains that effective Yemeni, regional, and international leadership can achieve a lasting and inclusive political settlement. In the spirit of that hope, this thesis concludes with the recent developments towards achieving peace in the next section and in the last section, it highlights the challenges in resolving the conflict.

5.2. Recent developments

The resolution of the conflict requires not only addressing the internal factors driving the crisis but also engaging with the regional and international actors involved. The conflict has been continuing for almost a decade, the involvement of several actors has only complicated it, hence a sustainable political settlement requires a more comprehensive approach. Despite the gloomy picture of humanitarian crisis, the sufferings and the arms trade, there have been some positive breakthroughs recently that provide hope for the seemingly frozen conflict to end soon. And although it is hard to predict the course of the war, the extent of reconciliation between the critical actors involved and its impact on the conflict would certainly be a test case for the possibilities and limitations of the external power intervention that this study tries to present.

As Biden administration withdrew its support substantially, it paved way for other global powers to engage more with the parties involved in the conflict. In March 2023, it was announced that the diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia would be

reestablished, ending a seven-year-old rift that intensified their regional rivalry. This agreement to revive the security cooperation pact, reopen embassies and resume trade and cultural exchanges was brokered by China. The diplomatic engagement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a great breakthrough in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle Eastern region and it can have positive impact on the conflicts marring Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Jonathan Fulton of the Atlantic Council asserts that the stability in Middle East is also in the vested interests of China as it is dependent on the region for more than forty percent of its energy needs.¹⁷² This deal was also a part of great game that China plays against its rival, USA. Perhaps, USA is one of those countries who stand to benefit the most from the Saudi Iranian regional rivalry.

Another positive development in the Yemeni conflict is the historic prisoner swap deal which was concluded between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis. On April 14, 2023, a three-day operation overseen by the ICRC was concluded. The operation involved the prisoner swap of nearly 900 detainees. The deal negotiated for more than a month in Switzerland was brokered by Oman. It is significant in building confidence measures amid peace talks between Saudis and the Houthis. The negotiations are expected to continue in May for further detainee releases.¹⁷³

On May 21, 2023, it was reported that the Yemen's de facto, Houthi government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chinese Anton Oilfield Services Group (AntonOil) to allow oil exploration by the company in Yemen. This is a significant progress as it provides some legitimacy to the unrecognized Houthi administration controlling a significant proportion of North Yemen. Although it is plausible that entry of another external actor like China in Yemen may complicate the war because of its rivalry with the US, considering the Saudi advances towards the Houthis, it seems that Saudi Arabia is keen on reaching on a political settlement with the Houthis.

¹⁷² Hubbard, Ben, and Shashank Bengali. "Answers to 7 Key Questions on the Saudi-Iran Deal." *New York Times*, March 10, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/10/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-iran-deal-explained.html>.

¹⁷³ Berg, Raffi. "Yemen War: Major Prisoner Swap Raises Hopes." BBC News, April 14, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65273289>.

5.3. The challenges in resolving the Yemeni crisis

Despite the recent breakthroughs, there are several challenges that impede a lasting conflict resolution to the Yemeni conflict. Achieving a sustainable political resolution to the Yemeni conflict will require a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. Based on the analysis presented in the previous chapters, it is clear that Yemen suffers from deeply rooted historical grievances and sectarian divides. The war only makes it worse. Hence, the resolution of the Yemeni conflict depends on the willingness of the involved stakeholders to resolve their differences and engage in constructive dialogue. It is necessary to make compromises to achieve a comprehensive and lasting political settlement, however all the warring parties had been for years at loggerheads, barring the recent abovementioned negotiations which took place in 2023. While the challenges are significant, the recent development paints an optimistic picture for Yemen's future.

Achieving lasting peace and stability in Yemen will require sustained diplomatic efforts, the mobilization of resources to address the humanitarian crisis, and the implementation of confidence-building measures among conflicting parties. Additionally, post-conflict reconstruction efforts will be essential to rebuilding Yemen's political and economic systems and fostering national reconciliation. The stakeholders should commit to inclusive peace negotiation and ensure that all relevant parties, including the Yemeni government, the Houthi movement, southern separatists, tribal leaders, and civil society representatives, are engaged in peace negotiations to promote a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement. Another important area that requires attention is the addressal of historical grievances and root causes of the conflict. When formulating negotiation plans, careful attention must be paid to address the socio-economic and political drivers of the conflict, such as marginalization, inequality, and the fragmentation of state institutions. The international community has a crucial role to play in supporting these efforts, both by providing financial and technical assistance and by promoting inclusive and participatory processes that involve all segments of Yemeni society.

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/3863463.stm.
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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Tez, Yemen İç savaşının uzamasından sorumlu olan temel sorunları analiz ediyor ve Yemen'deki savaşta müdahil olan çeşitli taraflara ışık tutuyor. Yemen, Arap Yarımadası'nın güneybatı ucunda jeo-stratejik olarak çok önemli bir konuma sahip, iç savaşla harap olmuş ve modern tarihin en kötü insani krizlerinden birine girmiş bir ülke konumundadır. İç savaş, 2014 yılında bir iç güç mücadelesi olarak başladı. Ancak kısa surede Yemen çatışması, çeşitli jeopolitik çıkarların yakınsaması nedeniyle giderek çözülmesi daha zor bir hale geldi. Bu haliyle Yemen İç Savaşı karmaşık ve çok yönlü bir savaşa dönüştü. Ortadoğu'nun en fakir ülkesi olan Yemen, bir yandan yıkıcı bir insani krize sahne olurken, öte yandan yaygın bölgesel istikrarsızlaşmaya yol açan bölgesel ve küresel güçlerin birbiriyle yarışan gündemleri için bir savaş alanı haline geldi. Bu çalışma, iç zayıflıkların iç savaşın çıkmasındaki başat rolünü kabul etmekle birlikte, Yemen'deki çatışmanın tırmanmasında uluslararası çıkarların rolünü keşfetmeyi amaçlıyor.

Bu amaçla tez, büyük bölgesel ve küresel güçlerin katılımını ve stratejik hedeflerini, ittifaklarını ve çıkarlarını inceleyerek, bu faktörlerin şiddeti nasıl artırdığını ve savaşı nasıl uzattığını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunu yaparken, öncülüğünü John Mearsheimer'ın yaptığı Saldırgan Neorealist teorileri ve John Stedman'ın uluslararası aktörler ve iç çatışmalar teorisi merceğinden uluslararası aktörlerin rolünü analiz ediyor. Klasik realizm çatışmalarda iç faktörlerin rolünü vurgularken, Neorealizm devlet davranışını belirlemede uluslararası sistemin rolünü vurgular. Çalışma, iç çatışmaların gidişatındaki dış müdahalelerin sonuçlarına daha fazla odaklandığından, Neorealist çerçeveye seçimi uygundur.

Tez, beş bölüme ayrılmıştır. Birinci bölüm, araştırmaya yönelik yaklaşımın açıklandığı giriş bölümüdür. Bu bölüm ayrıca Yemen'in ekonomik ve stratejik önemine odaklanarak ilgili paydaşlar için neden bu kadar önemli olduğunu anlatmaktadır. Ardından, savaşın gıda güvensizliği ve erişim açısından sonuçları ele alınmış ve daha sonra COVID-19 salgınının ülkedeki bozuk sağlık altyapısı ve gıda güvensizliği ile Yemenlilerin içinde bulunduğu kötü durumu nasıl daha da kötüleştirdiğine dair kısa bir tartışma yapılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, giriş

bölümü, savaşın unutulmuş kurbanlarını hatırlatarak ve krizin insani maliyetini rakamlarla ortaya koyarak sona ermektedir.

Tezin ikinci bölümü ayrıca altı alt bölüme ayrılmıştır. Bu bölüm temel olarak tarihsel bağlamı anlatmakta ve Yemen'in yüzyıllar boyunca tarihsel deneyimlerinin onu nasıl kırılmalı bir devlet haline getirdiğini tartışmaktadır. Bu konu zayıf devlet literatürü yardımıyla analiz edilmektedir. Birinci alt bölümde bu iddiayı kanıtlamak için, sonunda Ensarallah hareketi aracılığıyla Yemen siyasetinde önemli bir güç haline gelen Zeydiliğin evrimi ile birbiriyle yarışan birkaç ideolojinin çatışması ele alınmaktadır. İslam, neredeyse tüm Yemen'in dini olmasına rağmen, dinin kendisi, farklı ideolojilerle tarihsel bir bölünmeden müzdariptir ve tüm bu farklı ideolojiler, Yemen toplumunun dönüşümünde rol oynar. Daha sonra bu bölümün ikinci alt kısmında, Kuzey ve Güney Yemen'in birbirinden oldukça farklı olduğu ve iki Kore örneğinin aksine hiçbir zaman tek bir devlet olmadığı anlatılmaktadır. Bir sonraki alt bölüm ise, birleşme sürecini ve bununla birlikte gelişen zorlukları açıklamaktadır. Zayıf toplumsal doku, Kuzey ve Güney Yemen arasındaki ideolojik farklılıklar ve Husilerin marjinalleşme algısı, Yemen'deki şiddetli ayaklanmada patlak veren Ensarallah hareketinin yolunu açtı. İlk Husi isyanı, Husi liderinin hükümet yanlısı güçler tarafından öldürüldüğü ve hareketin radikalleşmesine yol açtığı 2004 yılında gerçekleşti. Arap Baharına kadar, Husiler ve hükümet güçleri açık ve kapalı çatışmalara ve birbirlerinin kalelerine yönelik saldırılara karıştılar. Ensarallah Hareketi, Arap Baharı tarafından cesaretlendirildi ve Husiler, Yemen toplumunu hükümete karşı bir araya getirmekte önemli bir rol oynadı. Yemen hükümeti iki yıl boyunca birçok reform sözü vererek durumu sakinleştirmeye çalıştı, ancak bu, sonunda 2014'te başkent Sana'a'yı devralan ve dönemin Cumhurbaşkanı Salih'i Suudi Arabistan'a kaçmaya zorlayan Husileri yatıştırmak için yeterli olmadı.

Üçüncü bölüm, Yemen'in statüsünün kırılığandan devletten kırılmış devlete dönüşümünü açıklıyor. Husilerin Sana'a'yı ele geçirmesi, komşusu Suudi Arabistan'ı alarma geçirdiği için ülkeyi sonu gelmeyen bir savaşa sürüklemek açısından kritik öneme sahipti. Suudi Arabistan'ın hükümeti yeniden kurma ve Husileri Sana'dan sürme arzusu, onu Yemen'de muazzam güç ve silah kullanmaya itti. Husiler, ortak dini bağları nedeniyle Şii İran ile ilişkilerini geliştirdiler ve İran, Suudi Arabistan'a karşı Husileri destekleme sözü verdi. Bu bölümün ilk alt kısmı, dış müdahale ve iç çatışmalarla alevlenen Yemen İç Savaşı'na kısa bir genel bakış sunuyor. Bunun ışığında mezhepsel bölünmeler, kabilecilik ve bunun çatışma üzerindeki etkisi tartışılıyor. Ayrıca, ilgili propagandayı finanse etmek için petrol kaynaklarını ilhak etme yarışı gibi sosyo-ekonomik faktörler vurgulanıyor. Bu bölümün ikinci alt kısmı, savaşın unutulmuş kurbanlarına, masum sivillere dikkat çekme girişimidir. Çatışmanın insani maliyetinin ve uluslararası kuruluşların rolünün değerlendirilmesiyle başlamaktadır. Savaş en

çok sivilleri vurdu; yerinden edilmeler, zorla kaybetmeler ve mülteci krizi milyonlarca Yemenliyi etkiledi. Savaş aynı zamanda kritik altyapıya da zarar vererek gıda güvensizliğine, kıtlığa neden oldu ve sağlık sistemini etkiledi. Bu bölümün son kısmı, uluslararası örgütlerin çatışmaları ele almadaki rolünü tartışıyor. Bu nedenle, önceki bölüm Yemen'in yüzyıllar boyunca nasıl kırılğan bir devlet olarak geliştiğini anlatırken, bu bölüm on yıldan kısa bir süre içinde nasıl parçalanmış bir devlet haline geldiğini anlatıyor.

Dördüncü bölüm, bölgesel ve bölge dışı aktörlerin analizini içeren dış güç müdahalesine odaklanmaktadır. Bu bölüm üç alt bölüme ayrılmıştır. İlk alt bölüm, İran, Suudi Arabistan ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri (BAE) olmak üzere üç ana bölgesel aktörün katılımına odaklanmaktadır. Bu bölümde, bölgesel hakimiyet arayışının bölgesel aktörlerin çatışmaya dahil olmasını nasıl motive ederek krizi şiddetlendirdiğine vurgu yapılmaktadır. Saldırgan Neorealizm çerçevesi içinde incelenen bu bölüm, bölgesel aktörlerin çatışmayı nasıl kötüleştirdiği sorusunu ele almaktadır. Suudi-İran jeopolitik rekabeti, Saldırgan Neorealizm, güç dengesi ve bölgesel hegemonya arzusu gibi teorik kavramlarla analiz edilmektedir. Bahreyn, Irak, Suriye ve nihayetinde Yemen'deki olaylara atıfta bulunarak bölgedeki bu rekabetin evrimi ve işleyişi ile bunun Ortadoğu siyaseti üzerindeki genel etkisine ilişkin kısa bir inceleme de bu bölüme dahil edilmiştir. Bu rekabetin yoğunlaşmasına bağlam sağlamak için farklı ülkelerin örnekleri ele alınsa da, bu tartışmada analizin odak noktası Yemen'dir.

Bölgesel jeopolitik rekabeti analiz etmek için bu bölüm ayrıca üç kısma ayrılmıştır. Her bir bölüm, Suudi Arabistan, İran ve BAE gibi farklı aktörlerin katılımına odaklanmaktadır. Suudi Arabistan ve İran, yıllardır şiddetli bir rekabet içinde olan iki önemli bölgesel aktördür. BAE ise stratejik çıkarları nedeniyle Yemen ihtilafına yıllar içinde daha fazla katılmaya başlamıştır. Birinci alt bölümde Suudi Arabistan'ın rejime verdiği desteğin altında yatan nedenler, yani rejimi desteklemenin neden Suudi Arabistan'ın çıkarına olduğu gerekçeleriyle değerlendirilmiştir. İkinci alt kısım, desteğin altında yatan nedenlere (lojistik, eğitim, silahlar, özellikle İran insansız hava araçları, vb.) atıfta bulunarak, İran'ın Husilere verdiği desteğin altını çizmektedir. Son olarak, bu alt bölümün son kısmı, Yemen ihtilafına aktif olarak katılan yeni bölgesel aktör BAE'ye ışık tutmaktadır Statü arayışı yaklaşımı çerçevesinde Emirlik'in özelemleri, desteklediği hizip ve nedenleri tartışılmaktadır.

Bu bölümün bir sonraki kısmı, bölge dışı ve küresel aktörlere odaklanarak, savaştaki en önemli uluslararası çıkarların altını çizmektedir. Saldırgan Neorealizm teorisi, çatışmada bölge dışı aktörlerin varlığını analiz edecek şekilde genişletilmiştir. Ancak bu analiz, Stedman'ın iç çatışmalar ve uluslararası aktörler teorisi ile de desteklenmiştir. Bu bölümün ilk alt bölümü, jeopolitik çıkarlara vurgu yaparak küresel güçlerin Yemen'deki müdahalesine odaklanmaktadır. Bu bölümün ikinci alt bölümü, savaştaki uluslararası aktörlerin suç

ortaklığına ışık tutmak için askeri dengeyi analiz etmektedir. Bu analiz için, Stockholm Uluslararası Barış Araştırmaları Enstitüsü'nün (SIPRI) veri tabanlarından yararlanılmıştır. SIPRI, eğilim göstergesi değeri (TIV) olarak bilinen ortak bir birimi kullanarak büyük konvansiyonel silahların uluslararası transfer hacmine ilişkin verileri karşılaştırır. TIV, bir çekirdek silah setinin bilinen birim üretim maliyetlerini temel alır ve transferin finansal değerinden ziyade askeri kaynakların transferini temsil etmeyi amaçlar.

Savaşta silah ticaretini anlamak için 2011-2013 ve 2014-2021 yılları arasında Suudi Arabistan, İran ve Yemen'e yapılan silah ithalatı ele alınmıştır. Bu istatistiklerin karşılaştırılması, savaşın tırmanmasının doğrudan bir kanıtı olarak ikinci aşamadaki üstel artışı ilişkilendirmeye yardımcı olur. Bu bölüm aynı zamanda başlıca tedarikçiler olan ABD, İngiltere, Rusya, Kanada ve Çin ile yapılan silah anlaşmalarının analizini de içermektedir. Birinci alt bölümde Suudi-BAE koalisyonuna Batının verdiği destek ele alınmaktadır. Askeri dengeden bakıldığında, Suudi Arabistan'ın başlıca silah tedarikçilerinin Avusturya, Belçika, Kanada, Fransa, Almanya, İtalya, İsveç, Birleşik Krallık ve ABD gibi Batılı ülkeler olduğu açıktır. Bir sonraki bölümde ise Husilere silah aktarılan İran'a Rus-Çin silah desteği ele alınmaktadır.

Dördüncü bölümün ikinci kısmının analizinden, Yemen çatışmasının aynı zamanda Doğu ile Batı arasındaki büyük güç rekabetinin merkezinde yer aldığı, ancak çok fazla dikkat çekmediği sonucuna varılabilir. Bu bölümün üçüncü kısmı, uluslararası paydaşların katılımına yönelik motivasyonlarının altını çizmektedir. Bu bölüm, ekonomik ve stratejik çıkarları başlıca motive edici faktörler olarak tanımlar. Obama, ardından Trump ve ardından Biden yönetiminin ABD politikasına kısa bir genel bakış, değişen dünya düzeni karşısında ABD yönetiminin çatışmaya ne kadar farklı yaklaştığının altını çizmek için sunulmaktadır. Kaynak elde etme rekabeti ile ilgili alt bölümde doğal kaynaklar tartışılırken, bir sonraki alt bölümde ticaret yollarının en kritik unsuru olan Bab-el-Mendeb boğazı ve Aden Körfezi referans alınarak tartışılmaktadır.

Son olarak, sonuç bölümü dört bölüme ayrılmıştır. İlk alt bölüm, araştırmanın temel bulgularının altını çizmektedir. Ayrıca araştırmanın bulgularını birinci bölümde belirtilen tez hedefleri ile eşleştirmektedir. İkinci alt bölüm, bölgesel siyasi arenadaki güncel gelişmeleri sunmaktadır. Son zamanlarda, krizin ardından, İran ile Suudi Arabistan arasında Çin'in arabuluculuk yaptığı normalleşme anlaşması ve Suudi Arabistan ile Husiler arasında Umman'ın arabuluculuk yaptığı esir takası anlaşmasını içeren bazı çok olumlu gelişmeler oldu. Bu gelişmeler savaşın gidişatını değiştirme ve hatta sunulan fırsatlardan istihbarat ve stratejik düşünme ile ilgili paydaşlar tarafından etkin bir şekilde yararlanılırsa savaşı sona erdirmeye potansiyeline sahip olduğundan, bu konu kritik öneme sahiptir. Ayrıca tez, devam eden Rusya-Ukrayna savaşının gıda güvensizliği açısından Yemen savaşına yansımalarından da kısaca bahsetmektedir. Bu bölümün üçüncü alt bölümü, krizin çözümünü engelleyen zorlukları ve

ilgili paydaşların çatışan çıkarları nedeniyle şimdiye kadar çeşitli ateşkes ve gerilimi azaltma çabalarının nasıl başarısız olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu bölümün son kısmı, Yemen'e yönelik beklentilerin ve ülkedeki olası savaş sonrası yeniden yapılanmanın altını çizmekte ve böylece ilerideki araştırmalar için önerilerde bulunmaktadır.

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