المجلة الأردنية في القانون والعلوم السياسية

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The Yemeni Crisis, Dynamics and Consequences

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Abstrac

The article discusses the Yemeni crisis which began as a result of the internal and regional impact of the Arab Spring in 2011. The crisis involved all internal Yemeni players, in addition to the involvement of major regional players, mainly The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and its Gulf allies such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on one hand and Iran on the other. The magnitude of this crisis encouraged international powers, mainly, the U.S to get involved, thus escalating the conflict and its consequences. The article will be exploring the diverse and intense dynamics which the conflict has, figuring the interactions among them in an attempt to provide a profound understanding of this crisis and its horrific toll on humanity, which will be discussed in the end of the article.

KeyWord: Yemen, Yemeni Crisis, Houthis.

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الأزمـــــة اليمنية، تفاعلاتهـا وتبعاتهـــــا

د. محمد جمال الخريشة

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة للبحث في الأزمة اليمنية التي ظهرت كنتيجة للتداعيات الداخلية والإقليمية للربيع العربي وتبعاته على اليمن. ستتطرق الدراسة لمختلف اللاعبين الرئيسين سواء الداخليين مثل الحكومة اليمنية من جهة والحوثيين من جهة أخرى، وكذلك اللاعبين الإقليميين تحديداً إيران والمملكة العربية السعودية وحلفاءها مثل الإمارات العربية المتحدة. كما وستبحث الدراسة في الدور الأمريكي كلاعب دولي رئيسي في المنطقة في الأزمة اليمنية التي أخذت بعدا إنسانيا لا يمكن تجاهله.

الكلمات الدالة: اليمن، الأزمة اليمنية، الحوثيين.

Introduction:

The Arab Spring presented great unrest in different countries of the Arab world. As such, during 2011, demonstrations took place in Yemen, seeking to overthrow President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime. Following negation led by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and backed by the U.S, Saleh agreed to resign in return of immunity, and his Vice President, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi assumed office as interim president. This transition of presidency was not easy, uncovering the magnitude of damage left by Saleh's regime, angering the Yemeni people further and eventually led to rebellion and start of protests in 2011, which gave way to civil war. What began as a struggle for new leadership has transformed into a terrible conflict involving regional and international superpowers, thus leading the civil war in Yemen to enter its seventh year. This civil war resulted in one of the most destructive and harrowing humanitarian crises in the century. The Yemeni civil war did not only impact the Gulf region, it had also affected the entirety of the Middle East in different ways and at multiple levels. The consequences of the Yemeni crisis will be seen in the future, however, they can be alleviated with advanced and profound understanding of the conflict, which this article attempts to do.

Research Objectives and Structure:

This article seeks to explore the internal, regional and global dynamics of the Yemeni crisis and how they intersected. The study begins by reviewing the history of Yemen's internal political structures and situation, and how it contributed to the crises. It will then investigate the role and the influence regional powers, mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran, had on the conflict dynamics. U.S behavior and motivation should also be addressed in order to fully understand the reasons behind this conflict, as well as the role of the powers involved. Finally, the article will appraise the toll of this war, namely the issues relating to the availability of water, food and health conditions, exploring possible solutions to alleviate their impact. Such structure and coverage aim at exploring the main internal and regional dynamics and players involved in this devastating crisis leading to advanced understanding of the crisis.

Research Problem and Significance

The diversity of internal and regional players and dynamics of the Yemeni crisis created ambiguity and complexity over such major and turning point in the future of this country and region. The Yemeni crisis is considered as one of the largest humanitarian crisis in modern history. It can be also seen as a major challenge to regional peace and stability given its impact on regional imbalance and shifts in alignments. As such, and considering the devastation that took place over almost a decade of civil war, the Yemeni crisis is considered the main dynamic of the politics of the Gulf region and generally the Middle East

side by side with the similar crisis in Syria. Therefore, understanding the Yemeni crisis is of great strategic importance to understand the politics of the Gulf region. In addition, advanced understanding of the Yemeni crisis and its major dynamics and players will help to propose possible solutions for a crisis its political and humanitarian impacts are still to be seen. Therefore, discussing this subject, in addition to its humanitarian and moral dimensions is of great importance for both academics and politicians alike.

Research Hypothesis and Questions:

The study stems from a main hypothesis which is: the Yemeni conflict was initially the result of the regime's failure in creating unity and legitimacy. This hypothesis assumes sub hypothesis: Such internal situation in Yemen allowed leading regional powers to intervene in Yemen internal affairs through building alignments within the Yemeni political sphere; Saudi Arabia, its Arabian allies such as United Arab Emirates and the Yemeni government on one hand and Iran and the Houthis on the other. As such, this led to the involvement of the U.S, which allowed the crisis to last longer by supporting KSA and its allies which had greatly escalated the crisis, leading to what could be one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history.

The study attempts to answer a number of intersected questions: What are the reasons behind the Yemeni crisis? What is the nature of the internal dynamics and how they overlap and interact with the regional dynamics and powers? To which extent does the U.S. involvement impact those dynamics and how? Not less importantly, how dangerous is the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and how can it be addressed on the ground? The research adopted the critical analysis approach; reviewing the most recent publications by experts and famous academics in reliable academic journals in addition to think tanks in the U.S, Europe and elsewhere.

Previous Studies:

Since its inception, and because of its striking impacts, the Yemeni crisis attracted many scholars and figures. Many efforts were put to address this crisis with its multiple dimensions. As a result, there is rich literature covering the Yemeni crisis from different angles. Some studies focused on the status quo and current dynamics of the crisis with extra attention to regional players with limited linkage to internal Yemeni politics. The study under the title "Yemeni Crisis: Status Quo and Future Indicators" is a useful study by Adnan Hezam in 2017 fall in this category, in which it explored the crisis from its regional angel. Other studies focused merely on strategic and security issues associated with the crisis. The study on "The Political Future of Yemen and its Impact on Arabian Gulf Countries" by Saleh Al Nefyseh in 2018 is a thorough study to understand possible security and strategic challenges and scenarios facing the Gulf region with remarkable attention posed by Iran on the Gulf region.

A very enriching study by Nadawa Al-Dawsari in 2017 titled "Breaking the Cycle of Failed Negotiations in Yemen" explored different diplomatic initiatives by the UN to solve the ongoing conflict. The study focused on the internal and humanitarian dimensions of the crisis in an idealistic manner. It also explored the challenges that faced different UN initiatives in bringing the crisis to an end. The study on "Civil Society during War: the case of Yemen" by Moosa Elayah and Willemijn in 2019 is an empirical study about the role of civil society organizations in peace building in Yemen. The analysis found that civil society organizations in Yemen are diverse with limited capacity in making change regarding social peace and unity mainly because these organizations suffer from both lack of fund and independence from internal politics. These studies and many others are very useful, objective, precious but exclusive in the sense that each of which focused on a major dimension of the Yemeni crisis. This study however is a temptation to offer a comprehensive understanding and coverage to formulate a feasible and realistic solutions to the Yemeni crisis. It is trying to build upon previous efforts to accomplish this endeavor by investigating comprehensive questions that explore all players, dynamics, consequences and possible solutions to the crisis.

Background and Current Internal Dynamics

Following the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Yemen was constituted of Northern and Southern Yemen. Between 1968 and 1978, Northern Yemen was able to establish an informal balance of power between the highland elites and lowland traders, which benefited the regional development.[1]Before 1968, the ruling Zaydi's region which was extended under the Ottoman Empire ruling was replaced though the growing spread of Sunnism and Wahhabi proselytizing, formerly Shia's areas, by Yemen's northern neighbor, KSA.

In 1978, during which President Saleh rule, most of Yemen's polices were in factor of the elite highland tribes, marking the start of corruption and patronage. Although Southern and Northern Yemen were united under President Saleh's rule in 1990, it did nothing for Yemen in terms of development since corruption still dominated the ruling system. Yemen was not only one of the poorest countries in the Arab region, it was also a place known for its instability and conflict between southern separatist movement groups.(2)

(1) Feierstein, M., "Yemen: The 60-Year War", Middle East Institute, 2019. Https://www.mei.edu/publications/yemen-60-year-war-Feierstein 2019)

(2) Al-Madhaji, M. Sidahmed, A. Al-Muslimi, F., The Roles of Regional Actors in Yemen and Opportunities for Peace, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, 14 July 2015. Https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/

Soon after the commencement of the Arab spring, in February 2012, a national election was held, however there was only one candidate, Hadi, thus leading the UN-sponsored National Dialogue Conference (NDC) to convince in order to establish a new constitution that was accepted by Yemen's various factions. However, the NDC was unable to resolve the power struggle in 2014, and had to extend Hadi's presidency for another year. The NDC ended soon after, while the International Monetary Fund continued pressuring Yemen to lift fuel subsidies, and Houthi rebels began their military movement against Hadi's government.

Houthi is a Muslim Shi'a minority group originating from Northern Yemen, namely Zaydi revivals movement in the north. They staged a mass protest in 2014 protesting the rise of fuel subsidies and demanding President Hadi to resign. They claim that their actions are a result of the growing spread Wahhabism in the area, in addition to the increasing Saudi interference in their affairs. Houthi's prominent allies are President Sales, due to their shared hatred of Sunnies, in addition to Al- Islah, who provided Houthis with the military support and clout in the former ruling monopoly party, General People's Congress.(1) Following the Arab Spring, Houthis gained the support of those who were angry about the Presidency transition period, in addition to President Sales loyalists. The real power struggle in Yemen began when the Houthis were able to pressure President Hadi to flee to KSA, in early 2015, after he was unable to create stability, or combat marginalization. Combining Hadi's abandonment of power which created uncertainty and instability with the civil war which had been going on in Yemen for the past 5-years, a void was created, and a number of bodies attempted to fill it including Al Qaeda, ISIS, and the Houthis, all of which battled to full the power vacuum.

Regional Powers and Dynamics

It could be said that the level of destruction and the severity of the violence witnessed in Yemen stems from the fact that it is caught in the war between two of the Middle East most powerful rivals, Iran and KSA. Although the two powers were never really in a direct war against each other, they instead supported opposing factions in wars across the Middle East and North Africa, including Syria, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, and the main subject of this article, Yemen. The toll of those wars had become greater as they became longer, bloodier and in increasingly sectarian.(2)

(1) Swietek, H., "The Yemen War: A Proxy War or a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy", Polish Quarterly of International Affairs, vol. 26, no. 2, 2017. Https://www.ceeol.com/research/article-detail?id=611561.

(2) Esfandiary, D. and Tabatabai, A., Yemen: An Opportunity for Iran – Saudi Dialogue?, The Washington Quarterly, 39 (2), 2016.

After fleeing to KSA, Hadi formed promptly an anti-Houthi/ Saleh alliance that included Islamists, tribesmen and external powers, including KSA and the UAE; eventually creating a civil war within Yemen. The two warring camps in Yemen were able to gain foreign support from KSA and its wide alignments in the Arab world and from Iran, adding to the existing proxy-war between the two countries, as each of them seeks to achieve regional supremacy. The addition of these external powers, and their aggressive intervention in the war, only added to the magnitude of the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen in addition to contributing to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in it. The blockade, whether imposed on the Gulf of Aden or through the airstrike, has managed to magnify the water and famine crisis, by worsening it and preventing aid from reaching Yemeni people.

It is a well-known fact that KSA is one of the region's superpowers, and its attempting to maintain its position as a dominant player throughout the Middle East. KSA's involvement in the Yemeni crisis began with forming a coalition consisting of Sunni-identified Arab countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait, Sudan and the UAE, including all GCC countries except from Oman. The bloc's main objective is to prevent Iran from gaining influent within the region. KSA's main interest in Yemen is combating Houthis who they perceive as the manifestation of Iran's efforts to gain influence and control within the region.(1)

Riyadh sees Houthi's dominance of Yemen as a hostile neighbor that threatens its border. Therefore, when Houthi rebels captured Sana', the capital of Yemen, in March 2015, the Saudi-led coalition initiated an air campaign to re-establish an internationally recognized government. KSA's involvement in the Yemen war through its naval blockades in addition to its illegal air strikes which only were a hindrance to the humanitarian aid and primary resources, like food, which also caused the deaths of thousands of people. By using the Saudi resources, the objective of the internationally- recognized Hadi government is to combat the Houthi/Saleh bloc in order to reestablish the Hadi regime in Sana'. In response to Hadi's international call to restore its regime, KSA had stepped in to support its Yemen agenda.(2)

Despite the relatively small size and poor economy of Yemen, the pro- Hadi and Houthi military forces are very capable. The Houthis were able to make great territorial gains, including taking over the capital, Sana, Hadi's stronghold in Aden, and Yemen's largest port on the Red Sea, Hodeida. However, and despite these great achievements, pro-Hadi forces are pushing back with great

(1)Laub, Z., "Yemen in Crisis", Council on Foreign Relations, 2016. Https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/yemen-crisis.

(2) Esfandiary, D. and Tabatabai A., ibid.

strength, and are regaining the control of key ports, lands and facilities gradually.(1) March 2015 marks a turning point in the Yemeni war, since KSA; alongside its Middle East coalition launched its Decisive Storm Operation which included the bombing of campaigns, naval blockade and the deployment of military groups to fight the Houthi rebels. Britain and the U.S also participated in this campaign by providing intelligence and logistical support for the airstrikes. The U.S had also promoted to arms sales to KSA and the collation during this time. Although the Decisive Storm Operation was announced as done in a little over three weeks, most powers are still active in Yemen, most notably, the U.S and KSA.(2)

Alongside their alliance with Saleh, Houthis were also supported, in arms and verbal strategy, by Iran. Since it turned to a Shi'a based country in 1979, Iran had often supported Shia' blocs around the world in hopes of spreading Shiite ideology, and in turn its influence throughout the4 region. Most recently, Iran had been backing and funding Shiite organizations and parties, such as Hezbollah, while at the same time, attempting to maintain its relationship with its ally, the Syrian Assad regime. After its presence and relationship in Syria got threatened by the recent events, it seems that Iran had been working harder on establishing a strong presence in northern Yemen, namely in the Houthi dominated areas. As the central government in Yemen weekend in 2011, Iran took advantage of the opportunity and increased its financial support of the Houthis. Iran's support of the Houthis put pressure on KSA, thus offering a new outlet for expanding Iran's economic and political interests.(3)

Moreover, Iran's interest in having control over Houthis-controlled areas stems from having a place to support an intelligence outsmart and the covert network for distributing weapons for its intestines in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa; these areas border KSA, which could provide direct contact with KSA when a confrontation arises with KSA. This support of the Houthis was perceived by KSA as a threat to its agenda within Yemen, in addition to being a threat to Sunni sect in general and KSA's regional supremacy, thus encouraging a proxy-war between both countries. Terrill (2014) notes that the Houthi forces have also led airstrikes on KSA, in addition to imposing arbitrary and abusive detention, as well as a blockade and the confiscation of food and

(1) Serr, Marcel, "Understanding the War in Yemen", Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, 2017, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 35769.

(2) Young, M., "Is the Arab Coalition Really Containing Iranian Influence in Yemen?", Carnegie Middle East Center, 2019. https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/78683.

(3) AlAwlaqi, W. and Al-Madhaji, M., "Beyond the Business as Usual Approach: Local Governance in Yemen Amid Conflict and Instability", Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, July 2018, p.56.

medical supplies from an already needy people, further escalating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.(1)

KSA and Iran have tenacious strategic interest which drive both countries to participate in such interventionist regional policy. The Majority of Western politicians and officials offer a fundamental analysis. They claim that the KSA, a Sunni- majority country; and Iran, a Shiite- majority country, are ideological enemies, who have transformed the Middle East into a battlefield for a sectarian war, in hopes of gaining the religious dominance in the region. Although there is no doubt, regarding the presence a religious divide between both powers, there are other reasons behind this war. KSA is battling to prevent Iran from spreading the Shiite ideology in the region and the surrounding countries; however, it could be argued that it is more afraid of Iran exporting revolution and expanding its influence and interest. Following the 1979 Iranian revolution, KSA became greatly concerned that the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini will motivate the Saudi people to overthrow the Saudi regime in the same manner he had galvanized the Iranian population to revolt against the Shah.(2)

Those fears are not unreasonable; Iran had previously supported revolutions and unrest tin Iraq and Afghanistan in hopes of attracting countries towards its authoritarian theocracy model in addition to viewing Iran as the leader of the Muslim world. Therefore, KSA believes that it is its responsibility to preserve the stability in the region so that it can maintain the stability of its regime. On the other hand, Iran is the ultimate enemy that seeks to increase its influence and push the Shiite Islamic republic agenda on the other countries by supporting groups which are looking to overthrow the regime. Laub (2016) believes that the conflict centers, unsurprisingly, on the fight for power.(3)

The war in Yemen, at its heart, is a fight over leadership of the country; however, regional and global players have begun seeking their own personal agendas which they hope to achieve through the conflict's outcome. KSA and Iran's commitment to the war is clearly displayed by their billions of dollars' worth of investments they made in it by supporting the factions whose interest align with their own. This type of proxy war is not something new for both countries; in the past few decades both sides funded many conflicts across the Middle East and North Africa. Historical, political, and religious foes, KSA and Iran have different visions for the region. KSA is the ultimate presentation of

(1)Terrill, W., Iranian Involvement in Yemen, Orbits, 2014. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0030438714000325.

(2) Darwich, M., The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status, The Gulf on the Verge Global Challenges and Regional Dynamics, Insight Turkey, vol. 20, no. 2, Spring 2018, pp. 125-142.

(3) Lub, Z., ibid.

status-quo power, where the stability of its regime is dependent on the stability of its governments and sects. On the other hand, Iran is the ultimate presentation of anti-status quo. According to Young (2019) Iran's supremacy depends on revolutions across the region, converting leaders and citizens to become more appreciative of the Shiite Islam. This perception is key to accurately evaluate the purpose behind the arms deals.(1)

U.S Role

The amount of oil found in the Gulf interested the U.S enough that it decided to establish a relationship with KSA. KSA has more oil than all of South and North America combines, and if KSA proves itself as a reliable trade partner America would then have a dependable oil source, in exchange of protection and support. As any relationship, the KSA-U.S relationship has suffered some downturns, most notably is the 1973 oil crisis, when KSA along with the other OPEC members cut-off U.S's oil supplies to protest its support of Israel.[2]Despite these difficult times, KSA proved to be a valuable ally, it was the Middle East's pillar, strong and tough enough to block the Soviet Union advance during the cold war. Iran contributed to these efforts, especially since it shares the border with the USSR. However, and according to Young (2019), following the Iranian Revolution, none of the allies, including the U.S, Riyadh or Washington wanted to see the Iranian anti-American Islamic republic spread to other countries and therefore KSA had quickly gained another purpose; countering Iran.(3)

KSA's strategic central location in the Gulf and oil-rich economy, established a strong consistent base from which it can counter Iran's spreading influences, and that's why Washington perceive the relations with KSA as high priority and of great importance for the American national security. It was in 1943 that the U.S began sending military aid to KSA, in addition to signing the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in 1951, establishing the foundation for the arms trade. According to CRS (2019) KSA spends an astonishing %8.8 of its GDP on defense (more than any other country in the world), and over the past decade, KSA has ordered USD 109.3 billion worth of U.S -made offensive weapons, transportation, surveillance equipment, part and training.(4)

During his presidency, U.S President Obama has authorized the largest arms sales to KSA in the U.S history, Wirth greatly USD 94 billion over 42 separate deals during his two terms. The Arms Export Control Act (AECA)

(1) Young, M., ibid.
(2) CRS., Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations, Congressional Research Service, 2019. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf.
(3) Young, M., ibid.
(4) CRS, 2019, ibid.

governed those deals, stipulating that such arms must only be used for self-defense. The issuing of such export license, a number of factors should be taken into account, including; Will the sale contribute to an arms race, support terrorism, increase the possibility of a revolution to escalate a conflict. The enforcement of such laws is difficult, and requires transparency and integrity from KSA in addition to a political intent from the U.S- neither of which are available. Hence why, once in KSA's hands, the world's most advanced weapons systems can practically be used without any restriction.(1)

KSA was able to maintain its offensive in Yemen for years through its billions of dollars' worth of weapons imported from the U.S. Since 2015, when they first intervened in Yemen's civil war, KSA has launched thousands of air strikes, most of which targeted civilians (women and children included). One of the most prominent instances is a 2016 incident, where two American-made laser-guided bombs hit a market, killing at least 97 civilians, 25 of which were children.(2) No matter its intent, all Saudi airstrikes in Yemen can be traced back to the U.S, and by resuming its arms trade deals with KSA, the U.S is then responsible in a way or another for the famine and the humanitarian crises in Yemen. For its part, KSA lakes the resources and the responsibility to verify its targets in a detailed and informative manner. By continuing to sign and grant export licenses to KSA, the U.S, specifically the Congress and the President are considered to support the Saudi military action in Yemen as 'Self-defense' under ACEA laws.(3)

Even though the U.S requires an end-user certification (EUC), a document which requires the military of the county importing the weapons to be the end-user of them; it can't resell or let any other government or non-government entity use them. However, many investigations and reports found that billions of dollars' worth of military arms, which KSA had purchased from the U.S had been directly funneled into the Saudi-backed, pro-Had coalition in Yemen, with grave consequences. One, Both KSA and the U.S no longer have control over the weapons. State actors hold some obligations towards their people, and are monitored by the international community. Governments to avoid abnormal behaviors most often than none, since they work about the repercussions of said actions in addition to the fact that they have to coexist with them. On the other

(1) Knights, M. and Pfuger, C., U.S.-Saudi Security Cooperation (Part 2): Restricting Operational Support in Yemen, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/polic-analysis/view/u.s.-saudi-security-cooperation-part-2-restricting-operational-support-in-y

(2) Martin, M. Nereim, V. and Fattah Z., Saudi Arabia Welcomes Trump with Billions of Dollars of Deals, Bloomberg, 2017.

(3) Shield, R. The Saudi air war in Yemen: A case for coercive success through battlefield denial, Journal of Strategic Studies, (41) 3, 2018.

hand, non-state actors, like the Houthi rebels or pro-Hadi factions, aren't bound by such international norms and have free-reign over how they can use those weapons. Two, U.S loses the exclusive ownership of sensitive military technologies, since once they are in the hands of others, they are most likely to learn and attempt to replicate those systems for their own use.([1])

In May, 2019, U.S President, Donald Trump signed a USD 8.1 billion arms deal using an emergency declaration to push through congressional approval, sparking dismay among Democrats and the members of his own part. Trump was able to veto all three resolutions reached by the House and Senate to block the deal. Various reasons were offered by Trump and Congress members regarding their condemnation. In one of those reasons, Trump expressed his fears that if they don't take KSA's money, then they will be acquiring such arms, and therefore spending those amounts of money in China to Russia. If this happens, the U.S loses a profitable defense contracts on addition to losing its ally in the region, while at the same time, damaging its national interests and contributing nothing to the improvement of human rights conditions. However, this is highly unlikely to happen for a number of reasons. First, Russia could barely cover its needs of next-generation fighter crafts, ranks and combat vehicles for its own armed forces, let alone for export. As for China, it has never produces the type of high military technology KSA is looking for. Second, even if either countries could produce such military weapons; the Russian and Chinese systems are not compatible with KSA's current arsenal (%60 of which is imported from the U.S, and the reset is from Europe).[2]Maintaining, discarding and establishing a full military weapons infrastructure is a very long and expensive process. Third, this math is not compatible for what KSA currently needs, especially since its currently amid a great proxy-war against one of its biggest enemies, Iran. There is no sense for KSA to engage in any matter that could drastically weaken its military strength.

Humanitarian Consequences

By 2014, Yemen was recognized as one of the Arab region's poorest countries, recording a poverty rate of more than %50, with about 143 million individuals in need of humanitarian aid. As a result of this, Yemen had gained a number of labels: "The Arab Region's poorest country", "The world's worst Humanitarian crisis"," The Middle East's most overlooked Conflict". By looking at its history, the humanitarian crisis had begun long before the Arab Spring. In a 2013 report by Chatham House mentioned that the increasing oil output and prices on the international marked during the second half of the 1990s, led to the shift from a decentralized, agriculture-led economy in Yemen,

(1) Knights, M., and Pfuger, C., ibid.
(2) CRS, ibid.

to an energy export-oriented model, while the income is use to support the elite network of patronage. It also noted that the as most tribal chiefs migrated to Sana'a, the power and the wealth had increasingly flowed from the center to the margins, when it flowed.(1)

During Saleh's rule, cities began to develop under the business elite, lowering urban poverty while increasing poverty in the country. The level of poverty in the rural areas continued to grow, reaching %46.7 by 2010, as the population became sustained by cheap fuel only and the subsidies became unsustainable for the central government which was short on cash.(2) The 2011 Arab Spring revolution brought more economic problems, heightened by an ineffective government and its mounting debt. As a result, Yemen became a country reliant on food imports, diesel pumps produced water, and an economy filed by cheap gasoline, electricity and deal, with heavily subsidized fuel for Yemeni citizens.(3)

At the top of the humanitarian challenges facing Yemen is the critical need for water, sanitation and hygiene. The number of displaced people in Yemen is increasing as a result of the ongoing conflict, lack of food, and epidemic outbreaks, such as cholera, disrupted the public services, and thus promoting the crisis. The absence of the infrastructure caused sanitation issues, contaminating all underground water all over Yemen, while sewage and treatment plants are not operational, due to the lack of fuel and maintenance. All of these poor conditions exposed the Yemeni population to a number of diseases, such as Cholera, which infected over a million individual.(4)

One of the reasons behind the continuing water cruses is the lack of necessary agricultural productivity. Most of the groundwater reserves are being exhausted due to inefficient usage and the cultivation of Qat (a stimulant, which is highly used in Yemen and the Horn of Africa). The production of such stimulants is exhausting the groundwater levels dramatically, thus hindering the farming of more important crops. The economic situation in Yemen, and the absence of basic services and file, prevented access to the clean water, fuel and electricity needed to heat and clean water, leading millions to being prone to

(1) Hill, G. Salisbury, P. Northedge, L. and Kinninmon, J., "Yemen: Corruption, Capital Flight and Global Drivers of Conflict", Chatham House, 2013. https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Salisbury_Yemen_ONLINE.pdf, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/194239

(2) Salisbury, P., "Bickering While Yemen Burns: Poverty, War, and Political Indifference", Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, 2017. https://agsiw.org/wp-

(3) Ibid.

(4) UNICEF, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2019. https://www.unicef.org/yemen/water-sanitation-and-hygiene.

preventable and treatable illnesses that can be prevented with a proper health system.(1)

Hann (2014) stated that the lack of groundwater in general, and clean water in particular lead to a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Stating that the cultivation of water-intensive Qat crops in Yemen, for economic and consumption reasons meant that %80 of groundwater reserves are being used up, and thus a dramatic decrease in the groundwater levels. Hann notes that the production of Qat needs to be addressed and regulates, however, the political situation in Yemen makes that highly improbable. Farmers are likely to continue producing Qat, due to the high demand, low production cost and guaranteed market; further depleting water reserves. Food insecurity is one of the other humanitarian crises; Yemen is dealing with amid this conflict. About 20.1 million individuals out of the 30 million in Yemen face hunger, in the absence of food aids, 14.4 million of which are in need of immediate assistance to sustain or save their lives (WEP.2019). Yemen is currently reliant on fuel and food imports; importing more than %80 of its food, %90 of which are staples including wheat and all of its rice. The war and high prices have thwarted the distribution of the already limited staples, including food, water and fuel.(2)

The city of Hodeida in the Houthi- controlled territory is the main city through which food and medical aid is capable of reaching two-thirds of the Yemeni population, as about %70 of all imports come through its port. The main contributors to the famine crisis in Yemen are the KSA and Houthi- led blockades and airstrikes (Dunning.2018). KSA-led coalition placed a ban on Yemeni airspace and sea following the firing of a ballistic missile towards Riyadh's airport in order to stop the Iranian smuggling of arms. A naval blockade was established by KSA around Western Yemen, curbing all exports and imports in some of Yemen's ports, while allowing limited humanitarian aid to enter through some ports, including Hodeida's.(3)

Having Hodeida as the main port for most imports in Yemen, including food, water and fuel, this strained the availability of food escalating the risk factor of a large-scale famine. These airstrikes had made the organizing of UN's humanitarian efforts difficult. In 2016, the Saudi- coalition beamed and destroyed the main bridge between Hodeida and Sana'a through which about

(1) Sharp, M., "Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, 2015. https://fas.org/sgp/crs.mideast/RL34170.pdf

(2) Laub, Z., ibid.

(3) Alles, L., Missiles and Food: Yemen's Man-Made Food Security Crisi, Oxfam, 2017. https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620388/bn-missiles-food-security-yemen-201217-en-pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

%90 of food aid provided by the UN's World Food Program are transported.[1] Moreover, the September 2019 airstrikes destroyed the UN-Supported water system which served about 12,000 individuals. According to ReliefWeb website statistics, the Saudi-led coalition have resulted in about 6.600 civilian deaths and wounded 10,500 others. 108,899 suspected cholera and acute diarrhea cases were recorded between January and March of 2019. One-third of these cases were children under five years old. 24 million individuals out of Yemen's 30 million inhabitants are in need of humanitarian aid.(2)

In 2018, KSA's assault on Yemen's main facility for commercial and humanitarian imports, the Hodeida's city port, left millions suffering from severe food and medical shortages. Yemen had to rely on the foreign aid in order to services following the demolition of factories, power plans and market places. Data regarding the collation airstrikes between 2015-2017 revealed that 356 air raids targeted farms, 174 targeted market places and 61 others targeted food storage sites. The destruction of sea ports and airports had greatly affected the flow of critical humanitarian aid into Yemen. More than %80 of Yemen's annual staple food supplies are imported through its ports.(3)

The decreasing number of imports and the rapidly deprecating currency caused food supplies to skyrocket, resulting in millions relying on humanitarian aid. The horrifying violation of international humanitarian law and indiscriminate killing meant that humanitarian aid workers are either unable or unwilling to reach some of the most vulnerable individuals in Yemen, resulting in entire communities being left without hope, with no food, water, sanitation or medicine. By 2019, more than 4 million of Yemeni people who are in dire need of assistance were living in 83 remote and hard-to-reach areas that can't be easily accessed by humanitarians.

According to the Yemen Data Project, about one-third of the KSA-led collation's air strikes hit non-military and unknown targets. Saudi-missions using U.S-made weapons have hit hospitals, schools, weddings, funerals and market places. If these locations were targeted with intent, then KSA has committed serious war crimes with U.S as its partner. If these locations were not targeted with intent, we conclude then that KSA is managing its operations with poor intelligence, and that some of the world's most advanced military technology is horrendously inaccurate. Both scenarios are unacceptable. The

(1) Dunning, T., Yemen – the 'Worst Humanitarian Crisis in the World' Continues, Parliament of Australia/ Parliament Library. https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6375089/upload_binary/6375089.pdf

(2) World Food Program, World Food Program / Yemen, World Food Program, 2019. https://www.wfp.org/countries/yemen

(3) Knights, M. and Pfuger, C., ibid.

ongoing war in Yemen, in which international powers are participating, has made the country's humanitarian emergency concerning water heath and famine, which was already present due to the failure of previous governments, and the actions of external actors, only greater.(1)

Local Authorities

Great amounts of aid are delivered by international donors and non-governmental bodies to support Yemen's local community, especially the most affected areas by war. Making the best of these aids means letting the local authorities participate in transporting the monetary aid, and distribute them in cooperation with local bodies and private sector actors. Local authorities enjoy getting recognition in attraction to local circumstances. The central government's inability to respond to local needs meant that these relatively resource-rich governorates have surpassed the legal mandate the 2000 Local Authority Law has enacted. In order for the governorates and districts to have poor, the central government has to delegate such power through temporary regality instructions.(2)

When applied, this approach grants governorates and districts better authority to supervise their local affairs. Producing a regulatory framework in which local authorities can perform effectively is one of the primary objectives during a conflict. This regulatory framework must sanction local authorities to developed. Moreover, it should disburse the associated income based in their needs, providing the local authorities with the chance to work with international donors in meeting the humanitarian and development requirements at the local level. The establishing of structure through which humanitarian bodies can work with local authorities will ensure that the aid is distributed and no longer centralized. This approach will enhance the authority's legitimacy and promote the local communities to unite under the formal government's structure.(3)

The main downfall of this approach is that the distribution of humanitarian aid was another reason for great conflict among the already warring people. As corruption and disorganization ran rampantly, the provided aid was often misused. There fore the UN have to make sure that all donors and international stakeholders have managed to oversee the distribution of aid in cooperation with the local communities and international actors. In addition to this, international cooperates have to take into account the local complications the

(1) Yemen Data Project, Yemen Data Project, 2019. https://www.yemendataproject.org/data.html
(2) Al-Awlaqi, W. and Al-Madhaji, M., ibid.
(3) Harden, D. and Knights, M., An Economic Roadmap to Humanitarian Relief in Yemen, Washington Institute, 2019. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/an-economic-roadmap-to-humanitarian-relief-in-yemen

conflict caused, and stop interfering in the local judiciary and security services' activities. Local authorities are still one of Yemen's most important institutions, mainly for their role in providing public services to the people. Despite that, the mounting conflict led to an economic collapse and led to the Central Bank of Yemen becoming immobilized. Therefore, the authorities weren't able to function at full capacity in most areas. Worldwide donors should begin incorporating local authorities as main actors in transporting monetary aid to other actors; this will enhance the authority's legitimacy, and promote communities to develop under formal government structures.(1)

Conclusion

This research explored one of the main striking contemporary crisis in the Middle East. It did so by approving its main hypothesis and exploring its questions. Throughout the research, it found that we cannot ignore the immense suffering of Yemeni men, women and children which is caused firstly and more importantly by the Yemeni regime's failure over the years in creating unity and legitimacy. Such failure caused severe political and economic defects within Yemen leading to fragmentation and internal and regional alignments. Consequently, Saudi-Iranian proxy-war, as the two regional powers fight for dominance and influence in Yemen, thus creating one of the region's most horrible man-made humanitarian crises. The numbers are terrifying and without an end; statistics show that about two-thirds of Yemen's populations, i.e. about 20 million individuals, are suffering from food insecurity, with an average of eight civilians dying every day from bullets and bombs.

Through supporting Pro-Hadi and Houthi militias, both KSA and Iran, respectively, see that it is the way to push their religious and political agendas in Yemen. For KSA, this success entails the hindering the spread of Shiite influence in Yemen in addition to halting Iran's plans of a 'Shiite Crescent' in the region. Moreover, it secures KSA's position as one of the largest, wealthiest and most powerful status-quo in the Middle East. To win the war in Yemen, KSA has to supply the Saudi led quotation and pro-had faction with military weapons. These weapons are acquired through U.S-Saudi arms deals which are greatly profitable for both parties, however, they resulted in a country bombed into famine. The magnitude of the human catastrophe is unimaginable at most, but is an unfortunate reality for all Yemeni people. As the conflict continues, the situation is becoming more complicated with no solution in sight. Hence why it is crucial to find long-term solutions to the issue, that will contribute to rebuilding Yemen following the devastation caused by the civil war.

(1) Al-Awlaqi, W. and Al-Madhaji, M., ibid.

Thankfully, there are a number of options. The U.S can hold KSA responsible for the horrors it has been committing by following up the conditional trade agreements. It can take it a step further, and halt all weapon trades, until KSA is proven innocent, and that it is committed to the international laws locally and abroad. One, due to the arms sales between the U.S and KSA, the latter is able to carry out its own foreign policy agendas using the world's top of the line weapons' technology systems; U.S can hinder this by halting all unconditional weapons sales and transfers. Two, by ending its weapon trades with KSA, the U.S can pressure it into applying human rights reforms, domestically and in Yemen. This argument has great support from congress members, however, they need to rally their political authority to override Presidential vetoes. Lastly, the U.S has the choice to whom it sells its weapons to. Despite the possible loss of a loyal customer, the U.S must stand behind the morals, which it had been known for since Cold War; democracy, freedom, and human rights. The U.S had been dramatically contradicted these morals by selling signing arms deals with KSA. These deals mark the U.S as a complicit in a way in the famine and public health crisis Yemen is going through. Most worrying is the fact that KSA lacks the adequate intelligence and humanitarian responsibility to conduct robust and detailed target verification, while the U.S had the capacity and the leverage to implement both policies. However, the question remains whether or not the U.S has the courage to do so.

Farming in Yemen need to be regulated and governed. Most Yemeni farmers opt to plant Qat; a crop that needs high amounts of water and mainly found in the Arab region, which production is highly profitable for famines in the Sa'dah area. This product uses %80 of the extracted groundwater, causing a significant decrease in groundwater levels. Therefore, farmers must be encouraged to farm more fruits and vegetable that could contribute to the country's sustenance. Another issue that should be addressed is the decentralizing of provided aid, in addition to promoting the local authorities' legitimacy, both of which will benefit the count, in addition to providing farmers with incentives to use modern watering technologies that can decrease water demand and can alleviate two of Yemen's issues.

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