Lebanese American University

The Saudi-led Intervention in Yemen: What Went Wrong?

By

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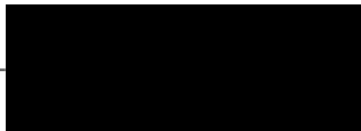   Day   Month Year

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Dedication page

To all those who lost their lives and the lives of their loved ones

during the conflict in Yemen since 2015

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The Saudi-led Intervention in Yemen: What Went Wrong?

Hayl Al-Salehi

ABSTRACT

Scholars have examined the drivers of the Yemeni conflict through various lenses, including sectarianism, state weakness, regional rivalries, and elite competition. This study employs the Transnational Conflict Framework (TNC) and the Intervention-Reconstruction-Withdrawal model (IRW) to analyze the conflict dynamics and study the impact of the Saudi-Led Intervention. It utilizes various peer-reviewed journal articles, books, archival documents, reports, and news articles to analyze the conflict, its dynamics, and prospect resolution. This analysis reveals that the conflict is rooted in different global, regional, local, identity, and individual drivers that have prevented a successful intervention toward conflict mitigation. The failure of the Saudi-led intervention is primarily due to unstable alliances, the unwavering external support to the Houthis, and the growing contradictions between main interveners (i.e., Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). This research suggests that a proper conflict resolution plan for Yemen needs to entrust greater role in local actors to lead the negotiations and devise agreements while being incentivized by external reward packages. It also suggests that further research should be conducted that advances bottom-up and culturally-sensitive conflict resolution frameworks.

Keywords: Saudi-Led intervention, Conflict Resolution, Transnational Conflict Framework, IRW, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Houthis.

List of Abbreviations

AQAP: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

IRG: Internationally Recognized Government

IRW: Intervention-Reconstruction-Withdrawal Model

ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

TNC: Transnational Conflict Framework

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

US: United States

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Chapter One

Introduction

The Arab Uprisings have marked a significant turning point in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. While a smooth transition of power was only achieved relatively in Tunisia and Egypt, the fate of revolutions in other Arab countries was brutal repression of the opposition and the survival of the regime (e.g., Bahrain) or a prolonged civil war (e.g., Yemen and Libya) or a mixture of both (e.g., Syria). The contemporary conflict in Yemen has some roots in the events following the Arab Uprising of 2011. The youth who participated in the revolution of 2011 in Yemen yearned for a civil state that ensures inclusion, political participation, economic growth, and a fall of the authoritarian regime (Hamid, 2018). The revolution achieved the latter after the Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, resigned as part of a deal reached through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative agreement efforts in 2012 (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2007). The agreement mainly includes the resignation of Saleh, the transferring of the presidency to his vice president, Abd Rabbo Mansour, and the creation of a transitional government with allocated quotas to key political groups (Transfeld, 2016). In exchange for Saleh's compliance with the agreement, he was offered complete immunity from prosecution and was permitted to continue leading the General People's Party (GPC).

The conflict in Yemen continues to have a tremendous impact on Yemen's humanitarian and economic conditions. The percentage of the population in need of humanitarian assistance is 80% (18.6 million), and the percentage of those in acute need of humanitarian assistance is

around 33% (10 million), with over 1.3 million displaced people as of 2018 (UNOCHA, 2018). Yemen's economy has become more paralyzed with the current conflict. The GDP of Yemen declined by over a quarter (28%) in 2015 and a further 4% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). The current Saudi blockade contributes to the deterioration of Yemen's economic and humanitarian situation by blocking the main port that provides food and other life necessities for over two-thirds of the Yemeni population (Feierstein, 2017). The Saudi-led intervention has also raised antagonism against KSA, increased the presence of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in Yemen (Winter, 2011). In addition, the Saudi airstrikes and blockade have put the legitimacy of KSA as a regional power and defender of the Sunni world into question due to increased humanitarian costs of the Saudi airstrikes in the Sunni majority population (Darwich 2018).

Since the conflict in Yemen became internationalized in 2015, external interveners have raised controversies in Yemen and within the international community. The Saudi airstrikes are estimated to be over 21,000 airstrikes since 2015, with an estimated average of 12 airstrikes per day (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The number of civilians who died victims of the Saudi-led raids in Yemen is estimated to be around 4,400 people, around a quarter of the total causalities of the conflict (World Report, 2020). Many human rights organizations have the targeting of civilians by Saudi airstrikes, including the Human Rights Watch which as reported that there are at least over 90 unlawful airstrikes that targeted "Yemeni fishing boats, mosques, factories and detention centers" (World Report, 2020). The conflict is expected to polarize the society further and push the Houthis towards seeking patronage from Iran if the Saudi-led intervention continues for a longer period of time (Darwich, 2018; Juneau, 2016).

Yemen: Areas of control and conflict

- Conflict zones
- Yemeni government forces
- Houthi forces
- UAE-backed anti-Houthi forces opposed to government
- UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces

Red Sea

Saada

Amran

Hajjah · Sanaa

· Marib

Hudaydah ·

SAUDI ARABIA

YEMEN

Taiz

Aden

50km
50 miles

Source: Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, May 2020

BBC
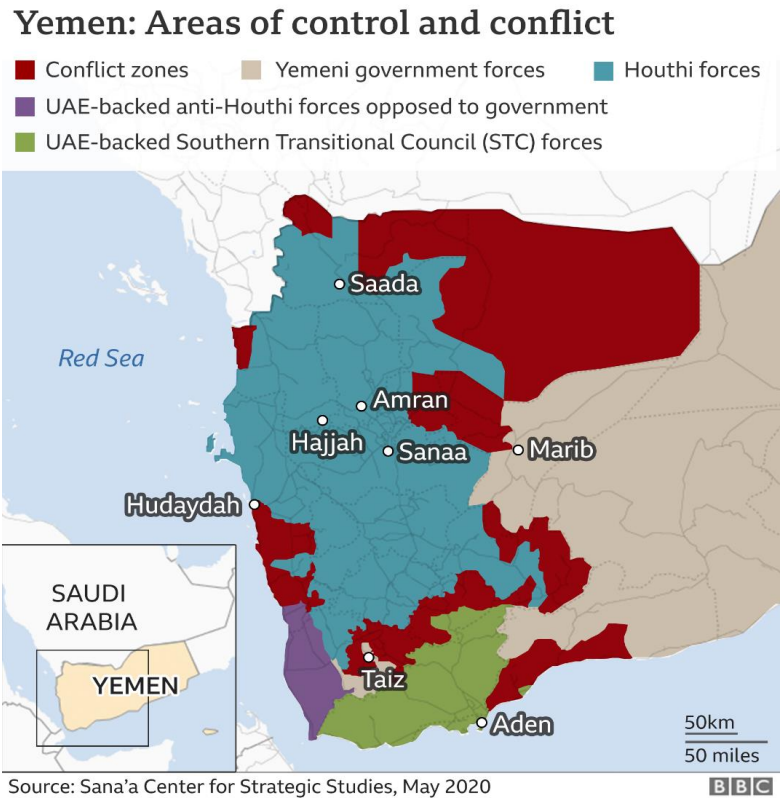
Figure 1 shows the distribution of areas under the control of various state and non-state actors

Current research aims to study how the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen influenced the dynamics of the conflict. While previous research has focused on the political culture, sectarianism, or the tribal structure in explaining the failure of the international interventions in Yemen, this research aims to utilize the Intervention-Reconstruction-Withdrawal (IRW) Model to diagnose the Saudi-led intervention by looking at various socioeconomic factors that contributed to the turnover of events in Yemen.

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Theoretical Approach

The complexities surrounding the Yemeni conflict calls for a comprehensive analysis of the Saudi-led intervention. This research utilizes the Transnational Conflict Framework (TNC) to analyze the conflict dynamics and roots of the internationalized conflict. TNC consists of a multilevel framework that investigates various global, regional, state, identity, and

individual drivers of conflicts and how these drivers interact to influence prolonged conflict dynamics. This research also utilizes the Intervention Reconstruction Withdrawal (IRW) Model (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016) to assess the success and failure of Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Focusing on state-building as a core objective for conflict resolution, the blueprint model consists of three primary phases: Intervention, Reconstruction, and Withdrawal (see Figure 2).

During the intervention stage, the state (or coalition of states) has its utmost military presence, and the intervention usually takes place to end violence between conflict parties. The purpose of the intervention during this stage is to end the military conflict. In the reconstruction stage, the intervention limits its military presence and empowers the local state institution to take hold of the security and safety of the society. During this phase, the intervention aims to develop the economic and political institutions of the state to enable it to suffice and recover from the conflict. External interveners are expected to focus on empowering the police and military institutions of the state to prevent conflict relapse. During the withdrawal stage, a gradual military withdrawal takes place. External interveners at this stage try to balance between a smooth withdrawal and a firm assurance of local institutions' capabilities to maintain order. Diplomatic and economic ties are encouraged between the intervention actor and the local institutions during this stage. This research will diagnose the Saudi-sponsored IRW by examining the three main phases of the blueprint and assess the factors that led to the prolongation of the war and the failure of reconstruction.

Source: Ramsbotham 2000, 2004; for nested paradigms, see Dugan, 1996, pp. 9–20; and Lederach, 1997, pp. 73–85
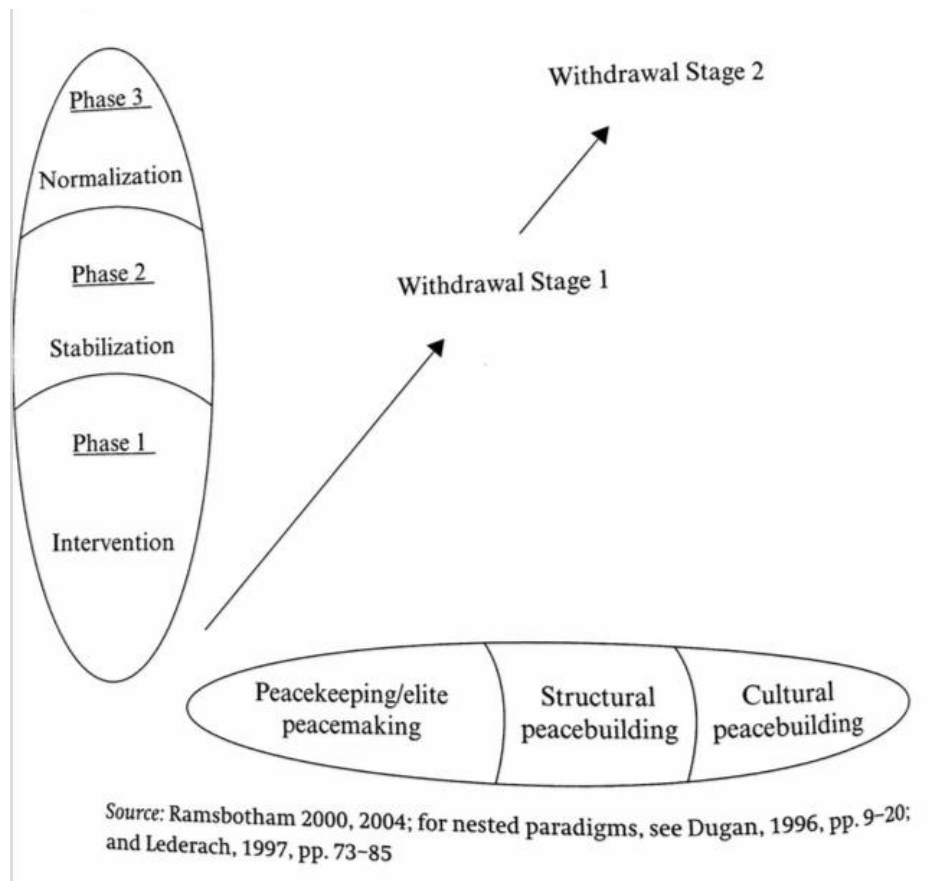
Figure 1. The different phases of the IRW with varying intervention strategies during each stage

This research suggests that several factors have hindered a successful IRW. First, the presence of identity politics in Yemen prevented any attempts to mobilize the Saudi-led intervention towards ending the conflict through negotiation. The political elite's conflict over the methods and the identity contestation surrounding the Yemeni state's ontology have hindered all efforts to reconcile and mediate between the political actors. Second, the political economy in Yemen has provided incentives to various actors to prolong the conflict. One of the roots of protracted social conflict is the persistence of various political entrepreneurs that profit from the continuation of war economically and socially. Third, the geopolitical context has played a significant role in prolonging the civil war. Despites the questioning of the validity

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of viewing the Yemeni conflict as a proxy war between key regional acotors (i.e., Iran, KSA, and UAE), the contribution of the geopolitical struggle cannot be neglected.

1.1.2 Tools

This research relied on various academic references in its inquiry, mainly journal articles, books, analysis papers, and academic reports. It also utilized publicly available information from news articles, humanitarian and non-humanitarian reports, and publicly available interviews with key political actors. The information gathered was compared with statistics and other quantitative information from secondary data sources (e.g., UN bodies, INGOs, and ThinkTanks). The Information was then analyzed and organized to test the hypotheses presented in the research.

1.2 Research Question

The main question of this research is: 'What are the main factors that have influenced the success/failure of the Saudi-led IRW in Yemen? The answers to this question will highlight aspects of identity politics, political economy, state structure, and geopolitical context that have shaped progress in the IRW.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

The second chapter of this thesis reviews the literature on post-Arab Spring conflicts in general and the Yemeni war in specific. It then presents a rationale for using IRW framework in examining the conflict in Yemen. The third chapter utilizes Transnational Conflict Framework (TNC) to investigate the various global, regional, local, identity/community, and individual factors contributing to the conflict in Yemen. Chapter four analyzes and assesses the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Chapter five concludes by highlighting the main findings and provides recommendations for future conflict resolution plans in Yemen.

1.4 Significance

This research provides a comprehensive assessment of the Saudi International Intervention in Yemen using the IRW model at the national and regional levels. The significance of this research comes from its interaction with literature on the MENA region, conflict resolution theories, and the literature on the Yemeni transnational conflict. This analysis would also be helpful for future researchers and policymakers examining the conflict in Yemen. Additionally, this research will contribute to the literature on regional conflict interventions.

Chapter Two

A Conflict Resolution Framework for Analyzing the Yemeni Conflict

The UN Security Council (UNSC) issued Resolution 2216 (2015) that endorsed regional efforts to intervene in Yemen and re-instate the International Recognized Government President, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, in power. After Hadi requested the Gulf Cooperative Council and the Islamic Conference state members to intervene, the intervention took place to halt the influence of the Houthis and reinstate Hadi in power. The resolution legitimized both the intervention in Yemen and the aerial and naval blockade to stop the Houthi advancement and reinforce the power transition mechanisms recommended by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative (Security Council, 2015). While resolution 2216 (2015) contained similar clues to resolution 2210 (2015), resolution 2216 contained few additional essential clauses. Some of these clauses include listing Abdulmalik Al-Houthi and Ahmed Ali Saleh in the annexed list of the UNSC and the provision of international legitimacy to the Saudi-led intervention to reinstate Hadi as per his official request. Although the resolution passed, not all the permanent members of the UNSC signed it. Russia withheld its vote and recommended further look into the context of the intervention (Security Council, 2015). The Saudi-led intervention was expected to last for a few months; however, the war reached its seventh year at the time of publication, with no significant advancement towards a peaceful transformation.

This chapter aims to understand the best theoretical and practical tools to study the Yemen conflict's roots and dynamics that contributed to the continuation of the war and the Saudi-led intervention's failure. The first section explores the various incentives of the regional actors, mainly the Kingdom of KSA (KSA) and the UAE (UAE), to intervene militarily in Yemen. The second section assesses the literature on how the Saudi-led intervention has been studied. The third section reviews some of the relevant literature on conflicts in the Arab World post the Arab uprisings. The fourth section investigates diverse perspectives on the reasons behind the Saudi-led intervention failure. Finally, the fifth section suggests a conflict resolution approach to analyzing the Saudi-led intervention.

2.1 The Motives behind the Saudi-led Intervention

Regional interventions throughout the Arab uprisings were common, especially those initiated by the Gulf monarchies. Some of the literature on the conflicts post the Arab uprisings focused on regional rivalries in the Middle East (Gause, 2014; Salloukh, 2013). The instability in many countries that were directly impacted by the mass protests of 2011 led to the increased permeability of those states. This, in turn, allowed foreign regional powers to take advantage and increase their influence (Salloukh, 2013). The competition for regional influence resulted in the intensification of the enmity between Iran and KSA and the emergence of what was described as a "Middle Eastern Cold War" (Salloukh, 2013; Gause, 2014). For example, the increased tension between Iran and KSA motivated the latter to meddle in Yemen's transition of power's negotiation efforts in 2012. In Syria, the intervention of regional state actors (i.e., KSA, UAE, Iran, and Turkey) and non-state actors (i.e., ISIS and Hezbollah) played a significant role in the emergence of the civil war (Durac, 2012). Additionally, the United States. and Russia intervention and the NATO coalition played a significant role in the conflict by providing strategic and military aid to various state and non-state actors in the region (Durac, 2012; Gause, F. George III, 2011). Yemen was one of those countries where the Saudi-led

coalition, with support of the United Kingdom and the United States, arranged an intervention to drive the Houthis out of the capital and reinstate Hadi.

Although the Saudi-led intervention played a significant role in Yemen's current war dynamics, the conflict cannot be considered a proxy war between Iran and KSA for few main reasons. First, the claims that Iran has significantly supported the Houthis to impact the conflict dynamics on the ground have not been supported by evidence. While Iran's government limitedly invested in the Houthis and the conflict in Yemen, their support was not sufficient to change the conflict dynamics (Juneau, 2016). There are various factors for the limited Iranian intervention in Yemen. First, Iran does not have a great interest in Yemen due to Iran's consideration of Yemen as a remote regional country (Juneau, 2016). Second, Iran has been dramatically distracted by regional proxy struggles in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, that intervening in Yemen was not considered a priority in the Iranian foreign policies (Vatanka, 2020). Third, the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, pushed for reconciliation policies with KSA (Gupta, 2013). Besides, Iran avoided the provocation of the US and KSA to negotiate the nuclear deal during Obama's administration. While Rouhani had ambitions to reconcile with KSA, his efforts were met with skepticism from the anti-Saudi hardliners in Iran and from the Saudi government, who viewed his efforts with suspicion (Vatanka, 2020).

The motives of the main interveners in Yemen go beyond reinstating the internationally recognized president Hadi and curbing the Houthis influence. Isa Blumi (2016) argued that there is intense competition in Yemen between the UAE and KSA to secure strategic locations in Yemen's South and plunder Yemen's natural resources. However, Thomas Juneau (2020) maintains that the UAE intervention in Yemen was mainly due to its strategic foreign policies change. These changes were due to the UAE's leadership change, the changing dynamics of regional politics, and the UAE's newly acquired military and economic abilities. There are four main foreign policy priorities for the UAE, namely: 1) curbing the influence of the Muslim

Brotherhood and their supporters (mainly Qatar); 2) limiting the influence of Iran in the region; 3) securing its maritime channels that are important to its waterways, and 4) maintaining good relationships with KSA and the U.S. (Juneau, 2020a). While originating from various historical and contemporary factors, these priorities have influenced the UAE's foreign policies in the MENA region. As for KSA, Ben Rich (2019) argued that the Saudi foreign policies since 2015 are best described as a shift from defensive realism to offensive realism.

Since its establishment and until 2015, the KSA has adopted a defensive realism strategy to ensure its survival. KSA's defense strategies include focusing on security maximization, bandwagoning, managing external threats, and avoiding confrontations (Karim, 2017). Some examples of Saudi's defensive strategies include Saudi's alignment with the stronger U.S. against Iraq, and with the U.S. and U.K. to curb the Iranian influence, and the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to coordinate the security in the Gulf. However, KSA shifted to more aggressive and expansionist strategies after King Salman was appointed to head the government and the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, was appointed as the Minister of Defense (Karim, 2017). The shift from adopting defensive to adopting offensive strategies was evident through the power-maximizing approach of the KSA in the region, its zero-sum approach to politics, and its increased purchase of military weapons (Rich & Moore-Gilbert, 2019). A clear example of the Saudi shift towards offensive realism approach is Yemen's war engagement, one of the most extensive wars that KSA has engaged in since its establishment. The U.S. also played a significant role in facilitating the implementation of the KSA-UAE foreign policies. Some of the main factors in the US foreign policy decision in Yemen are the nuclear deal with Iran during Obama's administration; the long-term security agreements between the US and KSA (e.g., arms sales and joint military training and assistance), and; the threat of AQAP (Day, 2020).

The US embassy in Sana'a ensured having a backchannel to negotiate with the Houthis even after their takeover of Sana'a in 2015 and while it continued its military and logistical support for Operation Decisive Storm and arms sale to KSA. However, with the murdering of the Saudi activist, Jamal Khashoggi, and the continual public opposition of the Saudi war in Yemen, Obama's administration blocked the delivery of around $50 billion worth of arms to KSA (Day, 2020). The partial US withhold of weapon sales was halted when the Trump administration showed much higher support to the Saudi-led coalition, especially after the presidential veto of the Congressional decision to stop the US assistance to the Saudi government in the war in Yemen. However, efforts have been made to keep the U.S. away from blame, especially after the bombing of a funeral that caused tens of causalities (Al-Eryani & Tophan, 2020).

2.2 The Saudi-led Intervention and its overall impact

Yemen's humanitarian situation has raised UN (U.N.) bodies concerns since the beginning of the war in Yemen. A group of U.N. experts issued a report highlighting the human rights violations that conflicting parties committed from 2014 to 2018. Experts found that all fighting groups have engaged in various human rights violations that can qualify as war crimes (Reliefweb, 2020). The Saudi forces have been accused of violations of the principle of proportionality in their airstrikes and on their extensive aerial and naval embargo (Human Rights Council, 2018). They are also in violation of the principle of minimizing civilian impacts (along with IRG, the Houthis, and Saleh's forces in Aden). Also, IRG, the Houthis, the anti-Houthi non-state actors, and Emirati personnel have been accused of the restriction of the freedom of speech of people under their jurisdiction, unlawful and inhumane detentions across Yemen, and the hindering access channels of food and other supplies to the people as a form of coercion (UN HRC, 2020). Additionally, the Security Belt Brigade, UAE personnel and Houthi forces have been accused of sexual harassment, rape and recruiting children to fight

during the war (Human Rights Council, 2018). These violations also come with other violations regarding the force closing of Sana'a Airport, which restricts the movement of people and patients in Northern areas in need of urgent health care abroad and the unnecessary restrictions on the entrance of imports and other humanitarian aids to Yemen by the Saudi forces.

The violations committed by the conflict parties are contradictory to what the UNSC permitted external intervention. Not only did the stability of Yemen deteriorated since the beginning of the Saudi-led intervention, but the re-instalment of a functioning IRG led by Hadi also has not been successful even in areas under the anti-Houthi coalition control. KSA's support for Hadi to legitimize their intervention prevented selecting any more favorable candidates to the warring parties. The UAE, another major participant in the Saudi-led intervention, support for the establishment of the STC and their assistance to the separatist in the South, challenged the authority and influence of Hadi in Aden and other governorates in the South, making any development plans in the economic and security sector unlikely in these areas (al-Dawsari & Nasser, 2020).

Yemen's conflict had (and still has until the time of writing this chapter) a tremendous impact on the Yemen population's humanitarian and economic conditions. The percentage of people under the need for humanitarian assistance is 80% (18.6 million), and those who are in acute need of humanitarian assistance are around 33% of the population (around 10 million, with over 1.3 million displaced people internally and externally as of 2018 (UNOCHA, 2018b). Furthermore, the Saudi blockade contributed to both the deterioration of Yemen's economic and humanitarian situation by blocking the main port that supplies food and other life necessities to over two-thirds of the Yemen population, including the port of Hodeida (Feierstein, 2017). What is more, Saudi airstrikes have severely hit the Sunni majority population of Yemen (Darwich, 2018). The development of the conflict in this path can cause further polarization of the community and would likely push the Houthis towards seeking

patronage from Iran, the only state that officially acknowledged their legitimacy (Darwich, 2018; Juneau, 2016).

Regionally, the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen has threatened the relations between KSA and UAE. According to Fare Al-Muslimi (2019), a Yemen researcher and political analyst, the Saudi-UAE alliances were likely to fail since the start of the intervention in 2015. Both the Saudi and UAE governments have different interests, security concerns, and decision-making mechanisms, making them unfit partners in the discourse of events, especially in the South (Almuslimi, 2019). There are various examples of the disastrous consequences of the Saudi-UAE conflict of interest in Yemen. The UAE's support of the STC to overtake Aden in 2019 challenges Saudi's reinstated Hadi's objectives to govern undivided Yemen (Almuslimi, 2019). This is also apparent after UAE air forces executed various airstrikes on the Saudi-Back IRG forces and allies when they pushed STC outside Aden (Juneau, 2020). The dysfunction of the UAE-KSA alliance in Yemen also appears in the logistical withdrawal of the UAE from Mocha, which took over six months due to the bureaucratic nature of the decision-making process in the KSA (Almuslimi, 2019). Even though the UAE and KSA policies varied to a point where the Anti-Houthi parties clashed in several areas, the UAE kept good relations with the Kingdom. UAE was also motivated to partially withdraw from Yemen to maintain good relations with KSA (Brehony, 2020).

2.3 Conflicts in the MENA region post the Arab Spring

The consequences of the Arab Uprising varied noticeably in the MENA region. In Tunisia, the protests succeeded in overthrowing former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1989-2011) and followed a transitionary election. In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) resigned after a few weeks of protest and handed the power over to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) to plan the elections. While the elections of 2012 in Egypt marked a great transition to democracy, the military coup in 2013 led to the transfer of power to the

former defense minister Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. In Libya, armed militias emerged to oppose former President Muammar al-Ghaddafi (1969-2011), aided by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces, killed al-Ghaddafi, and overturned the government. However, the revolution in Libya caused a large polarization in society. It turned into a destructive civil war, turning the country into a war zone where, for many years, local and regional actors competed for influence and power. Regime forces suppressed the mass protests of 2012 in Syria that aimed to change the Bashar al-Asaad regime (2000 - present) and improve their living conditions. However, after a short period of heavy regime crackdown of the civilian protests, several military factions defected and formed the Free Army, a military force opposing Bashar's regime. The situation was further complicated with the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the emergence of foreign international interventions that aided different local governmental and none-governmental parties of the conflict. Yemen is also an example of how the consequences of the Arab Uprisings contributed to a brief civil war between Ali Saleh's military forces and Islah political and tribal leaders in Sana'a during 2012 and between the IRG and the Houthis in 2014 up until now. Except for Tunisia, all the revolutions during the Arab Spring did not result in a democratic transition of power.

There are various potential explanations for the rise of internal arm conflicts in some countries where the Arab Spring took place. Eva Bellin (2012) argues that countries in which the military is less institutionalized were likely to have a military structure prone to splitting under widespread mobilization efforts. Holger Albrecht & Kevin Koehler (2018) argue that the military split was because of the demographic disparity between the high-ranking military leaders and low-and-mid ranking officers. In Yemen, the shifting alliances of Ali Mohsen, along with the decision of the leader of the confederate of Hashid, Sheikh Sadiq, to join the protestors, caused a conflict between the newly tribal and military forces split led by Ali Mohsan and Sadiq al-Ahmar, and the pro-regime forces lead by Saleh and one of his sons,

Ahmed Ali Saleh (a former commander of the Republican Guards Brigade) (Knights, 2013). The brief civil war between these factions caused hundreds of causalities and injuries to both sides and was later coined as the "Hasaba War. "Societal fractionalization served as another explanation for the emergence of conflicts during the Arab uprisings. The correlation between societal polarization and the emergence of a civil war entails that society's polarization was already prominent in countries that experienced civil conflicts post the Arab Spring (Gause, F. George III, 2011).

Sectarianism was also used to explain the emergence of civil wars in the Middle East since 2011. This view attributes conflicts that arose post the Arab Spring to the conflict between communal groups to gain power. The sectarian claim emphasizes that, in polarized societies, there are inherent differences between communities that make the process of stabilization and state consolidation difficult (King, 2012). Reconciliation in societies where sectarianism is prominent is thought to be challenging as different sects attest to different value systems and have different opinions about what constitutes a legitimate authority.

There are various reasons why sectarianism does not have a strong explanatory power on the Middle East's current conflicts. First, there have been multiple alliances to which regional powers have crossed the sectarian lines (Del Sarto, Malmvig, & Lecha, 2019; Gause, F. Gregory, 2014; Salloukh, 2013). Second, the sectarian narrative fails to grasp the role of international interventions in the emergence of conflicts. Additionally, all the countries that experienced mass protests experienced regional and international interventions that primarily influence the dynamics of these countries' conflicts. Studies focused on states' weaknesses mainly highlight that state weakness is a good indicator for the likelihood of civil war escalations. One of the main scales used to assess state weaknesses is the State Fragility Indicator (SFI). SFI is an index that indicates the weakness and strengths of states by studying several types of indicators such as economic indicators, political indicators, and social

indicators (Fearon, 2013). However, the line between the correlation between state weakness and the emergence of conflicts is blurred as there have been many weak states that had no overt conflicts for extended periods.

2.4 Roots of the Yemen Prolonged Social Conflict

The MENA region witnessed an abundance of regional and international interventions in its contemporary history. Many studies have focused on studying the U.S. intervention to investigate the U.S.'s attempt to stabilize Iraq and help the Iraqi population form a stable democratic state (Salisbury & Mansour, 2019). The failure of U.S. institutional and economic reforms in Iraq was due to several factors, including 1) disagreement on the mechanisms of power distribution, 2) regional interventions in Iraq's domestic politics, 3) failure to engage the public in the formation of the new social contract and 4) increased polarization between the Sunni and Shi'a community (Mansour & Salisbury, 2019). Yemen also poses another puzzle for studying reasons for international interventions' failure in establishing a stable state with a legitimate body of governance. One of the potential interpretations behind the failure of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen can be seen through the competing interests of international actors in Yemen. Blumi (2018) explained that one of Yemen's primary roots of conflict and its prolongation is related to various regional and international actors' competing economic interests.

Additionally, many state and non-state actors also played a significant role in the conflict escalation and Yemen's stalemate situation (Al-Qirbi, 2020). This is evident by KSA's uncompromising stand about the implementation of the UNSC 2216 resolution. This resolution favors removing all Houthi forces in Sana'a and generally favors proceeding with the initial GCC initiative (Security Council, 2015). Negotiations in Yemen have not been fruitful for solving the conflict peacefully because the Saudi government holds an uncompromising stand against the Houthis (Al-Qirbi, 2020).

The U.N. missions in Yemen also had their fair share of blame regarding the continuation of Yemen's war. Helen Lackner (2020) argues that the UN role was most significant during the transition between 2011 and 2014. However, the UN failed to prevent the war (even though they could delay it). Some of the reasons for the failure of the UN efforts in Yemen can be generalized to many conflicts in the region (related to the favoring of regional and global powers to preserve their international foreign relations to that of countries of conflict, and the UN limited authority on the ground). For example, the UN efforts during the transition period between 2011 and2014 mainly focused on implementing the GCC initiative agreement without paying much attention to the grievances of the Houthi and the Southerners. Other issues related to studying the Yemeni conflict focus on a single approach strategy to solve Yemen's conflict and neglect various pressing issues (Lackner, 2020).

Besides, the Saudi-led coalition pressure on UN decisions influenced the progress of the UN in Yemen. As the leading financier of the UN in Yemen and one of the biggest donors to the UN, KSA used its financial leverage to impede various UN decisions and statements (e.g., threatening to withdraw their funds after a released statement about the Saudi-led coalition involvement in recruiting child soldiers and killing civilians in Yemen) (Nichols, 2016). The U.N. mission came with a readymade solution implemented in other countries and hoped to be implemented in Yemen (Al-Qirbi, 2020). However, these solutions were not successful because of the unique nature of Yemen's politics that features shifting alliances, multiple foreign interventions with competing interests, and the tribal and religious complexities in Yemen (Al-Qirbi, 2020).

The Houthis influence was also a significant factor in the analysis of the conflict continuation in Yemen. Mohammed Abdulla Mohammed (2020) (pseudonym of a Yemen researcher who hid his real identity for security reasons) contends that the Houthis' current influence in Yemen is attributed to diverse ideological and local factors. Accordingly, one of

the main reasons for the Houthi prominence in Yemen is that they could attract a large segment of the Zaydi sect to join them (Mohammed, 2020). The Houthis' appeal has a lot to do with historical roots that date back to the Imamates. When the last Imamate was overthrown by the republicans, with Nasser's troops' aid, a civil war took place in Yemen between Imamate loyalists and the Egyptian-backed republicans. This war ended with the victory of the republicans and the end of Imamates' legacy that existed since the eighth century BC (Mohammed, 2020). Many changes occurred in the north of Yemen that pushed the Zaydis to favor the Houthi movements. These changes include the increased influx of Shafii Sunni citizens to Sana'a, the belief of many Zaydis that governance and authority should be in the hand of the descendants of the prophet, and the inspiration of many Shi'a factions, including the Houthis in Yemen, to follow the model of the Iranian revolution 1979 (Mohammed, 2020).

Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen (2020), a Yemeni political researcher and consultant, provided three main reasons for the Houthis' survivability in Yemen. The first factor is related to their alliance dynamics. The Houthis temporal alliances allowed them to advance faster as they were on their way to Sana'a (Shuja Al-deen, 2020). Their temporal alliances constituted several tribal groups allied with the Houthis against their rivals and a significant alliance with the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis used the alliance with Saleh to use his already established network of patronage and his connections with military officers and tribal militias to ensure a smoother advancement to Sana'a (Nevola & Shiban, 2020). The alliance with Ali Abdullah Saleh was temporary because Saleh wanted their assistance to defend a common enemy, the Islah, and cause chaos to prove that Yemen was better off during his reign. The second factor that helped the Houthis in their resistance and success in maintaining power is the Houthi leadership changing narratives in different contexts and different times (Shuja Al-deen, 2020). This ideological strategy was utilized to give the Houthis public support and increase the momentum of resistance. Another vital factor that assisted the Houthis in their

resistance against IRG and the Saudi-led coalition is their "Sacred Expansionist" ambitions (Shuja Al-deen, 2020). The Houthis attempted to expand outside its Saada and fought different battles in Al-Jawf, Saada, and Marib to gain influence before heading to the capital. The rhetoric of the Houthis' expansionist ambitions comes from their belief that their sect is the only one on the right path and that they must spread Zaydism across a sacred mission, "Quranic Marsh," that is backed by both ideological and theological foundations (Shuja Al-deen, 2020).

Many local researchers focused on an elite level analysis to study the failure of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Dr Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi (2020), former foreign minister of Hadi's government, argued that one of the main reasons for the Saudi-led intervention's failure is Hadi's miscalculated decisions. Since Hadi was selected as president of the transitional government in Yemen in 2012, his focus drifted from managing the political transition to a new democratic government to saving his presidency. Abdulghany Al-iryani (2020) contends that Hadi's inability to fix the most pressing economic issues, combined with his uncharismatic and unpopular figure in Yemen, allowed the Houthis to take advantage of the situation and advance to Sana'a. Hadi's resignation and his call for international intervention without any consultations with local actors constitute the second reason for the failure of Hadi's government (Brehony, 2020; Al-Iryani, 2020). Besides, Hadi failed to unite the anti-Houthi fronts in Yemen (Al-Iryani, 2020). Hadi's marginalization and targeting of many southerners contributed to the rise of the STC (the biggest southern rival to Hadi's government) and a brief civil war between STC and Hadi and his loyalist forces in the South.

2.5 A conflict-resolution approach to studying the Saudi-led Intervention

The Arab Spring presented a challenge to many students of international relations. While only a few researchers predicted the rise of political upheaval, the timings and the revolutions' scope and the events' consequences were not predicted. Edward W. Azar (1990) criticized many of the approaches of I.R. theorists to address prolonged conflict because they

only focus on only certain aspects of the conflict, separate between different levels of the analysis, or focused only on overt violent conflicts. Hence, he argues that some of the main preconditions for conflict escalation include "communal discontent", "deprivation of human needs", "global governance and the state's role", and "international linkage" (Azar, 1990). Need-based explanations of conflicts also provide a good explanation of the roots of conflicts. According to Mayer (2012), the Dynamics of conflict can be best understood by studying the conflicting parties' needs and then moving outwards to studying the other dimensions (structure, value, and emotions). Fisher et al. (2000) argue that it is best to study conflicts by first addressing the core problems and looking at their roots to understand and deal with their effects. Floyer Acland et al. (2014) claim that it is best to understand the conflicting parties' shared needs and fears to bring their positions closer.

Azar's theory of protracted social conflict entails that those prolonged social conflicts between communal groups are need-based. The need for these communal groups (e.g., need for security, acceptance, fair access to political institutions, and economic participation) is either threatened or jeopardized. Protracted social conflicts are usually a result of governments' failure to address the early warning signs of conflicts (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016a). In the Yemeni context, some of these warning signs include the inability of the *de facto* president of Hadi to save the economy of Yemen from collapsing, the inability to gain the loyalty of the factions of the military loyal to the ex-president, Ali Abdullah Saleh and the unresolved grievances of the Houthis (Baron, 2019; Breisinger, Diao, Collion, & Rondot, 2011).

Various models were established in conflict resolution to study the context and dynamics of protracted social conflicts. One of these models is the conflict escalation de-escalation model that analyzes protracted social conflicts. This model focuses on diagnosing conflicts by dividing the phases of conflict into various stages and looking into similar stage

patterns (Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak, & Bue Ngoc, 2005). The conflict escalation de-escalation model was also used to diagnose and propose various solutions to conflicts based on the conflict stage. Another prominent framework for conflict analysis is the Transnational Social Conflict Framework (TNC). TNC is an extension of Azar's (1990) protracted social conflict theory that considers global and regional level changes after the end of the cold war and contextualizes conflict regionally and globally (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2016). TNC consists of five primary levels (i.e., global, regional, state, identity groups, and elite/individual) that directly or indirectly connect and influence each other. This framework allows for studying conflict where conflict drivers have a direct link to transnational connectors.

Studying international interventions has also been a significant focus of the conflict resolution literature. Third-party interveners can serve as either third-party arbitrators or as mediators between warring parties. Their role as third-party interventions can be accomplished through coercive or non-coercive strategies (Curl, 1975; Lederach, 1995, from Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Coercive strategies include enforcement, non-forcible coercion, or mediation with muscle, while non-coercive strategies include pure mediation, conciliation, and good offices (Ramsbotham et al., 2016a). The multitrack conflict resolution model entails that a successful conflict resolution plan should tackle three main tracks: track I (top leaders), track II (mid-level leaders), and track III (grassroots) (Lederach, 1995). These three tracks should be targeted with various strategies to resolve conflicts and mediate between them and the embedded parties. After the end of the cold war, many international interventions that the U.N. and the UNSC sanctioned were recommended to follow a multi-stage model called the International Reconstruction Withdrawal model (Ramsbotham et al., 2016a). This model consists of three main stages: Intervention, Reconstruction, and Withdrawal. During the intervention stage, the state (or coalition of states) has its utmost military presence, and the intervention usually takes

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place to end overt violence between conflict parties. The purpose of the intervention during this stage is to end the emergent military conflict.

Third-party interveners limit its military presence and empower the local state institution to take hold of society's security and safety in the reconstruction stage. Third-party interveners focus on empowering the state's police and military institutions to shut down any attempts of a coup or armed skirmishes. During the withdrawal stage, the intervention starts a gradual withdrawal of its military presence from the state. During this phase, the intervention aims to develop the state's economic and political institutions, enabling it to suffice and recover from the conflict. The intervention also aims to balance between a smooth withdrawal and a firm assurance so that the local institutions can maintain order. Diplomatic and economic ties are encouraged during this stage between the regional actors and the local institutions. While the IRW serves as a tremendous analytical framework, the model has received some significant criticism since its inception. Some of this criticism includes the emphasis on a top-down process, neglect of the psychological dimension, failure to prioritize goals, not considering the motives of the interveners, the issue of the military involvement on tasks that are not military-related, and the U.N.'s general sidelined from international interventions (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Transformation advocates favor a bottom-up process to resolve conflict. John Paul Lederach (1995) emphasized that it is best to change from within local communities to transform conflict. This change can be achieved by first identifying the local sources of conflict and tackling them. However, changing from below can challenge international interveners as local communities might perpetuate power asymmetry, patriarchy, or privilege (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). The transformations model can also present an issue in clientelist societies where patronage is mixed with clientelism.

This research aims to utilize some of the theories in the literature about conflict resolution. The Transnational Social Conflict Framework will be used to map and analyze the

conflict in Yemen. Mapping the conflict in Yemen will help find the roots of the issue that hinder the ending of the conflict in Yemen and the dynamics that contributed to the escalation and continuation of the conflict. While this research will also utilize concepts presented in some models and theories about third-party interventions (e.g., the IRW model and the transformation perspective), testing the validity of these models is beyond the research scope. It is important to note that this research attempts to understand the Saudi-led intervention and its consequences and shortcomings without holding any moral stand against any of the warring parties. Although, the perception of the key political actors in Yemen, both local and international is essential, studying the moral stand of the parties of conflict is beyond the scope of this research.

This research attempts to solve the puzzle surrounding the Saudi-led intervention's failure to end the conflict in Yemen. The main question the research tries to answer is; what are the main factors that contributed to the failure of the Saudi-led intervention to end the conflict in Yemen are? This research puts forward the following hypothesis. First, the presence of identity politics in Yemen prevented any attempts to mobilize the Saudi-led intervention towards ending the conflict through negotiation. The political elite's conflict over the Yemen state's ontology has hindered all efforts to reconcile and mediate between the political actors. Second, Yemen's war economy has provided incentives to various actors in Yemen to prolong the conflict. One of the roots of protracted social conflict is the persistence of various political entrepreneurs that profit from the continuation of war as it provides them with economic and social gains that will be lost once the conflict ends (Ramsbotham et al., 2016a). Third, this research hypothesizes that the geopolitical context plays a significant role in prolonging the protracted Yemen conflict. Even though the notion that the current conflict in Yemen cannot be reduced to a proxy war between various regional actors (i.e., Iran, KSA, and the UAE), the geopolitical struggle's contribution cannot be ignored.

Chapter Three

Analyzing the Yemeni Conflict Using the Transnational Conflict Framework

The distribution of conflicts worldwide showcases regions with the most frequent durable conflict are in Asia (the Levantine area, India, China, and a big part of East Asia) (Bercovitch, Huang, & Teng, 2008; Binningsbø, E Loyle, Gates, & Elster, 2012). One of the most complex conflicts in the MENA region since the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century has been the current Yemeni protracted conflict. The conflict in Yemen erupted in 2014 when allegedly peaceful protests of the Houthis in the Capital of Yemen, Sana'a, turned into an armed coup after the Houthis attempted to capture President Abdu Rabbo Mansour Hadi and several prominent members in the transitionary government. After the overthrow of the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the vice president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, was chosen to become the transitory president of Yemen for the period between the Saleh overthrow and the expected transitional elections to take place in 2014. The Houthis' control of the capital, Sana'a and several other governorates took place after the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, allied with the Houthis and ordered Saleh-loyal military leaders to hand over their weapons and their military basis to the Houthis and support them on their attempted coup. With a coalition of other Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa, KSA drove Houthis out of Aden and continued attacking the Houthis' primary military bases in Sana'a and other areas and formed an aerial and naval blockade in Yemen. The coup,

however, failed after Hadi was able to escape to Aden and then flew to KSA and revoked his initial resignation announcement (Feierstein, 2017).

There have been various theories for understanding protracted social conflicts that involve diverse local, regional and international actors (Ramsbotham et al., 2016a). These theories can be divided into three major categories. The first category is the classical political philosophy of conflicts, presented by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Machiavelli, and Marx. These thinkers aimed to understand the general underpinnings of conflicts and resolve them using their theories' assumptions with little grounds to the context (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). The second category is the modern political philosophy of conflict. These theories include Social Darwinism, a theory that Herbert Spencer later used to justify conservatism based on the political survival of the fittest and International Relations (I.R.) theories (e.g., liberalism, realism, and conservatism). I.R. theories are usually used to provide a grand root of conflict based on distinctive social order understandings. The third category is postmodern theories, such as rational choice theory, game theory, and behaviorism. Many conflict resolution experts currently use these theories with some assumptions from the liberal theory to understand and resolve conflict. According to Azar (1990), protracted conflicts result from governments' failure to address the early warning signs of conflicts utilizing many concepts from post-modern theories.

The conflict in Yemen has been one of the most humanitarian pressing issues in the region. While the Saudi-led intervention was expected to last for only a few weeks, the conflict runs on its sixth year when writing this paper. The Yemeni government's failure to exercise power on its territory was exacerbated due to the diversity of local and international actors that made progress in resolving the conflict. With over 80% of the population under the need for humanitarian support and the high casualty rate (UNOCHA, 2018b), the call for proper international conflict resolution becomes imperative. While it is essential to look for

conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve the current conflict, it is also equally important to analyze potential factors that contributed (and continue to contribute) to the escalation of the conflict.

Globally, the factors that potentially contributed to Yemen's stalemate position can be best understood through the globalization double movement theory lens. The Global South has been majorly affected by the imbalanced economic development between the Global North and the Global South, causing many communal groups to rely on communal self-help to support themselves socially and economically (Salamey, 2017). Reliance on communal patronage weakened the state's legitimacy and authority (globalization double movement and communitarianism will be extensively discussed in chapter three). Regionally, Gulf monarchies' security concerns and the changing dynamics placed Yemen as a threat to the Gulf monarchies' security and legitimacy (Blumi, 2018; Gause, F. Gregory, 2014). Additionally, the mass protests of 2011 resulted in fear of the spread of these mass protests in the monarchies amid minorities' dissatisfaction with their government's ruling, especially in KSA and Bahrain (Soubrier, 2019).

At the national level, several economic, political, and ideological factors can potentially contribute to the failure of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Economically, the conflict weakened the Yemeni economic conditions. Furthermore, Yemen's current conflict aided the production of groups who gained enormous wealth and power and have massively benefitted from the continuation of conflict through various channels that profited from the informal economy's low restrictions (Delozier, 2019). The escalation of conflict is partially rooted in challenging those warlords who are obstacles to any conflict settlement that can upset the contemporary status quo. Ideologically, the ongoing conflict in Yemen contributed to the population's polarization and distrust of IRG's ability to govern the Yemeni territories. These economic and political grievances contributed to many youths' involvement in terrorist

groups, such as ISIS and AQAP, and other leftist and rightist militias, to find their way of belonging and fight ideologies that are perceived as unfit to govern Yemen.

This chapter aims to use the Transnational Conflict Framework (TNC) to contextualize Yemen's conflict and help understand the nuances that resulted in a political and military stalemate in Yemen, hindering the attempt of the Saudi-led intervention to stabilize the country and install a legitimate government in Yemen. The first section provides a map of the Yemeni conflict that highlights the various actors involved in Yemen, the central conflict issues, the conflict's context, and the conflict's impact. The second section draws a multilevel analysis of the Yemeni conflict that considers the global, regional, state-level, identity, and elite-individual levels of analysis to understand Yemen's conflict dynamics. The third section discusses the main findings and interlinks between the various levels of conflict drivers. The fifth section concludes by outlining the main factors contributing to the Saudi-led intervention's failure in Yemen.

3.1 Mapping the Conflict in Yemen

Conflict mapping has taken various forms in the conflict resolution literature. However, one of the most used conflict mapping charts is that of Wehr (2019). This conflict mapping model is suitable for analyzing Yemen's protracted conflict because it acknowledges the complexities of multiple state and non-state actors, presents a briefing of the contentious issues and showcases the conflict's impacts at the local and international levels. A prominent feature of the conflict mapping guide is that it considers the various dimensions of the conflict to provide a good base for analyzing protracted social conflict and help provide informed recommendations for interventions in the context of violent conflicts (Wehr, 2019).

Various parties in the conflict in Yemen have directly influenced the dynamics of the Yemeni conflict. Two of Yemen's most significant warring parties are the Houthis and the IRG

(IRG). The Houthis are a group of rebels who initially resided in Sa'ada, holding influential positions in the northern highlands of Saada as Sayyids, who allegedly transcended from the family of the Islamic Prophet, Mohammed. The Houthis as a group does not have any tribal roots; however, they held prominent positions in their community as judges, service providers and community leaders due to the Houthi family's exalted position as the transcendent of the prophet's family. The Houthi movement starts in the late nineties by Hussein Badr El-Din Al-Houthi and others from his family to advocate for holding into the teachings of Zaydism and reviving the Zaydi sect in Yemen after a long period of prosecutions by the republicans since the overthrow of the Imamite system in the early 1960s (Hill, 2017). Badr el-Din Al-Houthi later established the Believing Youth and was elected as a member of the parliament in 1993. However, Al-Houthi grew critical of the Yemeni government and later started to advocate for peaceful criticism of the Yemeni government. While early allegations of the violent intentions of the Houthis exists among many Islamic members, the transformation of the Believing Youth from a purely revivalist group to a rebel group took place in 2003, when skirmishes took place between Saleh's forces and the Houthis in Saada after members of the Believing Youth chanted anti-American, Anti-Jewish slogans in a mosque that Saleh was visiting at the time (Shuja Al-deen, 2020). The conflict developed into six wars between 2004 and 2009 that left hundreds of casualties and tens of houses and properties damaged in Saada and its surroundings.

The second main party of conflict is IRG. When Hadi got to power in 2012 as part of the GCC agreement for transferring the power to the vice president for two years to transition the government and establish a new social contract, he was expected to finish his term in 2014 and prepare for a new democratic election that will ensure a fair transfer of power to a new president selected by the Yemeni people. However, the dialogue was not very effective due to the presence of various spoilers from the old regime inside and outside the government, serious issues related to the Houthi and the Hiraak (southern movement) grievances, and the

deteriorating economic situation of Yemen. Hadi started to face challenges from the Islah party, Saleh's General People's Congress Party, the Houthis and the Hiraak that hindered any efforts to progress through the transition period.

The conflict in Yemen also encompasses varied subgroups that sided with the main parties of the conflict. The Houthis were assisted by the military forces loyal to Saleh[1] in 2014 after Saleh provided them with an easier path to Sana'a and ordered military units that were still loyal to him to assist the Houthis and hand in the military bases to them without resistance. The Saleh-Houthi alliance was shocking as the two new allies had fought six wars against each other in the first decade of the 21st century. Saleh and the Houthis alliance allowed Houthi militias to benefit from Saleh's network and sources to advance further into the South. Saleh took the opportunity to ally with the Houthis to end the influence of Islah and take revenge against his former allies, especially Ali Mohsen and the Al-Ahmar family (Nevola & Shiban, 2020). Additionally, many of the prominent tribes in Sana'a supported the Houthis, especially those belonging to the Zaidi sect, one of the three main Shi'a sects (Clausen, 2018). However, the Houthi-Saleh alliances broke off with the former president's assassination after a few skirmishes between Saleh's allied forces and the Houthis in 2017.

Like the Saleh-Houthi alliance, the anti-Houthi alliance can also be considered a fragile marriage of convenience between several local actors in Yemen. The alliance between Islah and Hadi was formed to defeat their familiar rival, the Houthis. However, due to the lack of trust between Hadi and Islah, it has been challenging to coordinate the Anti-Houthi forces to secure significant victories on the ground (Nevola & Shiban, 2020). Another major anti-Houthi actor is the Southern Hiraak. The author argues that the Hiraak and the Southern Transitional Council contributed to both driving the Houthis out of Aden and challenging the Hadi's

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[1] The Houthis-Saleh alliance, nevertheless, was broken after Saleh's failed attempt to turn the tables against his Houthi allies and Saleh was later killed by the Houthis in a battle over the dispute in 2017.

legitimacy. The origin of Hiraak is rooted in the protests and events between 2004 and2009 when a group of military commanders organized protests to request increasing their pensions or re-enlisting them in the military. Aidaros Al-Zubaidi, a southern ex-military commander, returned to Aden in 1996 after his brief exile in Oman and started organizing and training militias in his home governance, Al-Dhali, as part of the Southern resistance (Day, 2020). His effort, along with various other south military commanders, contributed to the formation of the Southern resistance that later played a significant role in driving the Houthis out of Aden in 2015. However, with the support of the Suadi-airstrikes, the UAE ground forces were the determining factor for freeing Aden and other southern governorates. Aidaros and Al-Shalal Shai, another key leader in the Southern Resistance, were appointed as governor of Aden and chief of the police forces, respectively, by Hadi, with pressure from the UAE. However, Aidaros' continual effort to advance the plans of Southern independence caused friction between him and Hadi, which later pushed Hadi to fire him from his position as a governor of Aden.

Regionally, KSA and its allies played a significant role in the Yemeni conflict. According to Transfeld (2016), the Yemeni conflict cannot be understood without taking KSA and Iran into the equation. The Saudi intervention in Yemen was a shock to many people in the region. The bases on which KSA and other states intervened in Yemen are allegedly in the categories of "intervention by invitation" and "intervention for peace and security" (Guidero, Hallward 2019). There are various reasons for the decision of KSA's intervention in Yemen. These reasons include the fear of Iran's influence in Yemen through the Houthis, who received modest funds from Iran and Hezbollah, molded their model of Hezbollah, and showed gestures of cooperation with Iran after their takeover of Sana'a. Another reason for Saudi's intervention in Yemen is the change in leadership within the Royal family (Al-Rasheed, 2019). Changes from the conservative risk aversive foreign policies of KSA of the last few

decades were marked by the taking over of Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) of the Ministry of Defense and the support of his father, King Salman, to his decision to lead the Operation of Decisive Storm to curb the Houthis' influence in Yemen. The decision of MBS to execute the widespread Saudi-led intervention in Yemen had a diverse reaction from the international community. Countries that supported the intervention are Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Egypt, Sudan, and Morocco. These countries participated in executing airstrikes even if minimal. The crown prince, MBS, also sought support from the U.S. and the U.K. to support the military operations of the Kingdom logistically and strategically.

The UAE motives for supporting the STC are still controversial in the literature. UAE plays a significant role in the conflict in Yemen. The UAE focused on strengthening its relations with KSA, curbing the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, and having strategic leverage over some strategic ports in Yemen influenced the dynamics and actions of the UAE's policy on Yemen (Juneau, 2020a). The UAE limited but competent military commanders used their expertise on various interventions in several third countries to develop different military forces to secure the South and ensure its stability and advance to crucial areas in Hoddeidah, Hadramout, and al-Mahara to drive the Houthis, eliminate the risk of AQAP and ISIS and push the Islah influence.

The efforts of the UAE to end the violent conflict in Yemen were constrained to various factors. First, the UAE's limited military workforce forced it to rely majorly on local forces to achieve military and security objectives (Brehony, 2020). These forces are paid from the UAE bankroll and hence can seek financial benefits elsewhere if the UAE support to them ends. Second, the UAE distrust in Hadi and his government to govern, and their assistance to separatist STC forces, have created frictions within the anti-Houthi camp that amounted to clashes in 2018 and the STC's takeover of Aden in 2019. With the assistance of the UAE airstrikes, the STC step to take over Aden was mainly motivated by their recently gained

power through the financial and military support of the UAE and the intentions of the UAE to withdraw from the war. The UAE eventually withdrew most of their forces in Hodeida and other areas in Yemen and left only a few forces on the ground after the international community started to grow frustrated on the humanitarian cost of the war in Hodeida and other parts of Yemen.

Another regional actor who raised significant concerns within the international community is Iran's alleged support for the Houthis. The official narratives of both the IRG (IRG) and KSA have showcased the Houthis in Yemen as actors serving their Iranian patrons' interests (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2019). While some interactions between Tehran and Houthi leaders since the establishment of the movement in 1994 have been reported, there was no sufficient evidence that the Irani's support of the Houthis can be a game-changer (Juneau, 2016). However, the Iranian moral, financial, and military support cannot be neglected. There are various factors for the limited Iranian intervention in Yemen. First, Iran does not have a great interest in Yemen due to Iran's consideration of Yemen as a remote regional country (Vatanka, 2020). Second, Iran has been dramatically distracted by regional proxy struggles in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Third, the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, pushed for reconciliation policies with KSA. While his ambition was to reconcile with KSA, his efforts were met with skepticism from the anti-Saudi hardliners in Iran and the Saudi government, who viewed his efforts with suspicion (Vatanka, 2020). Besides, Iran avoided the provocation of the U.S. and KSA to negotiate the nuclear deal during Obama's administration successfully. However, Iran was not wholly absent in the Yemeni conflict.

The Houthi movement was greatly inspired by the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979. The Iranian revolution set an example to the Houthis on the strategies of resistance. It later inspired them to create a similar structure to Iran's government structure (the Supreme Revolutionary Council). Hussein Badr el-Din Alhouthi, one of the founders of the Believing

Youth, received some of his teachings in Tehran (Blumi, 2018). Second, Iran supported the Houthis morally by endorsing their campaigns on various occasions, especially after KSA openly accused Iran of supporting the Houthis.

The Houthis claimed that at the beginning of their armed advancement to the capital was to protest the increase in oil prices as the government decided to remove all subsidies on oil products (BBC, 2020). However, the Houthis currently deny the government's legitimacy and claim it is not adhering to Islamic laws and is unfit for ruling the country (Alkhadir, 2014). The relationship between the parties of conflict is very dynamic throughout the conflict (Transfeld, 2016). Nevertheless, some significant patterns of the hostile relationship between the conflict parties are the North-South divide and the newly marked Sunni-Shia divide. The conflict in Yemen is not accessible to de-puzzle when it comes to quantitative and qualitative symmetry. However, the official government has relatively more support from the Saudi and UAE air forces and the military and logistical support from the Saudi-led coalition in areas under its control. In comparison, the Houthis have more control in-ground and more tribal and economic support in areas under their control.

The parties of conflict have various interpretations of nature and the causes of the conflict. On the one hand, the Houthis claim that the causes of the conflict are economic injustice and no adherence to Islam's actual definition. On the other hand, the official government and many Brotherhood-affiliated Islah party leaders believe that Iran's military and ideological support contributed to the Houthis's attack on governmental institutions and the capital takeover (Juneau, 2016; Yadav, 2015). The conflict has majorly de-escalated after the Stockholm Agreement that took place in 2018 in Sweden (Dijkstal, 2019). However, tensions and armed clashes are still taking place in various areas across Yemen.

The context of the conflict has three major dimensions. While few significant agreements were brokered since 2014, including the Stockholm Agreement of 2018 between the Houthis

and the IRG and the Riyadh Agreement of 2019 between the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the IRG, these agreements partially decreased violent clashes with no significant progress towards a comprehensive conflict settlement (Darwich, 2018). At the regional level, the conflict in Yemen has been described as a proxy war between the Irani forces, which supported the Houthis throughout their movement, and forces of dominant Gulf countries, such as KSA and UAE (UAE) (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2019; Juneau, 2016; Salloukh, 2013). Although Egypt planned to intervene in Yemen, the attempt came to a halt due to various domestic and regional circumstances that limited its intervention. Yemen's importance to KSA and Iran lies in the strategic location that enables it to control significant waterways in the Red Sea and the Arabic Sea.

Additionally, Houthis' presence posed a significant threat to Salafis in Yemen and the Wahhabi system in KSA (Salloukh, 2013). As of 2020, the conflict in Yemen is within various stages of the conflict escalation/de-escalation model. While there is shifting between violence and ceasefire on an irregular basis between the Houthis and the IRG, various tribes in the North of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) started to clash with the government's way of dealing with the conflict leading to further polarization. For example, frictions between the IRG and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) eventually occurred and led to an eruption of violence between the IRG and STC in Aden in 2018 and resulted in the STC's control of Aden with assistance from the UAE (Kostiner, 2020).

The conflict in Yemen had a tremendous impact on the humanitarian and economic conditions in the country. The percentage of people under the need for humanitarian assistance is 80% (18.6 million), and those who are in acute need of humanitarian assistance are around 33% of the population (around 10 million), with over 1.3 million displaced people internally and abroad as of 2018 (UNOCHA, 2018a). Economically, Yemen's weak economy has become more paralyzed with the current conflict. Additional to the humanitarian and

economic impact, the Saudi-led intervention has raised antagonism against KSA and increased the prominence of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The Saudi airstrikes and blockade have put the legitimacy of KSA as a regional power and defender of the Sunni World into question due to its failure to shift the balance of power in Yemen toward the IRG and the humanitarian costs of the Saudi airstrikes in the Sunni majority population (Darwich 2018). The conflict is also expected to polarize society further and push the Houthis towards seeking patronage from Iran as they become more isolated politically and economically due to the Saudi blockade (Darwich 2018, Juneau 2016).

3.2 TNC Framework

Since its inception, the Republic of Yemen has experienced four major civil wars. The first civil war took place from 1960 to 1967 when the republican revolutionist planned a coup to overthrow the Imamite regime in the northern highlands and establish a republic state in 1960. With support from the Egyptian president, Jamal Abdulnassir, the republican rebels overthrew Imam Badr el-Din and announced the establishment of the Yemen Arab Republic in the North (Carapico & Rone, 1994). With support from KSA, the Imam loyalists resisted the coup for over half a decade but were defeated after the military intervention of the Egyptian forces (Blumi, 2018). In the South, various actors within the Socialist-ruling party fought against each other over disputes related to the legitimacy of the power-sharing mechanisms among the socialist party leader that later turned into a tribal dispute between Al-Zomra, a group led by the former president Abdulfattah Ismail, and Al-Toghma, a group led by a socialist party leader named Ali Nasir Muhammed, in what was coined as the Events of '86 (Halliday, 1990; Kostiner, 2020). The brief but deadly war resulted in tens of thousands of casualties. The conflict was settled after Ali Salem Al-Bid's selection as president of the People Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

After the unification of Yemen in 1990, a civil war between southern political elites, led by Ali Salem Al-Bid, and the former president of unified Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, over claims that Saleh pushed to sideline the southerners influence in decision-making of the government and failure to improve the economic situation in the Southern territories lead to a brief but costly war in 1994 (Kostiner, 2020). The current conflict in Yemen marked the fourth major civil war in the last fifty years. The section below utilizes the multifactorial TNC framework of analysis to analyze the current conflict in Yemen.

3.3 Multifactorial Analysis of Armed Conflicts in Yemen

The Arab region is a complex system where the Transnational Conflict Framework (TNC) can serve as an excellent tool for understanding the conflict dynamics. TNC was a modified version of Azar's (1990) Protracted Social Conflict analysis as an attempt to appropriately understand the underlying causes of conflict after the end of the two world wars (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016b). There are five analysis levels to map out the factors that led to the escalation of conflicts: global, regional, state-level, identity group, and individual/elite level. TNC analysis of transnational conflicts is used in this chapter to map out the factors that led to the escalation of disputes in Yemen post Arab Spring and the prolongation of the war. Below are drivers that contributed to the escalation and how these factors attributed to the failure of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen.

3.3.1 Global Factors:

3.3.1.1 Geopolitical positions**:** Changes in the positions of several global powers post-cold war have left a vacuum of power in many areas of the World (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2007). The United States (U.S.)'s ascendance to global power exemplifies this as the U.S. became the leading superpower during the brief unipolar period after the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, the leading role of the U.S. was negatively affected due to several economic crises and the rise of China's economic

developments (Chan, 2010). Competitions to fill this vacuum resulted in many regional conflicts, especially in areas that relied significantly upon the superpowers' support and dominated positions. Additionally, Russia's tactical intervention and lack thereof post Arab Spring played a significant role in the emergence of conflicts in the Arab World (Salloukh, 2013). For example, the NATO[2] intervention, with the approval of Russia in Libya, contributed to the escalation of the war, guerilla warfare, and various paramilitary groups' empowerment (Campbell, 2013). In Yemen, global economic and political changes have majorly affected the conflict's social, political, and economic dynamics.

Socially, the increased availability of means of mass communication and the increased number of internet users allowed for greater access to information to the public. The spread of the Arab Spring in 2011 has been partially attributed to easy access to information and the affordable access to mass communication tools, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, across the Arab region (Khan, 2012). While the number of internet users in Yemen is still low compared to many other developed countries, its influence in raising awareness about Yemen's economic and political situation and youth mobilization cannot be discredited. The shift from a centralized state economy towards a free-market global economy that encourages many state-leaders to push for liberalization reforms and ease foreign investments restrictions has furthered the gap between social classes (White, 2018). In Yemen, the IMF and many regional and international donors have conditioned aid to the economy's liberalization reforms by privatizing many state institutions and removing foreign investments restrictions (Blumi, 2018). Additionally, the economic crisis of 2008 caused a significant blow to the Yemeni economy directly through the decrease in oil prices, the return of thousands of Yemeni workers from the Gulf, and increased prices of commodities.

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[2] North Atlantic Treaty Organization

3.3.1.2 South-North economic divide**:** the global economic inequality is a feature of the increased grievances and the revolt of many people in the Arab World (Ozgur & Ozel, 2013) (Gökçer Özgür & Hüseyin Özel, 2013). The existence of grievances attributed to disputes in countries like Yemen, Syria, and Libya. The unequal distribution of wealth between the South and the North resulted in the Global South's underdevelopment and the rise of clientelism and communitarian self-help to counteract globalization's harmful waves (Salamey, 2017). At a certain point during the changes that accompanied the Arab Spring, these active communitarian factions were able to mobilize and go to conflict with authoritarian regimes to gain power and influence (e.g., Houthis in Yemen, Hafter militias in Libya, Islamic State (I.S.) in Syria).

3.3.1.3 Discrepancies between the state system and distribution of people: the artificial divide of many countries in the Middle East have resulted in a significant conflict stemming from lack of solidarity based on nationalism in various areas in the Arab World and lack of representativeness in the government of various community groups (Durac, 2012). These discrepancies resulted from the border making agreements in the 20th century agreed upon by several imperial powers (i.e., Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916) and growing supranational identities. The dissatisfaction with current state systems over issues related to territoriality were significant drivers of conflict in many areas in the MENA[3] region post the Arab Spring (e.g., the disputes between the Houthis and Saudi over the Asir and Gizan region in the Northern borders of Yemen, and the dispute between the Houthis and the Sothern Separatists over the South).

3.3.1.4 Global ideological contestation: ideological contestation played a significant role in the eruption and mobilization of conflicts. An excellent example of how ideologies play a

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[3] Middle East and North Africa

role in disputes post the Arab Spring is the Civil War in Syria (Salisbury & Mansour, 2019; Salloukh, 2013) (Peter & Inboden, 2019; Salloukh, 2013). Although the dispute between the government and various paramilitary groups was understood to be a consequence of the government's perceived lack of legitimacy by various social groups, ideological discrepancies between the I.S. and the government were significant drivers of the war in Syria. The Zaydi-Sunni dispute in Yemen is a prevalent case in which ideology played a significant role in the conflict. Irani-supported Houthis have taken the Shi'a stand in Yemen[4], where two-thirds of the population adheres to the Sunni teachings (Bonvoa & Al-Rubaidi, 2017). This discrepancy in ideology contributed to the eruption of a fierce armed confrontation between the Houthis and other government and non-government groups in Yemen, especially in the South.

3.3.1.5 Transnational connectors: The disputes and political unrests in various areas in the Arab World have their roots internationally through transnational connectors. These connectors include the effect of international terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and I.S. in Syria and Libya, the flow of weapons from Libya to Syria, and the flow of weapons from various counties in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), and Iran to various paramilitary groups in Yemen, as well as the flow of economic and logistical support of international actors to various government and paramilitary groups in areas of disputes in Yemen, Syria, and Libya (see Table 1 for details on Iran's military support for Houthis). The advancement of communication and the flow of capital have also helped recruit soldiers and the society's polarization during various conflict disputes in the Arab World, especially in Yemen.

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[4] There are three main religious divisions in Yemen; the Sunni Yemenis, who are presented politically by the Islah party. They constitute over 65% of the population and are distributed throughout Yemen, and the Shia'a Zaidis, who constitute around 35% of the population and are concentrated in the Northern West parts of Yemen. It is believed that the Houthis were partially motivated by the fear of the Sunnis, especially the Salafi Sunnis, will rise to power and circumvent the Zaidi's influence (Baron, 2019).

Table 1

Recipient/ supplier (S)	ordered	No. designation	Weapon description	Year(s) Weapon of order	Year delivery	of delivered	No. Comments
Houthi rebels (Yemen)*							
S: Iran	(10)	Qiam-1	SSM	(2015)	2017	(10)	Yemeni rebels designations Burkan and/or Burkan-2

Transfers of significant weapons: Deals with deliveries or orders made from 2012 to 2019 between Iran and the Houthis (*Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*)

3.3.1.6 Foreign Policies and the Yemeni crisis: it is difficult to understand the Yemeni conflict without considering Yemen's geopolitical position and its importance to the World. Yemen is one of the main waterway channels connecting Europe and significant parts of North Africa to the Gulf and East Asian countries. Many Yemeni ports, such as Aden port and Hoddeidah port, serve as essential ports for international shipments crossing the Red Sea (Cordesman, 2015).

Additionally, Yemen shares a border with KSA, one of the leading oil exporters to the World. Hence, any security concerns in Yemen can risk global trade channels and the global oil market. Besides, Yemen has been considered a threat to international security after the emergence of the radical Al-Qaida branch in Yemen (AQAP). The war against terrorism, in addition to concerns related to the security of the global trading waterways, has pushed many international actors and INGOs to favor security over plans for development (Hill, Salisbury, Northedge, & Kinninmont, 2013). For example, the U.S. coordinated their efforts with Ali Abdullah Saleh, the former president of Yemen, to fight against the AQAP insurgencies. However, the focus on security and military aid contributed to the consolidation of Saleh's authoritarian rule at the expense of preaching Yemen's sovereignty, which caused many groups to criticize Saleh's compliance with the U.S. drone strikes and missions across Yemen (Knights, 2013). Since the emergence of the current conflict in Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition, with the logistical and strategic assistance of the U.K. and U.S., has focused on

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curbing the Houthis' influence to limit Iran's influence in the region (Al-Eryani & Tophan, 2020). The emphasis on constraining the Houthis' influence as part of the maximum pressure against Iran led to further polarization in Yemen and exacerbated the humanitarian situation.

3.3.2 Regional Factors:

3.3.2.1 Complex conflict system: the Arab World is a complex conflict system where various regional factors and experiences contributed to disputes and conflict post the Arab Spring. Some of the parameters when analyzing conflict systems of the Arab World, according to Buzan et al. (1997), are the maintenance of the status quo, internal changes within the complex, external boundary change, and the intrusion of an outside force. Many conflicts post Arab Spring in the MENA region can be partially attributed to the change in these parameters. For example, through the economic, logistic support of Houthis in Yemen, the intrusion of Iran played a subtle but essential role in their empowerment and confrontation with the government (see Table 1). Additionally, changes in power dynamics, exemplified by the immense financial and military power of KSA (see Table 2), led to the mobilization of various actors in the Arab World and the initiation of "Decisive Storm Operation" military alliances that aimed to restore the control of the Yemeni IRG after the Houthis' takeover of the capital and a significant part of the North.

Table 2

Supplier/ recipient (R)	No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year(s) Weapon of order	Year delivery	No. of delivered	Comments
Saudi Arabia							
R: Morocco	(30)	FH-70 155mm	Towed gun	(1991)	1993	(30)	Second-hand; probably aid
Palestine	1	Bell-212/UH-1N	Helicopter	(1996)	1996	1	Second-hand; for police; AB-212 version
Turkey	(3)	C-130E Hercules	Transport aircraft	2010	2011	(3)	Second-hand
	(3)	C-130H Hercules	Transport aircraft	2010	2011	(3)	Second-hand
United States	1	Boeing-707	Transport aircraft	2005	2006	1	Second-hand; modified to tanker aircraft; owned and operated by US company and leased per hour to US and other armed forces
Yemen	(10)	Al Shibl	APC/APV	(2010)	2010	(10)	
	(25)	M-ATV	APV	2015	2015	(25)	Probably second-hand; aid; for armed groups supporting government

Transfers of weapons: Deals with deliveries or orders made from 1990 to 2019 between KSA

and other countries (*Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*)

3.3.3 State-Level Factors:

All disputes following the Arab Spring happened in countries that scored low in

ranking in fragility measures. Yemen is placed as the most fragile state as of 2020 (Fragility

State Index, 2020). The following are some aspects of fragility that played an essential role in

the emergence of disputes in the Middle East after the Arab Spring.

3.3.3.1 Social factors: the social factors at the state level played a significant role in various

conflicts in the Arab World after the 2011 mass protests. For example, along with ethnic and

tribal lines, cultural divisions in Libya were among the reasons for the political unrest and the

rise of the conflict's intensity post the revolution (Gause, F. Gregory, 2014; Salloukh, 2013).

The cultural division between the North and South of Yemen, although not clear-cut,

attributed to the total rejection of Houthis' control over areas in the South and escalation of

the dispute between the Sharia group, a militant Sunni group based in Al-Baidha governorate,

the Separatists, and the Houthis in 2014 (Baron, 2019). Yemen scored 9.6 out of 10 and 10

out of 10 in 2014 and 2020, respectively, in the "fractionalized elites" indicator (Fragility

State Index, 2020). Besides, various crimes committed by the different parties in Yemen have

caused major grievances and raised the public's animosity levels (Human Rights Council,

2018). These grievances are used significantly to recruit soldiers to fuel the clashes across

Yemen.

3.3.3.2 Weak economy: the weakness of various countries' economies in the Arab World was

a significant driver of the mass protests during the Arab uprisings (Gause, 2014). While the

weakness of the economy of many countries in the Arab World is significantly connected to

the global and regional level, the primary source of the problem lies at the state level, where

elites utilize the rentier-based economy to ensure regime survival and increase their wealth

(Fawcett, 2019). Poor governance and relative deprivation resulted from clientelism, lack of accountability and the underdevelopment of revenues sources. These factors resulted in citizens' dissatisfaction with how the economy is managed (Salamey, 2016).

Additionally, the rise of a social class from the unemployed youth provided a fertile environment for radicalization and the utilization of this segment in arm conflicts (Al-Sakkaf, 2016; Del Sarto et al., 2019). Another major issue in Yemen is the way the political economy functions. Saleh mainly focused on sharing economic benefits to his allies to support his allies and prevent tribal clashes (Hill et al., 2013). The patronage network continued after Hadi got into power as many critical businessmen and the critical political and military continued to benefit from the formal and informal economic and political advantages that Saleh provided them in exchange for their loyalty (Hill et al., 2013). The intermingle between the elites' economic advantages and the current political status quo hindered settlement attempts as they are more likely to implicate the interest of many key political and tribal leaders. Besides, restrictions on imports due to security concerns from investors, the Saudi-aerial and naval blockade, and the heavy informal taxations from the Houthis lead to increased prices of goods and essentials, causing more people to fall under poverty lines (Darwich, 2018). The recruitment of child soldiers increased as many young men were forced to join different military groups to provide for their families. Additionally, the frictions between the Houthi-controlled Central Bank branch in Sana'a and the IRG-controlled Central Bank branch in Aden have led to further deterioration of the banking sector and a currency depreciation (Biswell, 2019).

3.3.3.3 Weak polity: The Yemeni government's perception by several vital groups as illegitimate was a significant driver for the mass protests in 2011. Yemen scored 9.6 out of 10 on "state legitimacy" (one being high and ten being low in "state legitimacy") (Fragility State Index, 2020). The Yemeni government failed to manage the economic and political aspects of

their countries. It also failed to distribute the economic and institutional advantages across all social and tribal groups. The exclusion of various sectarian, familial groups from the government, lack of representation, economic inequality between the ruling class and other classes contributed to the public's increased grievances (Winter, 2011). Hence, the government's zero-sum game calculation largely explains the government's violent reactions to political movements or demonstrations and the militia groups' fierce rebellion to use violence to counteract government pressure and gain political and economic benefits. Besides, the current political arrangement of many politically relevant elites from Saleh's government has significantly hindered any attempts of political settlements as many deemed Hadi and his government unfit to govern Yemen (Al-Qirbi, 2020). For example, Hadi's designation of Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar as vice president hinders any efforts of conflict settlements as both the Houthis and the Southern separatists hold animosity against Mohsen for his leading role in the six wars against the Houthis and his role in the civil war between Saleh against the southern forces in 1994 (Al-Qirbi, 2020). Additionally, the destruction of the national army and its dissemination has contributed to the Houthi forces' increased motivation to advance in areas under Hadi's control, especially after the clashes between Hadi forces and STC in 2019 (Kostiner, 2020).

3.3.4 Identity Group Factors:

Identity group factors can be best analyzed using the type-dynamic system of Azar (1990) to see how identity groups played a significant role in the outbreak of disputes. For example, in Syria, various sectarian groups framed the formation and mobilization of forces along sectarian lines (Lawson & London Middle East Institute, 2009). The Syrian government strategy to face these groups' confrontation was through repression by massive bombing and military confrontation. In Yemen, the formation of the Houthis that later became one of the conflict parties was related to the mobilization of ideology to attain

economic and political resources (Guidero & Hallward, 2019). However, these dynamics changed upon Saleh's alliance with the Houthis. The government dynamic dealing with the Houthi rebels was armed confrontations and utilization of the KSA and Emirates logistic, military, and financial support to drive the Houthis' influence from strategic governorates in Yemen. Identity was used at various levels of the conflict as a mobilizer by the Houthis against foreign forces against the Muslim-Brotherhood-affiliated Islah party under the accusation of being "Takfireen" (infidels).

Furthermore, unresolved differences between the northern Zaydi dominated community, and the Southern Shafii dominated community contributed to the strong resistance of the Houthi in Aden and their support for the Saudi-led intervention. Identity plays a significant role in how different groups view authority and what each group considers a legitimate form of governance. The disagreements and the conception of authority and legitimacy are significant factors that hindered any conflict settlement attempt as the Houthis view Hadi's government as incompetent and compliant with foreign powers (Maysa, 2020). In contrast, the IRG views the Houthis as informal militias that cannot be trusted in power due to their ideological affiliation with Iran.

3.3.5 Elite/ Individual factors:

In the Middle East, where most states have weak social institutions and where the leader controls most of the country's decisions, the leader's personality plays a significant role in the escalation/de-escalation of wars. The significant benefits of being in leadership positions, both economic and political, and the fatal risks of losing such advantages contribute to the leaders' zero-sum calculations (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). The incentives of being in a leadership position have further polarized and radicalized the leaders' decisions in the Arab (both government leaders and militia group leaders) and pushed them to make many exclusionist decisions (Kaarbo, 2017; Ramsbotham et al., 2016b). For example, Ghadafi

decided to confront the revolting groups fiercely and refused any forms of negotiation. Similarly, the Houthi leader, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, following his brother, Badr el-Dein Alhouthi, used exclusionist policies and the ideology of uncompromised armed confrontation with Sunni Islah, Hadi's government, and Southern Separatists (Baron, 2019). These leaders served as examples of how conflicts can escalate based on the decisions of the elites. The three-way agreement between Ali Abdullah Saleh, the former president of Yemen, Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, the Lieutenant of the 1st Armored Division, and Abdullah Al-Ahmar, the tribal leader of the Hashid confederate, has been based on providing Saleh with the tribal support in exchange for economic and political advantages (Knights, 2013).

Saleh's attempt to sideline Ali Mohsen and Abdullah Al-Ahmar's role was met with resentments that lead to a split among the elites. This split was exaggerated after Ali Mohsen and Sadek Al-Ahmar, the son of Abdullah Al-Ahmar, decided to support the revolution (Hill et al., 2013). Saleh's alliances with the Houthis allowed the Houthis to gain significant political and economic advantage and positioned their power ahead of Hadi's by providing them with easy access to Sana'a through his military patronage network. Hadi's unpopular position in the government also contributed to his quick overthrow during the attempted coup in 2014 (Al-Iryani, 2020). The newly installed president during the transition period, Hadi, could not gather many military factions to assist him in halting the coup attempt. Hadi's personality and the transitional government's inefficacy at his leadership present a significant constraint to the conflict resolution process.

3.4 Discussion

For the last seven years, the civil war's persistence displays the complexities surrounding conflicts that emerge in the global South among fragile states with heterogeneous communities amid a significant commitment from the Saudi-led coalition and other international entities to end the conflict. At the global level, the development of

technology, along with the imbalance disruption of wealth within the current global economy between the global North and global South, the waves of liberalization pressured by several international organizations, and the increased accessibility to information and communication contributed to the emergence of widespread revolutions in 2011.

The Arab Spring revolutions tilted the balance of power towards the gulf monarchies and increased the competition between Iran and KSA for regional influence. To avoid the spillover of the revolution in KSA and Emirates, the KSA and UAE government attempted to increase their public spending and plan some foreign policies to co-opt some of the revolution's ambitions in the Gulf (Juneau, 2020a). Additionally, the chaos caused by the inter-elite conflict in Yemen during the mass revolutions in Sana'a pushed the GCC to find solutions to stabilize Yemen's situation and prevent the increase of security threats from the Southern border of KSA. At the state level, corruption combined with weak polity and the weak economy has affected the legitimacy and efficiency of the state institutions and increased unemployment rates amongst young adults. The Houthis and the Southern separatists lost faith in the government and refused the terms of the National Dialogue Conference that took place in 2012. The communal groups adapted a communitarian self-help system where many groups relied on local and regional patrons for financial assistance. Economic and political grievances among the Houthi group were one reason for the Houthis' advancement in the North and their refusal to engage in any peace agreements without any political and economic benefits guaranteed to the group in the long run.

Additionally, the divide between the anti-Houthi coalition, mainly between the Saudi backed-IRG and the Emirati-backed Southern Transitional Council, has put both Hadi and the anti-Houthi allies in a weak position in their fight and political negotiations with the Houthis. The interests of elites in Yemen, especially those who gained significant economic and

political advantages during Saleh's regime and the aftermath of Yemen's mass revolution of 2011, have posed another constraint to the conflict settlement.

While it is important to acknowledge the various drivers of the protracted social conflict in Yemen, different drivers have varied weights when it comes to the contribution to the conflict. For example, global drivers of the conflict, such as the availability of means of mass communication tools and the unequal distribution of wealth, might be strongly linked to the increased awareness of the public about corruption and the deteriorated economic situation in Yemen, these factors are present in many countries in the MENA regions where violent conflicts did not take place. Besides, identity factors, while important to drive groups to assist rebellion and drive certain groups to stand in solidarity with those who share their views, shifting alliances in Yemen between different identity groups is commonplace, suggesting that identity itself cannot be a main driving force of the eruption of the conflict. This research contends that the two main drivers of the conflict are state weakness and the Hadi and Saleh's decisions since the beginning of the conflict. This two drivers of the conflict coincide with each other and transformed the conflict in Yemen from covert conflict to overt conflict gradually from the time of resignation of Saleh till the beginning of the Saudi-led intervention. As the state experienced a major fallout of its ability to provide necessary services to citizens, a struggle that has existed for decades but became exaggerated during the transition period after Saleh, the Houthis took the opportunity of the public outcry and mobilized various tribal groups and allies from around the Northern Highlands under the claim that Hadi was not fit for presidency and that the government has failed to answer the demands of the citizens. In addition to that, Saleh's alliance with the Houthis provided them with access to military equipment and connections with very influential tribal and business networks that were essential to their advancement in the Northern parts of Yemen.

3.5 Conclusion

Yemen's conflict is entangled with various global, regional, and local factors that show how misperception of the various complexities with countries in the global South can largely influence regional interventions' efficacy. The Saudi-led intervention to reinstate Hadi in power, while it successfully drove the Houthis out of many Southern governorates, was incapable of reinstating Hadi as a legitimate president in most Yemeni territories. Even in areas under IRG control, the influence and the stability of the transitional government is meager, with many threats of arising local actors amid the contradictory USA-UAE foreign policy ambitions in Yemen. Additionally, the communitarian self-help in Yemen and the identity politics drove many political elites and militia group leaders to frame Yemen's conflict as a holistic war against Islam's enemies. Violent conflict usually erupts when parties with different interests, values, or beliefs decide to either change the dynamics of the relationship with each other or when a particular group or a coalition of groups attempts to ensure their interests by themselves (Jeong, 2008). For the Houthis in the North, the attempt to capture Sana'a and overthrow the transitional government has mainly been related to the Houthis' attempt to ensure that their interests are being answered and their values and beliefs are being respected and practiced freely. Any conflict settlement will have to consider the various global, regional, and state drivers of conflict and the conflict causes rooted in ideology and elites' interests. While the drivers of the social conflict in Yemen are diverse, the weakness of the state and the decisions of several political elites, chiefly Hadi and Saleh, were the most crucial drivers of the conflict.

Chapter Four

The Saudi-Sponsored Intervention through IRW Model

The humanitarian situation in Yemen has called for further questioning of the way many national and international actors have handled the conflict in Yemen. In a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it was found that 45% (13.5 million) of the population studied from October to December 2019 are facing a high level of acute food insecurity (Reliefweb, 2020). The number is likely to increase to 16.5 million between January and June of 2021. It was also reported that the three main vital drivers of food insecurity are conflict, economic shocks, and reduced foreign investment. The UN-approved Intervention Reconstruction Withdrawal (IRW) model provides a good insight into assessing the external interventions in Yemen. The model entails that the external intervener should: 1) end the overt violence, 2) help reconstruct the state and the security apparatus, and 3) gradually withdraw while maintaining cooperation with the newly formed state (Ramsbotham et al., 2016b). Even though the Saudi-led intervention successfully drove the Houthis out of Aden, it neither ended violence nor reinstated IRG in power.

The Saudi Government has attempted to jump to the reconstruction phase according to the IRW model by helping the state construct a security apparatus and funding the Central Bank. However, these attempts have been more complicated than expected as many of the militias that fought the Houthis started to develop their agendas, causing further destabilization

in Aden. Economically, Yemen's most direct financial contribution is the Saudi two billion dollars deposited to the Central Bank in Aden. While the deposit aided the importation of food and other necessities and facilitated the work of many businesses in the short run, it did not create lasting solutions to the economy. This deposit also raised further antagonism between the Houthis and IRG. The withdrawal of Saudi-led forces is still under debate as many Saudi officials are trying to find the best face-saving strategy of ending the intervention. However, cutting the Saudi support for the IRG does not guarantee the end of the conflict as the warring parties have not reached any joint agreement. This chapter will assess and analyze the Saudi-led intervention using the IRW model by analyzing the main aspects of the Intervention, Reconstruction, and Withdrawal stages.

4.1 Intervention

4.1.1 Security

The security dimension of the intervention phase necessitates that those international forces control armed militias, supervise their demilitarization, and help in rebuilding the national army. It is best to assess the efforts of the two main participants of the intervention, KSA and the United Emirates, to understand how the intervention influenced the security efforts in the group. KSA mainly focused on shelling the military basis of the Houthis in Sana'a and other governorates under their control and cutting their supply lines. The airstrikes made by KSA and other countries that participated in the intervention destroyed most of the missiles and fighter planes that the Houthis embezzled when they controlled the capital (BBC, 2015). It also helped Hadi and his allies in their fightings on the ground. The UAE has assisted the anti-Houthi forces by sending soldiers on the ground. Some of the main contributions that the UAE made on the ground are employing hundreds of ground troops, sending trainers and military generals to provide the anti-Houthi forces with the necessary training and mentorship needed to push the Houthis from the Southern governorates.

As part of the UAE's effort to assist in fighting the Houthis' advancements and Al-Qaeda's disruption of peace in Aden and Al-Baydha, UAE formulated several brigades in various areas in the Southern part of Yemen. Some of these brigades are "the Giants Brigade, the Guardians of the Republic, and the Tihama Resistance" (ACLED, 2018). These brigades were expected to integrate with the national army under the leadership of the IRG. However, due to the loose link between Hadi and the leaders of these newly established military groups, it was challenging to integrate these brigades into the national army fully. The disagreements turned into a brief overt conflict when STC and their allies overtook Aden and declared self-governance in 2019 (Al-Iryani, 2020). KSA organized an agreement between the IRG and STC in November 2019 to de-escalate the tension between STC and IRG by returning the KSA-UAE ties in the South of Yemen and integrating STC in Hadi's government and security apparatus.

The agreement entailed that STC forces should relocate to Lahj and Al-Dhale and allow the security forces of Hadi to oversee security in Aden (Al-Masdar Online, 2019). It also involves sharing power and minister posts with members of the STC and integrating the forces of the STC into the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior. While Hadi attempted to make some initial moves towards achieving the agreement, a serious attempt from either party has not occurred due to the mistrust between STC and IRG and STC's mistrust in the Saudi negotiation's efforts. However, the Saudi Government could bring the two conflicting parties to the table and pushed STC to take back their claim of self-governance. Nevertheless, it is still in the hand of IRG and STC to solve their differences (Radman, 2020a). Focusing on negotiating peace deals between IRG and the Houthis, the UN Envoy in Yemen Martin Griffith did not prioritize the Southern issue. However, with the establishment of STC in 2017, the voice of some parts of the Hirak movement started to

resurface as they gained political and financial influence from UAE and Oman (Radman, 2020b).

4.1.2 Law and order

During the intervention stage, external actors are expected to control the progress of courts by targeting organized crimes within the government, building and training police forces to ensure local security, fighting civilian crimes, and ensuring the abidance of human rights and punishing any breaches of human rights. The Suadi-led intervention attempted to secure law and order by training some local fighters in Aden and other governorates in the South and assigning some to local security. The Security Belt Brigade was integrated into the Yemeni military and assigned to enforce law and order in Aden and its surrounding governorates. However, due to the vacuum in security in Aden, Al-Qaeda increased its attacks on many governmental and military targets as they opposed the KSA and UAE's increased influence in Aden. Additionally, a series of assassinations of politically influential figures took place in Aden to eliminate competition by the newly emerging militia leaders.

Yemen ranked 176 out of 168 on the "Corruption Perceptions Index" as of 2020, meaning that most of the public already perceived the authorities as corrupt (Transparency International, 2020). Yemen's rank dropped since the beginning of the internationalized conflict from 154 in 2015 to 176 in 2020, a significant indicator of the increased governmental corruption. The war in Yemen, involving internal and external groups, resulted in widespread targeting and destruction of Yemen's civilian infrastructure, including water treatment and sanitation systems. Many of the destructed civilian sites were from the aerial bombing of a coalition of Saudi, UAE, and other Gulf air forces (Gleick, 2019). Reports also revealed that petroleum products sold on the black market in the Capital Secretariat and the governorates of the Republic were not subject to any customs duties or taxes and were sold in full view of Ansarullah authority. At the same time, the owners of small stalls were

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aggressively pursued by the tax authority while the value of the quantities sold on the black market reached billions of Yemeni riyals per day (Akhbar Alyemen, 2021).

4.1.3 Government

As part of the IRW model, a significant focus of international interventions is empowering and building a strong and effective government. International interventions are expected to supervise, create a new constitution, and provide essential tools and expertise to local governments to plan elections suitable for the local context. In Yemen, the efforts to build a new constitution were mainly centered on the National Dialogue after former president Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned. The National Dialogue Conference was set as part of the Gulf initiative to transit to a new government and build a new social contract. The Gulf initiative offered to supervise the conference and provide essential funding and expertise for the conference. The conference was expected to last for six months and involve representatives from all parties and regions in Yemen. It constitutes several committees to discuss and plan various issues related to the economy, power transition dynamics, women's rights, youth participation in the political sphere (Al-Monitor, 2013). While many political factions welcomed the conference, it was frowned upon by the Houthis and the Southern Hiraak. The Houthi leadership claimed that the conference did not address the demands and grievances that Saleh's Government previously ignored (Aljazeera, 2014). Additionally, the Hiraak disagreed with the dialogue due to its negligence of the Southern cause and its unwillingness to grant more autonomy to the Southerners. Besides, many of the old regime political actors continue to influence Hadi's Government, making it harder for both the Houthis and the Hiraak to trust the government.

After the Houthis' takeover of Sana'a and Hadi's forced travel out of Yemen, the dialogue concluded with no tangible results because the newly formed constitution did not proceed to the parliament amid the Houthis' takeover of the parliament and other

governmental constitutions. Since the start of the military operations of the Saudi-led intervention, no efforts have been made to provide a system of power transition to the Yemeni IRG. The lack of plans to form a representative government is because the Saudi-led intervention relies heavily on Hadi as a president for its legitimacy. Additionally, Hadi is currently the most suitable ally to KSA for his acceptance to base his office in Al-Riyadh and his compliance and endorsement of the Saudi military operations.

4.1.4 Economy

One of the main aspects of the intervention phase of any external interference according to the IRW is related to economic development. External interventions in the first phase should provide the local community with sufficient humanitarian aid and restore the most vital services while restricting any abuse of resources by spoilers. KSA and the UAE are currently the two biggest donors to Yemen, with estimates of over 10 billion dollars committed to humanitarian relief by both countries (Atalayar, 2020). However, the humanitarian sector in Yemen has issues that prevent its progress. First, due to the increased corruption within governmental and non-governmental institutions, most of the funds do not directly go to the beneficiaries. Armies, militias, and war profiteers instrumentalize aid to enhance their interests, either indifferent or hostile to the interests of civilian populations (Alterman, 2018). Aid providers are not always well-situated to understand how their actions affect the conflict at large. While they resist privileging peacemaking over urgent relief, they are also encouraged to ensure their actions do not extend the war and the suffering that flows from it. Besides, Saudi forces' aerial and naval siege on Yemen restricts the amount of humanitarian aid that goes to Yemen. Additionally, due to the conflict between the Houthis and the IRG, the transportation and distribution of humanitarian aid face many obstacles.

The Saudi-led intervention airstrikes and military operations have caused the death of many civilians and intensified the suffering of the community. A report by the UN special

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mission investigating human rights violations that the warring actors committed since 2015 showed that all parties of the conflict, including the Saudi-Arabia and UAE forces, have committed war crimes in Yemen (UN HRC, 2020). Hence, the provision of humanitarian relief by KSA and UAE is contradictory to the humanitarian mission in Yemen. Another central aspect of economic development during the intervention phase is restoring essential services. Yemen had suffered from a shortage of essential services even before the current conflict took place. Yemen ranked in the lowest ten countries regarding service provision (Fragility State Index, 2020). In the last six years of conflict, Yemen's energy, health, and education sector suffered greatly due to the destruction of many of the country's infrastructure, poor management of resources by both spoilers in the North and government officials in the South. The electricity and internet services also suffered significantly, with electricity coverage barely existing in the capital. People started to rely heavily on solar panels amid an increase in the oil price, which was majorly hit due to restricted access to oil in the Northern governorates. While the Suadi government has pledged to allow access for oil to areas under Houthi control, the oil crisis is still present in most Northern governorates, with the price of oil increasing up to fourfold on the black market (Wange, 2020).

The situation in Sana'a has transformed primarily after the Houthis' entrance. Economically, the prices of petroleum have doubled, and the prices of natural gas increased four times. Additionally, the Houthis cut salaries of the public sector with few exceptions. The Houthi forces also have extorter traders and businesses for various reasons ranging from supporting the Quranic Mission to helping in the festivals they make to assert their positions (Al-Harbi, 2020). Sana'a's real estate sector has experienced a tremendous boom as the Houthi members materialized their wealth during the conflict into real estate.

The economic tragedy in Yemen has left most of the population under the poverty line. Besides, the increased oil price and the heightened prices of other essentials, resulting in

a major humanitarian crisis. It is estimated that over two-thirds of the Yemeni population needs some form of humanitarian aid. To permit for smoother trading and allow the government to retain some essential functions, the Saudi Government injected two billion dollars into the Central Bank branch in Aden (National News Agency, 2018). These funds were expected to provide local businesses with liquidity to trade and aid the government in its economic plan. However, many claims that government officials used the money to advance their gains and that the funds monopolized for certain businesses did not directly lead to economic improvement.

4.1.5 Society

The IRW model recommends external interveners to tackle local conflicts from the elite, community leaders, and society. The social dimension of the intervention phase focuses on providing a way to overcome skepticism about the integrity of the media. The media in Yemen has significantly been polarized to the point that it is difficult to find a platform that is not politically affiliated to any of the warring parties. Looking at news articles posted in Al-Masira, the central Houthi news platform, Marib Press, the main IRG, and Aden Press, the main news platform, one sees a clear biased language the warring parties use to raise antagonism against their opponents. Terms like "militias" and "Iran-backed Houthi militias" are frequently used in the IRG and Hiraak media platforms to discredit the Houthi movements.

Similarly, the Houthi media uses terms such as "the aggressors" and the "American-Zionist aggressors" to describe the Saudi forces, and they use the term "mercenaries" and "Saudi mercenaries" to describe the anti-Houthi forces. The Houthis also use the term "takfiris" or "infidels" to describe and discredit the Islah forces. The biased media in Yemen contributed to the polarization of the society and overall distrust of media. Another aspect of the social dimension that is expected to be tackled according to the IRW model is allowing

sufficient exposure to issues affecting the most vulnerable segment of society. Over three million were internally displaced people as of 2016 in Yemen (Qirbi & Ismail, 2017).

In Yemen, some of the most affected segments of society by the war are children and women. The Abductees' Mothers Association participated in a protest stand in Aden governorate as part of the campaign under the slogan "towards equal citizenship" (Mothers of Abductees Association, 2021). The statement emphasized that women have rights that cannot be compromised, especially in recognizing full citizenship rights for women without discrimination. The statement also stressed that violence against women and girls occurs due to society's harmful traditions, repressive institutions and discriminatory laws, and women's subjugation to violence. Hundreds of women in Aden also announced that they are working together in a broad campaign of solidarity to support women's rights of passing their citizenship to their children and their rights of fair treatment by the government.

Since 2015, many warring parties have recruited children to fight in the front line. The Houthis have significantly employed many children at checkpoints and have recruited children as a shield in the front lines during battles (Euro-Med Monitor, 2021). While international efforts, including those participating in the Saudi-led intervention, to stop the recruitment of child soldiers, their impact remains limited due to their lack of access to areas under Houthi control. Besides, cases of child marriage have increased drastically due to the deteriorating economic conditions that force and lack of awareness about the risks of marrying children very early (Hunersen et al., 2021). Many parents do not even abide by the puberty condition stated in the Yemeni law for two main reasons. First, parents usually have access to courts. Additionally, they can issue marriage to underage women to relieve some of their financial burdens and provide them with a reasonable sum of money from the Mahr. These issues have not received sufficient attention from the Saudi-led intervention.

Another segment of the vulnerable communities in Yemen is the refugees. Since the beginning of the internationalized conflict, internally displaced people exceed two million, while those who left the country are estimated at the hundred thousand (UNHCR, 2020). Most of the internally displaced people moved to relatively stable areas, such as Marib and Sana'a. However, with the increased attention of the Houthis in overtaking Marib, clashes increased in Marib, exposing over two million refugees to death, starvation, and trauma. Because of the strategic importance of Marib in changing tipping the balance of the conflict, all warring parties employ the maximum forces they can use to secure areas in Marib, with little regard to the impact of the conflict in Marib on the refugee community.

4.1.6 International Intervention Transition

During the intervention phase of the IRW, external actors are expected to directly support the peace process in an approach that considers the cultural context through both negotiations with the politically relevant elites at the top level and providing a platform for community and youth leaders, while also raising awareness about the peace process at the community level. In Yemen, the Saudi-led intervention representatives have long officially advocated for a peaceful transition to a non-violent conflict by demilitarizing militia groups and providing a way for the warring parties to negotiate and start a new social contract. However, these efforts contradict the Saudi-led interventions' actions as the airstrikes continue to target many military establishments and governmental infrastructures in the North, causing further community polarization. Likewise, the Houthis have stuck to their claim that the Saudi-led intervention is illegitimate. They insisted that no negotiations can commence without a complete stop to Yemen's UAE and KSA operations. In addition to the non-reconciliatory positions of both main warring parties, the language used to communicate with each other is biased and filled with both culturally insensitive remarks and disrespect to

the values and beliefs of their opponents. Hence, any adequate support for the peace process in Yemen has been mostly non-existent.

The UN special mission in Yemen expressed their concerns regarding the latest escalation of clashes between IRG and Ansarullah in Hudayda. The UN special mission came in line with the UN condemnation of the shelling of civilian houses by the conflicting parties. The mission encouraged Ansarullah and IRG to abide by the agreement commenced in Sweden in 2018. The agreement entails removing all forces from Hudayda city and its ports and moving these forces to mutually agreed-upon areas outside the city (Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2019). The UN special mission had a limited influence on the progress towards peace in Yemen, especially after the Houthis' continual preaching of human rights in areas under their control. In an unprecedented incident, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused Ansarullah (officially adopted name by the Houthi group) of throwing an unknown bomb in an African migrants' detention camp in Sana'a that resulted in the killing of tens of hundreds of migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2021). HRW claims that an investigation should proceed regarding the incident as it preached the rights of refugees. HRW also warns against the irresponsible use of weapons by Ansarullah forces against the principles of human rights and international laws.

4.2 Reconstruction

4.2.1 Security

A major steppingstone that the IRW model focuses on during the reconstruction phase is the empowerment of the national army. The Yemeni military was once one of the strongest in the region. As of 2014, the Yemeni government spent around 1.75 billion dollars on the military, which totals 3.97% of the national GDP and 14.3% of the total government expenditure (World Bank, 2020). Besides, the official Yemeni armed forces were supported

majorly by the US and some European countries as part of Saleh's collaborative effort with the international community to coordinate and curb the influence of terrorist groups in the MENA region. After the attack of 9/11, Saleh pledged his full support of the "War against Terrorism" plan that Bush advocated for and was after that one of the US partners (Hill et al., 2013). Since 2003, the US has provided Saleh's Government with military and financial aids to coordinate their efforts to fight Al-Qaeda in Yemen. The Giants Brigade and the counter-terrorist Brigade were Yemen's most vital military units, both supported by the US and UK. The situation took a different turn after the mass protests of 2011 in Yemen.

The conflict between Saleh and one of the prominent military leaders in Yemen, Ali Mohsen Alahmar, has its roots in the disagreement between Saleh, Alahmar, and the leader of the Hashid Confederate, Abdullah Alahmar, regarding the American increased influence in Yemen and Saleh's plan to place his son, Ahmed, as his successor. The effect of their disagreements did not materialize to weakening the national army, nevertheless, until the event of Juma'at Alkarama, where claims that Saleh ordered some snipers to kill civilian protesters in the Change Square. After Juma'at Alkarama, Ali Mohsen Alahmar and Abdullah Alahmar split from supporting Saleh and joining the protesters. The disagreement between Saleh, Mohsen and Abdullah led to a series of short but deadly civil wars between the forces of these three political elites that majorly weakened the Yemeni national army and fractionalized its power. Besides, when Hadi got to power in 2012, one of his main steps was dismembering military units under Saleh and his family's sphere of influence (al-Dawsari & Nasser, 2020). These include Ali Mohsen's 1st Armor Brigade and Ahmed Ali Saleh's Special Forces Brigade. Hadi's effort was faced with protestations from several military leaders, especially Mohammed Ali Alhamra, the leader of the Airforce Brigade who refused to step out from his decision, and General Fadl al-Qawsi, who closed the Sana'a International Airport when Hadi issued a decision to fire him from his position as leader of the Security Bureau

(MENASource, 2014). The conflict between Hadi and the prominent military leaders and his lack of influence among those loyal to Hadi have weakened Hadi's grip of the army and paralyzed his efforts to reconstitute the army.

During the Houthis' advancement to Sana'a, Saleh ordered his forces to withdraw without resistance from their basis and allow the Houthis to take them over (Alley, 2018). The national army was further weakened after the Houthi takeover of Sana'a and their control of all military bases in Sana'a. The newly acquired sources provided the Houthi militias with military equipment, armors, and intelligence tools during their clashes with the Anti-Houthi alliances. With the few remaining Presidential Guards Units loyal to Hadi, the IRG has only a small amount of military power to fight off the Houthi insurgency. Additionally, the alliance of tribes with the Houthis as a protest of the government's brutal use of force during the Saada wars, the government alliance with tribal groups to combat the Houthis' rebellion were crucial factors contributing to the government lack of support amongst many northern tribes. Additionally, the government economic and social neglect of Saada, the marginalization and oppression of Zaydis and the Zaydi sect in the northern highlands in general, and in Saada in specific and the failed international policies in Yemen, especially Saudi foreign policies in Yemen pushed the Houthis and their allies to resort to violent confrontations (Brandt, 2017).

Since the beginning of the Saudi-led intervention, the UAE has focused significantly on empowering local military groups against the Houthi advancements in the South. After local military groups, with the aerial and on-ground military support of the Saudi-led intervention, pushed the Houthis out of Aden and other surrounding governorates, the UAE focused on training military units to empower the anti-Houthi forces. UAE was the one under the establishment of several brigades, including the Hadramout Brigade, the Security Belt Brigade, and the Giants Brigade, which contributed heavily to balancing against the Houthi forces. However, the national military forces and the newly built brigades were insufficient to

tip the balance against the Houthi forces. The inability of the anti-Houthi forces to balance against the Houthis was partly attributed to the loose links between the anti-Houthi forces on the ground and the increased military capabilities of the Houthi forces on the ground (Al-Qirbi, 2020). The UAE's effort to empower military units in the South that are loyal to the separatists instead of empowering military units loyal to the IRG was a significant setback in the efforts to strengthening the Yemeni National Army.

4.2.2 Law and Order

One of the main highlights of the reconstruction phase of the IRW focuses on building the capacity of the local government to maintain an essential order that is unbiased under the laws and regulations of the country. In other words, external interventions are expected to supervise and develop the country's local judiciary system under the intervention to allow the government to maintain a proper role of law. In Yemen, the Saudi-led intervention did not provide any clear plan to maintain order in Yemen. The lack of any clear plan contributed to an impartial court system in the North and a state of chaos in the South. There have been several incidents in the northern highlands where the Houthis executed several opposition members under different claims not based on a fair judiciary system. The Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Adel Al-Asoumi, mentioned in an interview with Almasdar, a local News Agency, that the attack by Ansarullah forces on the Marib Governorate and its issuance of death sentences against members of the parliament reflects its extreme disregard for all international laws and norms (Almasdar Online, 2021).

The US department of treasury listed several Houthi members working on internal security and intelligence agencies in the Houthi controlled areas in the Global Magntisky E.O, an act allowing the Government of the United States to list officials for sanctions for the torture and abuse of prisoners (including women and children) (US Department of Treasury, 2020). Besides, some Houthi leaders have pressured the judiciary system in various ways

since the Yemeni conflict. Some of the allegations include unjustified detentions, sexual violence, and torturous interrogations. On another issue, Ansarullah forces launched a campaign against restaurants and bowlers in the city of Al-Qaeda in the Dhu Al-Safal District, south of the governorate, to impose financial taxes and royalties, under the pretext of the necessity for their owners to own tourist cards (Alshark Alawst, 2021).

4.2.3 Government

The IRW model features a manual to policymakers from the external intervention's side on how to build the capacity of the local community and government from relying heavily on the external intervener to building a strong government that can be self-sufficient. One of the significant milestones of having a strong and effective government is collecting enough taxes and planning a well-structured national budget. Due to the corruption and the Houthi control of a massive area of Yemeni territory and the absence of strong law enforcement, collecting sufficient taxes for building an adequate national budget has been difficult. Besides, formulating a national budget that can allow a reconstruction of the government and the Yemeni economy has not been attainable due to the instability of the IRG primarily based in Riyadh. Because of the inability of the IRG to govern freely in areas under its control, the failure to agree on a clear national budget by the government cabinet, and the unstable records of the yearly revenues, the government has been unable to provide an effective reconstruction plan.

In addition to having an effective tax system and a well-structured national budget, the reconstruction stage focuses on having a representative government that encompasses different delegates from diverse political, regional, and religious backgrounds. In Yemen, having a representative government has been an issue since the inception of the Yemeni Arab Republic in the North and the Yemeni People Democratic Republic. In the North, the republicans pushed for the marginalization of Zaydis, who ruled the northern highlands for

millennials. The marginalization of the Zaydis stemmed from the severe enmity between the Northern republican rebels and the Zaydi imamates and the republicans' fear of a revival of the Imamite system (Hill, 2017). In the South, frictions between the Ismaili emirate's princes and the socialists end up with the marginalization of the old Ismaili ruling groups and the takeover of their properties during the socialists' ruling of the South (Kostiner, 2020). After the unification of Yemen in 1990, Saleh's Government attempted to marginalize Southern leaders from the power that led to a short but deadly civil war in 1994, pushing many socialists' leaders into exile. A fair representation of the government has been an issue since Saleh ruled the Yemeni republic post the unification as Saleh attempted to manage the tribal leaders using divide and rule tactics. Hence, the representation in the government lacked as many of the key government officials were from the northern highlands, mainly from Hashid confederates.

After Saleh's resignation and Hadi's de facto ascendance to the presidency, the representation of the government remained a significant issue. The Islah party, along with its tribal affiliates from the Ahmar family, exerted pressure on Hadi to follow their orders and give them more influential positions in the government under the claim that they were the main contributors to the toppling of Saleh. The Islah overtook fifty per cent of the government cabinet and controlled the most influential positions in the government (al-Dawsari & Nasser, 2020). This ratio remained the same - even after the Saudi-led intervention took place. Having a representative government has not been attainable for three main reasons. First, the Saudi-led intervention legitimacy was majorly based on Hadi being in power. This is because Hadi was the one who requested an external intervention to drive the Houthis out of strategic sites in Yemen and his continual appraisal of the intervention. Second, the current structure of the IRG is maintained by providing those supporting the government militarily with the most influential positions as part of gaining the alliance and

support on fighting the Houthis. Third, the ideological and inherent conflict between the Houthis and Hadi's government prevents any attempts of having Houthi representation in the current IRG.

Politically, the Houthis firmed their grip on the state institutions by only selecting members from their groups to lead these institutions and oversee the work. They also put many policies restricting the freedom of speech and expression of all people. The Houthis have also taken a chance to spread their ideology by transforming many schools into hubs of teaching Houthi ideology and by imposing new laws and regulations regarding women's clothing, the separation between genders in schools, universities and even restaurants, and prohibition of any gatherings or demonstrations against the movement (Al-Harbi, 2020).

4.2.4 Economy

The economy is another important aspect of the reconstruction phase of IRW. During the reconstruction phase, the country's formal economy is expected to have adequate revenue to provide the necessary services for providing a dignified life for the citizens. In Yemen, essential services are lacking, and a significant portion of the Yemeni economy is under humanitarian needs. The formal Yemeni economy suffered greatly for various reasons. First, due to the Saudi naval and aerial embargo on Yemen, the trading sector in Yemen suffered greatly, causing many businesses to go out of business and leading many others to struggle to survive. Second, due to the lack of security and the roadblocks around significant cities, internal trading and local businesses could not generate enough revenues and taxes to support the government in providing essential services to citizens. Additionally, most of the population is under the control of the Houthi leadership, where taxations from their consumption go to the Houthi leadership or to sustain their military efforts.

Another major issue that the reconstruction stage attempts to solve is related to the employment of former combatants. To avoid turning former militia groups from all sides into

spoilers, the government should attempt to reintegrate into the society as formal members of the national military or provide them with suitable job opportunities. In Yemen, attempts by the UAE to integrate many of the newly formed brigades into the national security forces and the army have been difficult due to their distrust of the government and the loose links between these groups and the IRG. Besides, having a weak rule of law and the spread of corruption allowed many business owners and traders to escape paying taxations and avoid tariffs, causing a decline in taxes collected. These points can be addressed through assisting the national government budget for economic development, investing in projects that aim to provide job opportunities for the citizens and provide a smoother path for business owners to thrive in their businesses. The external interveners are also expected to assist the local government in providing economic development plans that provide employment opportunities for locals. In Yemen, these steps were unlikely to be accomplished due to the increased security threats in the country that hinder international investors from starting businesses in Yemen and due to many restrictions on the trading posed by the Suadi naval and aerial embargo.

4.2.5 Society

Peace-driven media can also allow room for discussions between warring parties. In Yemen, bias in the media has been one of the biggest issues during the conflict. Not only is local media being extremely politicized, but the language used in these media platforms has also been highly biased, fueling its audience against opposing groups. In Yemen, external interveners have not been able to assist in allowing for peace-driven, responsible media as their media outlets themselves are biased and politicized. Once the community has overcome their tendency to distrust media sources in the intervention phase, external interveners are expected to assist the local community in developing responsible media that is unbiased and promotes peaceful tools of solving the conflict through assisting

local media through workshops and financial assistance to avoid their reliance on biased funding sources.

Besides the failure of the Saudi-led intervention to assist in establishing a responsible media, the intervention also struggles to manage priorities related to managing peace and justice. On many occasions during protracted social conflicts, international interveners struggle to balance between providing a peaceful transformation from violent conflicts to non-violent conflicts and addressing preaches to human rights and injustices during the conflict. In Yemen, UN reports showed that all warring parties, including the Suadi-led intervention, have committed atrocities during the conflict (Reliefweb, 2020). Henceforth, if justice is to be served, it must tackle all those responsible for the war crimes and atrocities during the conflict. However, this puts external interveners in a dilemma as many of their members have contributed to some of these atrocities. Consequently, serving justice and addressing the grievances of those who suffered greatly during the conflict remains a critical problem in the face of a long-lasting, effective peace agreement.

4.2.6 International Intervention Transition

The transition of the external intervention is an important phase in all the main stages of the IRW model. During the reconstruction stage, the transference of control should be done gradually to give the wheels of control to the local government without any unnecessary interference or abandonment from external intervention. This entails that the international intervener should ensure that its gradual withdrawal in the reconstruction phase should ensure that local governments are equipped with the resources, tools, and strategies to rely on themselves. At the same time, it also shows potential spoilers that the external interveners are available to get involved in supporting the local government when necessary. In Yemen, both KSA and UAE attempted to transfer control to the local government represented by the IRG. IRG forces failed to provide security for the governorate, and their

military abilities failed to push the Houthis out or even stop their expansion. The Saudi-led coalition forces have also failed to assist in deterring the Houthis' expansion in Marib, evident by the retreat of many Saudi officers to the southern borders of KSA. The tribes, however, especially the Murad tribes and the Jed'an tribes, were able to stop the Houthis' expansion in Marib (Al-Madhaji, 2020).

Nevertheless, the external interveners were intervening in times when their unnecessary intervention raised concern among the local community and the local politically relevant elites for micromanaging many local aspects, mainly marine traffic in the Red Sea and Naval Aerial control. Additionally, the UAE's efforts to train and support the Southern Transition Council and the Security Belt Brigade independent of the IRG challenged the local government's authority to control the South. In other areas, the lack of supervision by the Saudi-led intervention, especially in the central governorates (e.g., Taiz and Ibb), empowered anti-Houthi groups to pursue their agendas independent of the IRG.

4.3 Withdrawal

The IRW model entails that the withdrawal of external interventions is the last inevitable step to a successful intervention. After ensuring a secured environment empowered by the local government, external interveners should work towards demilitarizing politics by nationalizing the military forces and allowing space for a violence-free culture. This step is essential to ensure a smooth democratic transition and transform the conflict from violent to non-violent confrontation. In the context of Yemen, the Saudi-led intervention has not reached this stage. Although a complete withdrawal plan of the prominent participants in the Saudi-led intervention has not been in motion, it is essential to look at various aspects of the withdrawal plan set by the IRW model and how they are likely to be feasible in Yemen.

Even though efforts by the UAE to integrate the army and demilitarize the Houthis'

insurgency has been in place since the beginning of the internationalized conflict, there has

been no progress towards the demilitarization of politics for three main reasons. First, all

warring parties have grown suspicious of each other's intentions. The lack of trust among the

parties of conflict can be noticed through the speeches of the political elites who discredit and

delegitimize the other parties of the conflict. Second, due to the equal abilities of both the

Houthis and the IRG, efforts to pressure the Houthis to give up their arms struggle has failed

due to their growing popularity in areas under their support and due to Iran's continuous

support to them (Clausen, 2018). Third, due to the presence of spoilers within the leadership

of the warring parties, efforts to demilitarize politics have not been successful as these

spoilers attempt to prolong the war to serve their gains.

One of the main pre-conditions for a successful withdrawal phase is having a non-biased

police and judiciary system that aims to respect the role of law. In Yemen, the conflict has

polarized the community along various regional and sectarian lines. In 2015, some Southern

military forces pushed some Northern residents to leave Aden under claims that they

supported the Houthis during their attempted advancement towards Aden (Yemen Monitor,

2020). While some Northern citizens sided with the Houthis during the armed clashes

between the Houthi rebels and the Southern resistance, these claims do not generalize to most

Northern citizens in the South. They are pivotal to the Southern economy. Besides breaches

to citizens' rights and having biased police, minorities have also suffered greatly in Yemen. In

an unusual case of violations of the African migrants, some Houthi-affiliated militias burned

an interrogation camp of African migrants who were detained and pressured to join the

Houthi militias and participate in the Houthis' armed struggle.

External actors during the withdrawal phase are expected to supervise the local

government in managing an effective means of power transfer through establishing a

culturally sensitive and efficient social contract in transferring power through democratic means. The progress towards establishing a democratic transfer of power has been hindered due to the reliance of the Saudi-led intervention on Hadi for its legitimacy and due to the inability of the IRG to control most of the Yemeni territory (al-Dawsari & Nasser, 2020). Additionally, establishing a democratic election to transfer power peacefully would require the empowerment of civil society. In Yemen, even though humanitarian organizations have thrived during the conflict, most civil societies do not focus on politics because of the risky environment surrounding political advocacy. Besides, due to the exclusionary nature of political participation at a higher level, the integration of local politics into national politics has been feasible.

The efficiency of the external interventions lies partially in ensuring an economic plan to push for the long-term interests of the citizens. The efforts of both the IRG and the Saudi-led intervention have not been able to reintegrate the interests of citizens of all citizens. The inability to answer to the interests of citizens is due to Yemen's current economic crisis caused mainly by the political instability and the current low foreign investments on projects in Yemen. Besides, the difficulty in establishing new laws promoting trades and international cooperation due to the inefficiency of the IRG has pushed many citizens to look for jobs that do not align with their field of expertise. Hence, any plans for developing the economy are not feasible unless a peace agreement has been reached between the political elites.

With the development of a deeply politicized community, plans for depoliticizing divisions between communities in Yemen have been a crucial step that is needed for a successful withdrawal stage. In other words, the societal division is to be depoliticized to allow the community to overcome their social problems and heal the psychological issues accumulated during the conflict. However, with the weak role of law and the inability of the IRG to provide a fair judiciary system to compensate those affected by the war, progress

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towards healing the grievances of the communities in Yemen has been halted. Additionally, due to the lack of fair representation in the government, a fair court system is still far-fetched.

To develop a successful withdrawal plan, the IRW recommends that external interveners push the local government to integrate regional and globally to benefit the local government and the regional and global structure. Efforts by the Saudi-led intervention to integrate Yemen with the GCC through economic and logistical cooperation have not been progressing for the last six years. According to Auke Lootsman (2020), the issue is not with the unavailability of food but with the food price. People in Yemen rely on imports for 90% of their food needs (Hill et al., 2013). In other words, most food that people in Yemen consume comes from abroad. With the deteriorating structure of the ports in Yemen, the premium costs of insurances, and the high levels of inspections that take several months on average, the costs of shipping doubles and the increase in prices are put on the shoulders of the consumers. Hence, food becomes so expensive that many workers cannot afford it, as their income was negatively impacted by the conflict (Lootsma, 2020). Many countries have promised to invest in Yemen's economic development and infrastructure post the conflict (Cordesman, 2015). However, these efforts are highly dependent on the turnout of the conflict, which has not been cleared out by the time of the writing of this chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

The conflict in Yemen has its various complexities stemming from its connection to the broader international, regional, and global context. Although both violent and non-violent conflicts have emerged sporadically in Yemen since the inception of the Yemeni Republic in the 1960s, the Saudi-led intervention was the first international intervention in Yemen in decades approved by the UN and many other international actors. Due to the unique context of Yemen and various policies adopted by the main participants of the Saudi-led intervention, the application of the IRW in the internationalized Yemeni conflict has been a challenge. In

the intervention stage, ensuring an end to overt violence and strengthening the grip of the IRG was not possible due to various factors. These factors include the Houthis' increased military capabilities after controlling most weapon reserves of the Yemeni national army, the loose links across the anti-Houthi coalition, and the lack of sufficient in-ground forces to assist the Yemeni National Army. The economic situation during the early stages of the intervention in Yemen suffered greatly. The Yemeni population continued to suffer until the time of writing this chapter, as the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen faces various challenges on the ground amid an increased reluctance among many international actors to continue their efforts in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Besides, organized crimes have increased dramatically since the beginning of the conflict; with the Houthi quasi-state structure in the Northern highlands forcing businesses to pay taxes to support the Houthis' military efforts and the new courts established by the Houthis in the North issuing execution sentences to many of those who disagree with them along political lines. The media also continued to be biased. Society has been polarized between full-fledged supporters of the Houthis under the claim of protecting Yemen's sovereignty and those opposing the Houthis and pledging their alliances with the Suadi-led intervention and the anti-Houthi alliance forces.

Although there are no clear-cut criteria that researchers can apply to the Saudi-led intervention to position the intervention along the three main IRW stages, many efforts have been made by KSA and the UAE to reconstruct various aspects of the Yemeni government. One of the main aspects of which the Saudi-led intervention has attempted to reconstruct is the anti-Houthi forces. Both the UAE and KSA provided military equipment to many groups that resisted the Houthi insurgencies, creating various brigades in the South of Yemen. These brigades were expected to join the national army and follow orders from the IRG Minister of Defense. However, the weak links between the leaders of these brigades and Hadi's

government, along with various ideological and practical constraints of joining the national armies, created frictions within the anti-Houthi front - leading to skirmishes between these groups. Additionally, the corruption within the government, along with the deteriorating situation of businesses and trading in Yemen, has contributed to the descending governmental revenues. Hence, the government cannot provide essential services to most of its citizens, even in areas under its control. Both the presence of external interveners and the government's inability have contributed to the lack of trust among the Yemeni community on the efforts of both IRG and the Saudi-led intervention.

Prospects of a withdrawal plan in Yemen have not been set in motion despite attempts of both the UAE and KSA to limit their intervention in Yemen, with the UAE almost completely withdrawing from Yemen (Juneau, 2020b). However, an abrupt withdrawal in Yemen without a proper exit plan can pose a risk to both the national security of Yemen and its neighbors. It can also potentially disrupt global trades as the security of the Red Sea canals will be at risk. In the context of the Saudi-international intervention, the most critical factors that can ensure a successful withdrawal have not been met. The IRG does not currently possess the military or the economic capacity to rule over most of the Yemeni territory. Besides, the dire humanitarian situation is still a significant problem in Yemen that requires continuous support from international actors, especially UAE and KSA.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The US special envoy to Yemen, Tim Lenderking, announced in late June 2021 that the Houthis are "real political actors" that needs to be involved in any negotiation settlements (Btati, 2021). While Washington still considers the IRG as the only legitimate government, Linderking's statement can have severe implications for the US shifting dynamics of dealing with the Yemeni conflict. The official statement was not the first time the US government did something that can be considered harmful by their Gulf allies. Both the Obama administration and Biden administration have been set to limit the sale of arms to KSA amid the increased civilian atrocities from the Saudi airstrikes in Yemen (Public Radio International, 2021). In addition, the UAE has announced a significant withdrawal of its in-ground forces in 2018 after Stockholm's Ceasefire Agreement between the Houthi forces and Hadi and his regional allies in Hodeida. The Saudi government has shown some tendencies to withdraw from Yemen. However, a proper face-saving strategy to withdraw from Yemen has not been feasible. It is estimated that the war in Yemen has cost the international community over $29 billion in US dollars in international aids only, of which both KSA and UAE are the prominent donors (Yuri, 2019). This is aside from the sheer military and logistical costs that KSA and UAE bared over the past seven years. With the immense material and human costs, the conflict in Yemen becomes a concerning issue at the national, regional, and global levels.

The literature in the Yemen current conflict has varied in its explanation of the conflict dynamics and the role of the Saudi-led intervention. Some of the main explanations

of the Yemeni conflict tackles the conflict from a sectarian (King, 2012), regional rivalries (Gause, F. Gregory, 2014), global economic structure (Blumi, 2018), or elite competition perspective (Hill, 2017). While this provides valuable explanations of the internationalized Yemeni conflict, a more comprehensive analysis is needed to understand the turnover of events and why the Saudi-led intervention has failed to achieve its two main objectives in the interventions in Yemen, re-stating Hadi to rule over the entire Yemeni territory and ending the Houthi violent struggle to secure its southern borders. This research employs two main analytical frameworks; the Transnational Conflict Framework, the modified version of Azar's (2016) Prolonged Conflict Framework, and the Intervention Reconstruction Withdrawal (IRW) framework utilized by many external interveners that have gotten endorsement from the UNSC since the end of the cold war.

The roots of the conflict in Yemen can be best described through various levels of analysis that encompasses the global, regional, state, identity, and individual drivers of the Yemeni conflict. At the global level, the increased prices of commodities and the drop in oil prices have caused significant economic and humanitarian crises since the Great Recession of 2008. The impact of these two factors was amplified in Yemen due to the heavy reliance of the Yemeni population on imports for essentials and the government's reliance on oil revenues as a primary contributor to the state budget. Regionally, the rivalry between KSA and Iran reached its peak post the Arab Spring as these two states attempted to secure their influence in the MENA region after the toppling of many dictators following the mass protests of 2011. With the Houthis viewed as a proxy tool of Iran by many Saudi officials, the fear of a spillover of the conflict to the territories of KSA drove KSA and some of its regional allies, mainly the UAE, to have an active role in the conflict in Yemen. The weakness of the Yemeni state in general and the low support for the transitional government led by Hadi were significant drivers of the Yemeni conflict post-2014. These factors were also intersected by

the lack of representation in the IRG, the deteriorating economic situation in the country at large, and the unpopular statements of Hadi fully endorsing the US drone strikes in the areas of Al-Qaeda hideouts. At the identity level, antagonism between the Zaydis and the Sunnis, mainly represented by the Houthis and the Muslim Brotherhood Islah party, intensified violence and pushed communitarian groups in both camps to adopt violent strategies to reconcile their differences. At an individual level, changes in the Yemeni, KSA, and UAE leadership were detrimental to the emergence of the conflict as Hadi developed an exclusionary approach to deal with opposition, MBS adopted general offensive strategies for dealing with the regional affairs, and Mohammed Bin Rashid (MBR) attempted to improve the UAE relationship with KSA through coordinating the UAE and KSA foreign policies towards Yemen. Although these drivers have significantly contributed to the eruption of the conflict in Yemen, two main drivers stand out; state weakness, and the decision of the Hadi and Saleh post 2012. The weakness of the state provided the Houthis with the political and popular coverage of rebelling against the government because it was not able to answer the demands of the citizens. This political coverage was exacerbated by Hadi's focus on saving presidency and overlooking the grievances of several groups in Yemen, especially the Houthis and the separatists, and Saleh's alliance with the Houthis and his provision of the weapons and connections to the Houthis to advance their objectives of capturing the capital.

With the diverse and multi-level drivers of the Yemeni conflict, the strategies adopted by the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen and their consequences can explain the dimensions of the conflict dynamics in Yemen. At the intervention stage, progress towards ending the violent conflict, ensuring a proper judiciary system that obliterates organized crimes, providing financial aids and essential services, promoting a peace-driven media, and ensuring the presentation, protection of venerable communities, and aiding the government to restructure its social contract and armed forces have not been successful. The weakness of the

official armed forces is because the official Yemeni army was dismantled majorly after the Houthi takeover of Sana'a, the inability to balance against the Houthi forces after they embezzled a massive number of weapons from the military basis in areas under their control, the loose links between anti-Houthi forces, and the lack of sufficient in-ground intervention by KSA and UAE. Additionally, relying on Hadi for the legitimacy of the intervention and lack of representation in the government due to spoilers inside and outside the government has contributed to the halt of significant attempts to restructure the social conflict and relieve the humanitarian struggle of the majority of the Yemeni population. At the reconstruction stage, empowering the official army, collecting sufficient taxes to provide services for citizens, and employing former combatants in the army, ensuring an unbiased judiciary system and media platform was not successfully achieved by external interveners in the Yemeni context. The lack of a proper reconstruction plan can also be attributed to neglecting the complexities involving a conflict resolution plan by all warring parties, especially external interveners. A plan to withdraw from Yemen is still not conclusive as Saudi-Arabia attempts to find a proper face-saving strategy to withdraw from Yemen, ensuring its influence in Southern Arabia and the security of its Southern borders. However, given the current stage of the conflict, an abrupt withdrawal from the conflict can be risky to the security of Yemeni, the Middle East waterways, and global trades. In conclusion, the context of Yemen with its interaction with various global, regional and identity factors come hand in hand with the choice of strategies of international interveners to explain why the Saudi intervention failed in Yemen and how the Yemeni internationalized conflict evolved over the past seven years.

5.1 Recommendations

Although this research is not directed to policymakers, a set of recommendations can be made based on the research's analysis and findings. These recommendations include:

- **Focusing more on improving areas under the IRG control:** Yemen's geography and community structure can be best utilized to promote a peaceful transformation of the conflict through first assisting in improving security, economic and governance in areas under the International Recognized Government. Because of Yemen's extensive access to the waterways in the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, areas mainly controlled by the IRG, an establishment of projects to improve the security and economic sectors in areas under IRG control can provide a competing alternative to those allying with the Houthis. After all, the shifting alliances within political and military groups in Yemen have proven that many actors favor their interest over blinding adhering to the unconditional support of a particular group. Hence, an improvement of the conditions in areas of IRG control can put pressure on the Houthis to come to the table for negotiations.

- **Promoting more local efforts when it comes to negotiation:** the Yemeni population has generally favored resolving its crisis internally. This is due to the historical tragedies of external interveners in Yemen and the more nationalist tendencies of many Yemenis. In order to ensure a successful negotiation effort that can lead to a peaceful ending of the conflict, local actors need to coordinate peace deals with each other that ensures a fair settlement of the conflict and provide plans to ensure that such conflicts do not re-emerge in the future.

- **Providing a plan for a more inclusive government and political atmosphere:** Yemen is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Hence, a more inclusive representative government must address the grievances of communal groups across the country and ensure that all key groups are included in Yemen's decision-making machinery. The mass protests in 2011 were greatly motivated by demands of

establishing a civil state that is representative and inclusive. Hence, any efforts to end the current conflict should stem from these values.

- **Acknowledging the atrocities of the warring parties:** the international community has expressed its concerns about the dire humanitarian tragedies caused by the war in Yemen. Some of the direct negative consequences of the war are killing innocent civilians on many battlefronts across Yemen, destroying properties and state institutions by the Saudi and UAE airstrikes, and the Houthis' attacks during battles. These atrocities need to be addressed and acknowledge by the warring parties to ensure collective healing from the conflict.

- **Restructuring the military and employing ex-combatants:** Yemen has endured various cases of violent armed conflict with various groups since its unification in 1990. These conflicts include the fight against AQAP, the armed clashes between the government and the Houthis from 2004 - 2009, and several tribal disputes in the northern highlands. A strong army is needed in Yemen to avoid escalating any future conflicts and end the current conflict in Yemen. In a country where most of the population possess some sort of fire weapons at their own personal/tribal disposal, a strong army is needed to face any violent attempt to disturb the security of Yemen.

- **Promoting more conflict resolution research to study the Yemeni conflict:** Yemeni politics' complexities and delicate nature deem any external efforts to fail if no proper analysis is set to look for the best ways to intervene and positively change the turn of events in Yemen. Henceforth, there is a dire need for a more multi-disciplinary and comprehensive analysis of the Yemeni conflict that ensures that all the variables that can potentially influence the consequences of foreign policy strategies of the international community towards Yemen are appropriate and safe to apply in the Yemeni context.

5.2 Limitations

This research attempts to tackle a complex problem in the MENA region, Yemen's conflict dynamics amid the Saudi-led intervention. Researchers studying Yemen can face various challenges ranging from lack of sufficient data on the economy and security aspects, to name a few. Hence, this research has come with several limitations. First, due to the difficulties of interviewing many politically relevant elites, this research relied heavily on publicly available information to understand the critical political actors' opinions and actions. Second, some of the vital information needed to assess the Yemeni state and the Saudi-led intervention are not available to the public because many local and international actors who participated in the Yemeni conflict prefer to keep this information from the public as it can harm their agendas. Theoretically, relying on the IRW model to assess the Saudi-led intervention has its limitations. First, the model relies on a top-down approach to analyzing international interventions. This approach sometimes neglects the impact of the public and their interaction with the conflict. Hence, many important aspects are not addressed in the model. Second, the model assumes a Weberian concept of state-building. While the Weberian model proved to be effective in many countries in Europe and North America, its application in the context of Yemen is challenging due to the lack of an organized state structure and the lack of consensus of what constitutes authority. Aside from the IRW, this research was not well-informed about the dynamics of the backchannels of negotiations between local and international actors, limiting the explanatory power of interpreting the shifting alliance dynamics evident in the Yemeni conflict.

5.3 Future research

Although it is filled with tragedies and long-lasting negative impacts on the Yemeni population, the conflict in Yemen is a rich area for exploring various topics that are important to scholars of international affairs. While this research focused mainly on studying the

conflict dynamics through shedding light on international interventions, future studies can delve deeper into several complex topics related to the conflict in Yemen. Researchers can explore the Houthi rebellion tactics and compare them to the tactics adopted by other militia groups across the MENA region. Additionally, through qualitative research, researchers can explore the perception of communal groups on external interventions and how such perceptions affect their reaction to external interveners. This topic can also intersect with other future research prospects that involve an in-depth analysis of the role of ideology in politicizing communal groups' struggles. Finally, future researchers can also explore how several quasi-state structures have emerged in the MENA region post the Arab Spring and the main factors influencing their survivability.

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