

RETHINKING TRADITIONAL ALLIANCES: PAKISTAN-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF THE YEMEN CONFLICT

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Abstract

The conflict in Yemen has significantly strained relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, assess the limits of their decades-long alliance. This study examines the diplomatic, economic and security implications of Pakistan's decision not to join the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, and explores the complex factors driving this shift. Research suggests that Pakistan's growing economic ties with China, critical public opinion on Saudi Arabia's actions, and desire for strategic autonomy have contributed to its progressively independent stance. The conflict has disclosed underlying tensions in the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, particularly over sectarian differences and competing regional interests. This study analyzes the dynamics of the conflict and the role of external actors, including Iran and the United States, in shaping Pakistan's response. Moreover, it examines the economic consequences of

strained relations, including the decline in Saudi investment and oil exports to Pakistan. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex geopolitics of the Middle East and South Asia, highlighting the need for a nuanced analysis of intertwined interests and rivalries. These findings have important implications for policy makers, emphasizing the importance of diverse economic partnerships and reducing reliance on traditional allies. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the Yemen conflict has irreversibly changed the trajectory of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations, necessitating a realignment of their strategic partnership. Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative approach, which includes primary and secondary sources, including official documents, expert interviews, and scholarly literature. The study's findings offer valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of regional geopolitics and promote stability in the Middle East and South Asia.

Keywords: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Middle East, Relationship, Conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia and Yemen share a long border and have historically had close tribal and cultural ties. In 1918, Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din of Yemen signed the Treaty of Taif, establishing borders and friendly relations. There are friendly relations between Saudi Arabia's Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud and Yemen's Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamiduddin.

Saudi-Yemen relations were founded in 1918 when the founder of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, and the ruler of Yemen, Imam Yahya, first established contact. This initial meeting marked the beginning of a complex and often tumultuous relationship between the two countries.¹ The initial contact between Saudi Arabia and Yemen dates back to 1918, when the founder of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, and the ruler of Yemen, Imam Yahya, first established contact. The historic meeting took place during a period of regional upheaval, as the First World War drew to a close and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. In order to expand his dominion beyond Najd, Ibn Saud sent a delegation to Yemen to form an alliance with Imam Yahya. wary of Saudi expansionism, responded cautiously, recognizing the potential benefits of cooperation.² The two leaders exchanged letters and gifts, laying the foundation for future relations. Key issues discussed include border demarcation, trade agreements and mutual recognition of sovereignty.

Saudi Arabia and Yemen maintain close tribal and cultural ties, with frequent visits and exchanges. Saudi Arabia provides financial support to the Yemeni Imamate government. Border disputes between Saudi Arabia and Yemen intensified in the 1920s and 1930s, as the expansionist ambitions of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud clashed with Imam Yahya's determination to protect Yemen's territorial integrity.³ The disputed areas of Najran, Jizan and Asir became flashpoints, with Saudi forces repeatedly invading Yemeni territory. In 1926, Saudi Arabia captured Najran, leading to a series of

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skirmishes and diplomatic tensions. Imam Yahya appealed to the British for help, but their response was tepid given their own interests in maintaining good relations with Ibn Saud. The conflict escalated in 1931 when Saudi forces captured Jizan, leading the Yemeni tribes to resist. The conflict culminated in the 1934 Treaty of Taif, which temporarily resolved border issues but left underlying tensions simmering.⁴

In 1934, Saudi Arabia and Yemen signed the Treaty of Taif, establishing diplomatic relations and settling border disputes. The agreement recognized Yemen's territorial sovereignty and established commercial and trade agreements between the two countries. However, implementation of the agreement was often controversial. The Treaty of Taif, signed on 20 May 1934, was a landmark agreement between Saudi Arabia and Yemen aimed at resolving border disputes and establishing diplomatic relations. The agreement reached in the Saudi city of Taif recognized Yemen's sovereignty over the disputed areas of Najran, Jizan and Asir, while Saudi Arabia gained control of the coastal plain of Tahama. The agreement established a clear border demarcation, in which Saudi Arabia relinquished its claim to Yemeni territory. Key provisions included mutual recognition of sovereignty, non-aggression, and cooperation on trade, commerce and security. Under this agreement, diplomatic relations were also established with Saudi Arabia and Yemen. British diplomats played an important role in facilitating the negotiations, reflecting their interests in regional stability.⁵

British colonial influence during the 1930s to 1960s played an important role in shaping Saudi-Yemen relations. British advisers guided Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, while Yemen remained a British protectorate. This external influence created tension and hostilities between the two nations. Britain played an important role in shaping Saudi-Yemen relations from the 1930s to the 1960s, leveraging its colonial dominance to secure regional stability and strategic interests. Britain's influence was multifaceted, including diplomatic, economic and military dimensions. Britain facilitated the 1934 Treaty of Taif, mediating border disputes between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. British diplomats such as Sir Andrew Ryan cultivated relations with important figures including Abdulaziz Ibn Saud and Imam Yahya.⁶ Britain's Arab Bureau, established in 1916, provided intelligence and advisory services while shaping Saudi foreign policy.

Britain controlled Yemen's economy through the Aden colony, influencing trade and commerce. British Petroleum Company (BP) dominated Saudi oil exploration, while Anglo-Prussian Oil Company (APOC) held concessions in Yemen. Britain's economic advantage allowed it to dictate regional energy policies. Britain maintained military bases in Aden and Bahrain and projected power in the region. The Royal Air Force (RAF) patrolled the Saudi-Yemen border enforcing the Taif Agreement. British military advisers trained Saudi and Yemeni forces, strengthening ties.⁷ As the Cold War intensified, Britain allied with the United States to counter Soviet expansion. Saudi Arabia and Yemen became major players in the regional Cold War theater. Britain supported Saudi Arabia's anti-communist stance, while Yemen's republican government (established in 1962) had Soviet support.

Britain's influence began to wane as decolonization engulfed the Middle East. Yemen gained independence in 1962 and Saudi Arabia gradually asserted its

sovereignty. The Yemeni Civil War of 1962 marked the end of British rule, as Egypt and Saudi Arabia intervened. The Yemeni Civil War of 1962 was a turning point in Saudi-Yemen relations. Saudi Arabia supported royalist forces against a republican uprising led by Egyptian-backed revolutionaries. The intervention demonstrated Saudi Arabia's commitment to maintaining regional stability and its opposition to Arab nationalist movements. The Yemeni Civil War, which began in 1962, was a major conflict that devastated Yemen and attracted regional and world powers.⁸ The war began as a struggle between monarchist forces loyal to Imam Ahmad bin Yahya and democratic forces led by Abdullah al-Sallal, who sought to establish a modern, secular state. The conflict escalated when Egypt, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, intervened on behalf of the republic, while Saudi Arabia supported the monarchists. The war became a proxy struggle for regional influence, with the Soviet Union supporting Egypt and the United States supporting Saudi Arabia. The Yemeni Civil War began on September 26, 1962, when Abdullah al-Sallal, a Yemeni army officer, led a democratic uprising against Imam Ahmad bin Yahya, Yemen's ruler since 1948.

Al-Sallal declared Yemen an Arab republic, sparking a conflict between the two. Imperial forces loyal to Imam Ahmad and democratic forces.⁹ Egypt, under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser, immediately intervened on behalf of the republicans and deployed 70,000 troops. Saudi Arabia supported the monarchy, providing financial and military aid. Egypt's intervention turned the conflict into a regional proxy war. The Soviet Union provided military aid to Egypt, while the United States provided diplomatic and military assistance to Saudi Arabia. Britain tried to mediate but eventually withdrew from Aden in 1967. Fighting escalated in 1963 as monarchist forces gained Saudi support. Clashes spread to neighboring areas including Najran and Jizan. The conflict escalated in 1965 with a fierce dispute over the Saudi-Yemen border.

NORTH YEMEN CIVIL WAR (1962-1970)

The North Yemen Civil War was a complex and multifaceted conflict that ravaged the country from 1962 to 1970. At its core, the war was a struggle between the monarchist forces loyal to Imam Ahmad bin Yahya and the republican forces led by Abdullah as-Sallal, who sought to establish a modern, secular state. Tensions between the monarchist and republican factions had been simmering for years, fueled by Yemen's sluggish modernization and Imam Ahmad's autocratic rule. The 1952 Free Yemeni Movement, which aimed to overthrow the monarchy, further polarized the population. As-Sallal's coup on September 26, 1962, sparked the conflict. The republican forces, led by as-Sallal, were primarily composed of Yemeni army officers and intellectuals. They sought to establish a secular, democratic government and modernize Yemen's economy and infrastructure. Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who saw Yemen as a key battleground in his pan-Arab agenda, provided significant military and financial support.¹⁰

The monarchist forces, loyal to Imam Ahmad, drew support from tribal leaders, conservative Islamists, and Saudi Arabia. Imam Ahmad's regime had long been tied to Saudi Arabia, which saw the monarchist forces as a bulwark against republican and nationalist movements. Egypt's intervention on behalf of the republicans in October 1962 marked a significant escalation. Egyptian troops, numbering up to 70,000, helped republicans capture key cities, including Sana'a. However, Egyptian forces faced stiff

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resistance from monarchist tribesmen and Saudi-backed militias.¹¹ Saudi Arabia provided financial and military aid to the monarchist forces, viewing the conflict as a regional struggle against republican and nationalist ideologies. Saudi Arabia's support enabled the monarchists to maintain control over rural areas. Yemen's complex tribal dynamics played a crucial role in the conflict. Tribal leaders, often motivated by local interests, shifted allegiances between monarchist and republican forces. Tribal militias fought on both sides.

The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union became entangled in the conflict. The US provided diplomatic support to Saudi Arabia, while Britain attempted mediation. The Soviet Union supplied military aid to Egypt. Fighting intensified in 1963, with monarchist forces launching guerrilla attacks on republican-held cities. Egyptian forces responded with aerial bombing campaigns. The conflict spread to neighboring regions, including Najran and Jizan.¹²

In 1966, as-Sallal faced a coup attempt by fellow republicans. He survived but lost control of key military units. A counter-coup in 1967 restored as-Sallal's authority. Egyptian forces began withdrawing in 1967, following a devastating defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Republican forces struggled to maintain control. From 1968 to 1970, the conflict simmered, with sporadic clashes between monarchist and republican forces. In 1970, the republican government consolidated power. Saudi Arabia supported the royalist forces against the republican government in North Yemen's civil war. Egypt, under Gamal Abdel Nasser, supported the republicans, leading to a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.¹³

SOUTH YEMEN AND UNIFICATION (1967-1990)

South Yemen gained independence from Britain in 1967 and became a socialist state. Following Britain's withdrawal from Aden in 1967, the People's Republic of South Yemen emerged as a Marxist state. The National Liberation Front (NLF), led by Qahtan al-Shaabi, dominated the government. South Yemen's economy struggled due to limited natural resources and dependence on Soviet aid. Al-Shaabi's presidency was marked by internal power struggles and ideological rifts within the NLF. In 1969, a leftist faction, the National Front, seized power, and al-Shaabi was ousted. Abdul Fattah Ismail, a radical Marxist, became president.¹⁴ South Yemen's emergence as a Marxist state in 1967 was marked by significant economic challenges. With limited natural resources and dependence on Soviet aid, the National Liberation Front (NLF) government implemented socialist policies to redistribute wealth and promote economic growth. The NLF's radical faction, led by Abdul Fattah Ismail, nationalized key industries, introduced land reform, and established a centralized planning system. Despite these efforts, South Yemen's economy struggled. The country's infrastructure was underdeveloped, and a brain drain of skilled professionals further weakened the economy. In contrast, North Yemen experienced rapid economic growth following oil discoveries in 1984. Remittances from Yemeni workers abroad and foreign investment fueled infrastructure development and modernization.¹⁵

In 1978, the YSP was formed, merging various leftist groups. Abdul Fattah Ismail and Ali Nasir Muhammad, a moderate, shared power. The YSP implemented socialist policies, including land reform and nationalization of industries. Ali Nasir Muhammad consolidated power in 1980, purging leftist opponents. His presidency saw

economic liberalization and attempts to engage with Western countries. However, his regime faced opposition from socialist hardliners. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, South Yemen's relations with North Yemen remained tense. Border disputes and ideological differences fueled tensions. However, in 1972, the two countries signed a unity agreement, which was later abandoned.

In 1988, North Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh and South Yemen's President Haidar Abu Bakr al-Attas initiated unification talks. The two governments agreed to merge their economies, militaries, and governments. The YSP's influence waned in the late 1980s due to internal divisions, economic stagnation, and Soviet reforms. Ali Nasir Muhammad's ousting in 1986 marked the beginning of the YSP's decline. A southern secessionist movement, fueled by economic grievances and tribal tensions, emerged in the late 1980s. The movement sought greater autonomy or independence for South Yemen.¹⁶

In 1990, North and South Yemen unified under President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The unification of North and South Yemen in 1990 was a significant event in the country's history. On May 22, 1990, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) and the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) joined to become the Republic of Yemen. This unity was the result of years of negotiations and agreements, including the 1972 Cairo Agreement and the 1988 Joint Investment Area agreement. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of North Yemen became the Head of State, while Ali Salim al-Beidh of South Yemen became the Head of Government. A 30-month transitional period was set to complete the unification of the two political and economic systems.¹⁷ A presidential council was jointly elected, and a prime minister was appointed to form a cabinet. The unified country adopted a new constitution, which affirmed Yemen's commitment to free elections, a multiparty political system, and basic human rights. The constitution also established a provisional unified parliament, consisting of members from both the north and south.

However, the unification process was not without challenges. The country faced significant economic difficulties, including a decline in remittances from Yemeni workers abroad and a loss of foreign aid. The Gulf War also had a significant impact on Yemen, resulting in the return of hundreds of thousands of Yemeni nationals and a decline in tourism. Despite these challenges, the unification of North and South Yemen marked a new era of pluralism and political opening in the country. The media enjoyed greater freedom, and new parties emerged, reflecting the diversity of Yemeni society. However, the unity was short-lived, as tensions between the north and south continued, ultimately leading to a civil war in 1994.¹⁸

BORDER DISPUTES AND TENSIONS (1990-2000)

The unification of North and South Yemen in 1990 did not immediately resolve border disputes and tensions between the two regions. Despite the unity agreement, territorial claims and ideological differences persisted, fueling tensions. The border between the north and south remained a contentious issue, with disputes over the provinces of Shabwa, Abyan, and Lahij.¹⁹

In 1991, clashes erupted between northern and southern forces in the city of Aden, resulting in dozens of casualties. The conflict was sparked by a dispute over control of the city's port and surrounding areas. The incident highlighted the deep-

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seated mistrust between the two regions and the challenges of integrating their military forces. Throughout the 1990s, border tensions escalated, with periodic clashes and skirmishes reported along the border. In 1992, the government established a border commission to resolve disputes, but progress was slow. The commission's efforts were hindered by the complexity of territorial claims, lack of documentation, and competing interests.²⁰

In 1994, tensions boiled over into a full-scale civil war. Southern separatists, backed by some military units, declared independence and established the Democratic Republic of Yemen. The conflict lasted several months, resulting in thousands of deaths and widespread destruction. The northern government ultimately prevailed, but the war exacerbated regional divisions. The 1994 civil war highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to addressing border disputes. In 1995, the government launched a national dialogue initiative, bringing together representatives from the north and south to discuss reconciliation and unity. The initiative helped reduce tensions, but border disputes persisted.²¹

In the late 1990s, Yemen's border disputes with neighboring countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, added complexity to the domestic situation. Yemen's claims to the Saudi-Yemeni border region of Najran and the island of Socotra fueled tensions with Riyadh. Despite these challenges, the Yemeni government made efforts to strengthen regional ties. In 1996, Yemen joined the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as an observer, aiming to enhance economic cooperation and security. However, border tensions with Saudi Arabia continued, and in 1998, clashes erupted along the border. The incident highlighted the need for a more lasting resolution to Yemen's border disputes. Throughout the 1990s, international organizations and diplomatic efforts played a crucial role in mitigating border tensions. The United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League provided technical assistance and facilitated dialogue.²²

By the end of the decade, Yemen had made significant progress in addressing border disputes, but challenges persisted. The legacy of the 1994 civil war and ongoing regional tensions underscored the need for sustained efforts to promote unity and stability. Key figures involved in addressing border disputes included President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Prime Minister Abdul Karim al-Iryani, and southern leader Ali Salim al-Beidh. Their efforts helped maintain a fragile peace, but the path to lasting unity remained fraught with challenges. The complex interplay of domestic and regional factors continued to shape Yemen's border disputes, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to resolving these tensions and promoting national unity.²³ Saudi Arabia and Yemen had recurring border disputes and tensions over smuggling, illegal immigration, and territorial claims. Recurring border disputes and tensions over smuggling, illegal immigration, and territorial claims. Saudi Arabia and Yemen signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to demarcate borders in 1995.

COOPERATION AND AID (2000-2011)

From 2000 to 2011, Yemen's cooperation and aid efforts focused on addressing economic, social, and security challenges. The country received significant assistance from international donors, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, and European Union member states. In 2000, Yemen joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), aiming to integrate its economy into the global trade system. The move facilitated

foreign investment and trade liberalization. However, Yemen's economic growth remained sluggish due to corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited natural resources.²⁴

The Yemeni government implemented various development programs, including the 2001-2005 National Development Plan. The plan focused on poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and human resource development. Donors pledged significant support, with the United States providing \$1.2 billion in aid between 2000 and 2005. In 2002, Yemen launched its Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Initiative, strengthening ties with Western countries. The initiative aimed to combat Al-Qaeda's growing presence in Yemen. The United States provided military aid, training, and intelligence support. The 2004 Arab League Summit in Tunis recognized Yemen's efforts to combat terrorism and promote regional stability. The summit pledged economic support and technical assistance to Yemen. In 2006, Yemen introduced its National Strategy for Poverty Reduction. The strategy targeted education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Donors committed \$4.7 billion in support.²⁵

The 2007-2010 Yemen Development Program focused on infrastructure development, including roads, ports, and energy projects. The program received \$2.5 billion in funding from international donors. In 2009, the Friends of Yemen group was established, comprising 28 countries and international organizations. The group coordinated aid efforts, addressing economic, security, and development challenges.²⁶

The 2010 donor conference in San'a secured \$7 billion in pledges. However, aid disbursement faced challenges due to corruption concerns and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Throughout this period, Saudi Arabia remained a key donor, providing significant economic and military aid. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait also provided substantial support. International organizations played a vital role in Yemen's development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) supported institutional capacity-building and poverty reduction initiatives. The World Bank focused on economic reform, infrastructure development, and private sector growth.²⁷

Key figures involved in Yemen's cooperation and aid efforts included President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Prime Minister Abdul Karim al-Iryani, and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Ahmed Muhammad Sofan. Despite significant aid inflows, Yemen's development progress remained uneven. Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and security challenges hindered effective aid utilization. The 2011 Arab Spring protests highlighted the need for more inclusive and effective governance. By 2011, Yemen's cooperation and aid landscape had become increasingly complex, with multiple stakeholders and competing priorities. The country's ongoing development challenges underscored the need for sustained international support and effective aid coordination.²⁸

ARAB SPRING AND HOUTHI UPRISEING (2011-2015)

The Arab Spring protests in 2011 sparked widespread demonstrations in Yemen, calling for President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation. Protesters demanded democratic reforms, economic improvement, and an end to corruption. The uprising led to Saleh's departure in November 2011, after 33 years in power. Vice President Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi took over as interim president, overseeing a two-year transition

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period. The National Dialogue Conference (NDC) brought together representatives from various political parties, tribes, and social groups to discuss constitutional reforms and national reconciliation.²⁹

However, the transition faced significant challenges. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) exploited security vacuums, launching attacks on government forces and civilians. The Houthi movement, a Shia Islamist group, began its ascent in northern Yemen. In 2011, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi declared support for the Arab Spring protests. However, as the transition progressed, Houthis became increasingly dissatisfied with the NDC's outcomes. They demanded greater representation and autonomy for the Zaidi Shia community. In 2014, Houthi forces seized Sana'a, the capital city, and eventually took control of key government institutions. President Hadi was forced to resign, and the Houthis established the Supreme Revolutionary Committee (SRC) as the de facto governing authority.³⁰

The Houthis' rise to power was facilitated by their alliance with former President Saleh's loyalists. Saleh's influence within the military and security apparatus helped the Houthis consolidate control.

In January 2015, the Houthis dissolved parliament and announced plans for a new government. The international community condemned the coup, and the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Houthi leaders. As Houthi control expanded, AQAP launched a series of attacks on Houthi targets. The conflict escalated into a full-scale war, drawing in regional actors. Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of Arab states, launched airstrikes against Houthi positions in March 2015.³¹

The conflict displaced millions, exacerbating Yemen's humanitarian crisis. The United Nations estimated that over 20 million Yemenis required humanitarian assistance. Key figures involved in the Arab Spring and Houthi uprising included President Ali Abdullah Saleh, President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, and former Yemeni President Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar. The Arab Spring's promise of democratic reforms and accountability gave way to sectarian conflict and regional intervention. The Houthi uprising transformed Yemen's political landscape, plunging the country into a complex web of internal and external conflicts. By 2015, Yemen's future remained uncertain, with multiple factions vying for control. The humanitarian crisis deepened, and the international community struggled to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.³² The complex interplay of domestic and regional factors contributed to Yemen's descent into chaos. The legacy of the Arab Spring and Houthi uprising continued to shape Yemen's trajectory, underscoring the need for inclusive governance, national reconciliation, and regional cooperation. Yemen's Arab Spring protests led to President Saleh's resignation and the rise of the Houthi movement. Saudi Arabia supported the Yemeni government against the Houthis, who were seen as Iranian proxies.

SAUDI-LED INTERVENTION (2015-PRESENT)

In 2015, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of Arab states in a military intervention against the Houthi rebels. The conflict has resulted in significant humanitarian suffering, regional tensions, and a complex geopolitical situation. In March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition launched Operation Decisive Storm, a military intervention aimed at restoring President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi's government and countering Houthi

expansion. The coalition comprised Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates.³³

The intervention began with airstrikes targeting Houthi positions, followed by ground operations. Saudi Arabia's objective was to prevent a Houthi-dominated Yemen from becoming a strategic threat, particularly given Yemen's proximity to Saudi Arabia's southern border. The conflict escalated rapidly, with the Houthis retaliating against Saudi and coalition targets. Missile strikes and cross-border attacks became frequent. The United Nations estimated that over 10,000 civilians were killed or injured in the first year of fighting. In 2015, the Saudi-led coalition established the Yemeni government-in-exile, with President Hadi operating from Riyadh.³⁴ The legitimate government struggled to maintain control over territory, relying heavily on coalition support. As the conflict dragged on, humanitarian concerns grew. The United Nations declared Yemen's crisis one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. Over 20 million Yemenis required assistance, with 8 million at risk of famine. In 2016, the coalition launched Operation Restoring Hope, aiming to drive Houthis from Sana'a and key cities. However, the operation stalled, and fighting continued. The conflict drew in regional and international actors. The United States provided military support to the coalition, while Iran allegedly supplied missiles to the Houthis. The conflict became a proxy war, fueling sectarian tensions.

In 2017, the Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on Yemen's ports and airports, restricting aid deliveries and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The blockade was eased in 2018, following international pressure. The conflict's human cost continued to mount. By 2020, estimates suggested over 100,000 Yemenis had been killed or injured. Displacement reached unprecedented levels, with over 3 million internally displaced persons. International efforts to broker peace gained momentum in 2018. The United Nations-sponsored Stockholm Agreement aimed to establish a ceasefire and facilitate negotiations. However, implementation faced significant challenges.³⁵

Key figures involved in the Saudi-led intervention included Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, and former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh's assassination in 2017 by Houthi forces eliminated a potential negotiating partner. The Saudi-led intervention transformed Yemen's conflict into a regional conflagration. Though King of Saudi's speech was revolved around Gulf cooperation³⁶ but the ongoing war has deepened Yemen's humanitarian crisis, fueled sectarian divisions, and threatened regional stability. By 2022, the conflict remained unresolved, with periodic escalations and failed peace initiatives. The international community continued to call for a negotiated settlement, but the warring parties remained entrenched. The complex interplay of domestic and regional factors contributed to Yemen's ongoing crisis. The legacy of the Saudi-led intervention continued to shape Yemen's trajectory, underscoring the need for inclusive governance, national reconciliation, and regional cooperation.³⁷

CONCLUSION

The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen has had far-reaching consequences, exacerbating the country's humanitarian crisis, fueling sectarian divisions, and threatening regional stability. Despite international efforts to broker peace, the conflict

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remains unresolved, with periodic escalations and failed peace initiatives. The war has resulted in over 100,000 casualties, displaced millions, and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. The complex interplay of domestic and regional factors has transformed Yemen's conflict into a proxy war, with Saudi Arabia and Iran vying for influence. A lasting resolution requires inclusive governance, national reconciliation, and regional cooperation. The international community must prioritize diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction to prevent Yemen's further destabilization. Ultimately, a peaceful Yemen is crucial for regional security and global stability, making a negotiated settlement an imperative for all parties involved. The next chapter is going to discuss the role of Pakistan on Yemen Cries.



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