


Untangling the Yemen Conflict: Middle Eastern Roots and Iran's Role in Mediation

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Abstract

Yemen is the poorest Arab country in the world. The corruption of the government, the marginalization of the Houthis, and the inability of the government to meet the economic needs of the citizens of this poor Arab country have been burning in the fire of instability for more than a decade. This instability is such that the transfer of power in 2011 could not be a message of peace for this country, and finally, in 2015, the country entered into a devastating civil war. This research, using the descriptive-analytical method, has tried to investigate the roots of the crisis in Yemen and the constructive role of Iran in ending this conflict. The results of the research show that the Islamic Republic of Iran evaluates the developments in Yemen in the form of Islamic awakening, which reduces the influence of the West in the region. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned about the efforts of Saudi Arabia to manage the developments in Yemen and to empower the affiliated currents and demands that all religious and political currents play a role in the future of this country. What is important for Iran is, firstly, to play a constructive role in the developments of this country to solve the existing challenges towards the understanding of political groups, and secondly, to support its allies to prevent their forced exit from the power scene.

Keywords: Middle East, Yemen crisis, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Peace process.

Introduction

Yemen is located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula and has extensive maritime borders in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The strategic position of this country in terms of the nobility on the Horn of Africa through the sea borders of the south and west of Yemen and also the island of Socatra has given special importance to this country. In addition, the nobility of this country have given double importance to the Bab-al-Mandab Strait in terms of energy security and transportation. In fact, a large percentage of the traffic that takes place in the Suez Canal also passes through Bab-al-Mandab. So, as much as the Suez Canal is important, Bab al-Mandeb is also important. (Drysdal and Blake, 1386, p. 178) Yemen is a small country in the Arabian Peninsula that has been involved in an intractable conflict for nearly a decade. Many analysts consider the war in Yemen to be a de facto conflict, with Iran on one side, which is supporting the Houthis, and a multinational coalition led by Saudi Arabia on the other side. In November 2021, the United Nations Development Program estimated that up to 377,000 people had been killed directly and indirectly. About 20.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and 4 million have been displaced. The World Food Program has described it as "the world's worst humanitarian crisis." The origins of this conflict date back to 2011, when President Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced to resign because of popular protests. President Mansour Hadi took power in 2012 after a UN-backed transition by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Since the rise of the Houthis in 2004 and the Arab Spring event, Yemen has faced great difficulties in maintaining governance, which ultimately brought civil war in 2015. Yemeni society is very multidimensional, and there is also a sectarian dimension that plays the main role in the continuation of conflicts (Dresch, 2000, p. 45). From a historical point of view, the country has experienced different uprisings in different time periods since 1962 as well as in 2004 and finally the devastating civil war in 2015, which is still ongoing. To stabilize the political-social situation of Yemen, a major political transition took place in 2011, when the Vice President of Yemen, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, became the president of Yemen (Lackner, 2019, p. 98). Despite the transition, the government was unable to control the internal conflict, and finally, in 2015, Hadi's government fell down while the Houthis occupied the Yemeni capital Sana'a. Since 2015, Yemen has been divided between two main factions: the international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, which holds significant control over much of the

country, and the Houthi forces dominating the northern regions. Power in the south is divided between the government and the Southern Transitional Council, a separatist group supported by the UAE. In 2020, these two groups agreed to enter a coalition government. However, many of their agreements haven't been implemented because of a lack of integration between their forces. In 2021 and 2022, fighting focused on the city of Marib, which was the last northern stronghold of the recognized Yemeni government. While Saudi Arabia proposed a ceasefire to resume talks in March 2021, the Houthi believed that talks would be meaningless until the blockade of Saudi air and sea ports was lifted. Despite these challenges, the two sides agreed on a ceasefire in April. The ceasefire was extended twice but expired in October. In April of this year, Hadi handed over power to the Presidential Council, and the United Kingdom and the United States also supported this decision. But the Houthi still considered the government illegal. Although about 70% of Yemen's population lives in areas controlled by the Houthis, the government under the leadership of Hadi is still internationally recognized as the legal government of Yemen, which was approved by the UN resolution in 2015 (UN, 2017).

The civil war in Yemen is further complicated by the involvement of regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia. The rivalry between these two countries has deepened the conflict, turning Yemen into a proxy battleground. While there have been diplomatic overtures, particularly from the Obama administration, the conflict remains unresolved. The role of Iran, often accused of meddling in Yemen's internal affairs, has drawn attention. Experts argue that any rapprochement between Islamic countries would run counter to the interests of Western powers like the United States and Israel, and Yemen's conflict is seen in part as a battleground for broader regional and global strategic interests. This research seeks to analyze the Yemeni crisis from a political geography and geopolitical perspective, addressing the various local, regional, and international factors at play. By framing the analysis through the lens of realism, a dominant theory in international relations, the study will explore how power dynamics, regional rivalries, and external interventions have shaped the trajectory of the conflict. Realism, with its focus on power politics and the anarchic nature of the international system, provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding the complex interplay of actors in Yemen.

1. The Historical Evolution of Conflicts in Yemen

The root of the crisis in Yemen goes back to the popular protests of 2011. Ali Abdallah Saleh was elected as the president from abroad and Hadi for a two-year transitional period (BBC, 2020). Before 1990, Yemen was two separate countries. the northern Yemen Arab Republic, which Saleh had ruled since 1978 before to be Yemen's president, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south. The majority in the south and east are Sunni, while Shia Muslims live mainly in the north around Sana'a (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015). Despite efforts since 2012 to resolve political issues and agree on a new constitution, inter-party talks broke down in January 2014. In September 2014, the Houthis, officially known as Ansarullah, launched an assault on the capital Sanaa, capturing much of northern Yemen, including the Red Sea port of Hodeidah. The Houthis, who are Shiite Muslims, are accused by the US and others, including Saudi Arabia, of receiving support from Iran (Reuters, 2021, p. A).

In March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates intervened in support of Hadi's government. The Saudis, like most of the Persian Gulf countries that joined the coalition, are Sunni countries that seek to reduce Iran's influence in their neighborhood. In fact, the most important directions of Saudi Arabia during the Yemeni revolution and in Yemen in general were the lack of democracy in Yemen, preventing the acceleration of developments and trying to manage and control them, preventing the spread of developments in Yemen to other regions and countries, and maintaining the structure of the Yemeni government. And the effort to empower people and affiliated movements and reduce the influence of Shiites and the effort to separate and divide Yemen and annex some Yemeni provinces has been to ensure access to the sea and reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz (Nyakoui, 2013, pp. 31-32). On the other hand, the U.S. President Barack Obama quickly announced support for Saudi Arabia and its coalition. As Yemen's political transition faltered, the White House created a "common planning cell" and advocated for a political resolution through negotiations. Ironically, the U.S. and its Saudi ally had played a role in preventing this outcome. Between 2015 and 2021, the U.S. provided at least \$54.6 billion in military aid to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, according to the U.S. Accountability Office. This included logistical support, intelligence sharing, refueling fighter jets, training pilots, and repairing equipment, effectively making the U.S. a participant in the conflict.

Despite growing criticism, including a 2019 War Powers Resolution passed by Congress to end U.S. involvement, the effort failed. President Biden opposed halting support, arguing that it would undermine leverage in peace talks. However, a UN report criticized the U.S. stance, labeling it complicity in potential war crimes, underscoring the complexity of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict. The role of regional power issues in the Yemen conflict is very complicated. The Sunni Muslim leader, Saudi Arabia, and the Shiite leader, Iran, were both major players in Yemen in the early days. In deed, this conflict cannot be considered a bipolar conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates and al-Qaeda are considered the two weaker poles of this conflict. In the following, the role of each of these Middle Eastern powers in the Yemen crisis will be examined.

2. Saudi Arabia's Role in the Yemen Conflict: Power, Influence, and Regional Stakes

Saudi Arabia continues to support Hadi's government and therefore conducts military operations against the Houthis in Yemen. In the field of developments in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is the most important foreign actor. Saudi Arabia has always played an interventionist role in Yemen and has considered this country as its backyard. Among Saudi Arabia's interventions in Yemen, we can mention the country's role in the Yemeni civil war in 1994. On May 21, 1944, Vice President of Yemen, Ali Salem Al Bayd, with the support of Saudi Arabia, declared the independence of South Yemen under the name of "Democratic Republic of Yemen." In fact, Saudi Arabia tried to divide Yemen with its political, financial, and military support (Jaafari Valdani, 2068, p. 206). This country also intervened in the war between the Yemeni government and the Houthi Shiites and bombarded and suppressed the Houthis. In this way, the Royal Saudi Air Force has widely participated in the downing of the Houthis' air defenses. Saudi Arabia is also responsible for killing a large number of Houthi fighters in Yemen (Niaz & Jamia, 2019). In contrast, the Houthis have used missiles and drones to attack several sites in Saudi Arabia, including oil refineries and military installations. The United States estimates that there were approximately 240 such attacks from January to August 2021 (US Department of State, 2021). In 2017, the Saudi-led coalition temporarily blocked access to all entry points to Yemen in response to a Houthi missile attack on Riyadh airport. This position of the coalition was criticized by the United Nations and called for lifting

the blockade of Yemen. British Prime Minister Theresa May, like President Trump, called for the removal of restrictions on the flow of commercial goods. Data collected by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen, which facilitates the free flow of commercial ships to certain Yemeni ports, shows that the amount of fuel and food imported into Yemen in 2020 was more than in 2018. About 75% of it has been delivered in 2019. This international body is responsible for inspecting ships and issuing licenses.

Table (1): Monthly Average of Food and Fuel Unloaded in Yemen (in Tons)

Year	Food	Fuel
2016	224872	139874
2017	297934	140905
2018	258130	140905
2019	302611	187555
2020	308746	142221

Source: (UNVIM for Yemen, 2021)

The human rights supervisor has argued that the restrictions of the Saudi-led coalition threaten to send aid (HRW, 2017). Nevertheless, the restrictions are still in place, and the Saudis have proposed to remove them after the success of any peace talks and are actually using these restrictions as a tool for negotiations. On September 5, the Saudis intercepted three ballistic missiles fired into the country, and in December more interceptions were seen. Another attack on Abha airport in February 2022 injured twelve people. Saudi Arabia believes that the Houthis carried out these attacks with Iranian missiles. From 2010 to 2019, approximately 19 percent of Saudi Arabia's arms imports were from the United Kingdom, while around 60 percent came from the United States. These weapons were used in Yemen by Saudi forces. According to the statistics provided, since 2015, the Saudi-led coalition has carried out nearly 24,700 airstrikes, resulting in the deaths of approximately 19,200 civilians (Yemen Data Project, 2022). On the other hand, the unresolved territorial disputes between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, which have historical bases, after more than 14 years and despite the activities that were made in 2000 to resolve it, the issue remains unresolved in the minds of the Yemeni people. Yemenis still claim about three provinces of Yemen. Provinces whose roots are more similar to Yemen than Saudi Arabia.

Following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Saudi Arabia indeed has positioned itself in direct competition with Iran,

striving to counterbalance Iranian influence and prevent its growing power (Barzegar, 2012, p. 229). Compared to other Arab nations in the region, Saudi Arabia adopts a notably aggressive stance towards Iran's policies. Saudi officials argue that the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq resulted in the removal of anti-Iranian regimes, inadvertently boosting the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in both countries. These invasions have shifted Iraq and Afghanistan from being threats to opportunities for Iran, thereby altering the regional power balance to the detriment of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states (Torabi, 2011, pp. 158-160). Moreover, the rise of Shiite power in Iraq and the successes of Hezbollah in Lebanon have further accelerated Iran's regional influence, which has intensified Saudi Arabia's concerns (Kamrava, 2013, p. 6). The Saudi government's behavior underscores its determination to prevent the consolidation of Iranian power and its aggressive approach is a reflection of this objective. Saudi Arabia is particularly focused on countering Iran's influence among Shiite populations in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen, marking this as a critical aspect of its regional strategy.

In the past years, in the framework of Iran's competition for regional supremacy, Saudi Arabia has been very worried about the expansion of the influence of the Islamic Republic in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain and the formation of what is called the "Shia crescent" and has tried to curb this influence. Saudi Arabia and Iran have had serious discrepancies regarding the recent conflict between the Yemeni government and the Yemeni Houthi minority, who live in Saada province in the north of the country. The government leaders of Saudi Arabia and Yemen have repeatedly accused Iran of supporting the Houthis with financial aid, training, and equipment. However, the accusations of Saudi and Yemeni authorities regarding Iran's equipment and training support have not been proven. Although the Houthis are five imams, unlike Iran, which is a twelve-imam Shia, Iran's leaders added to this understanding by verbally supporting the Houthis in accordance with the policy of religious unity. But it is difficult to imagine that they can remain silent on a very important issue for the Shia community. Saudi and Yemeni government officials have sometimes accused the Houthi leaders of trying to divert their followers from moderate Shia principles and actions towards a more militant form of Twelver Imam Shia in accordance with Iran's religious strategy (Terrill, 2011:19). The sword is the sword (Qiyam al-Sif), and the history of military conflicts between the Yemeni Shiites and the government goes back to before the

Islamic Revolution of Iran. However, the conflict between the Yemeni government and the Houthis gained a new dimension due to the direct military intervention of Saudi Arabia in northern Yemen in November 2009. In order to maintain regional order, Saudi Arabia was not only an observer of developments, but this country tried to maintain regional structures so that they could influence the influential components in these revolutions by being fully present. So Saudi foreign policy is conservative on the one hand because it tends to protect the status quo, but it is also aggressive because it tries to manage the atmosphere of regional revolutions for its own benefit by using political, economic, and security tools (Madani & Hawasi, 2013, p. 65).

The conflict quickly emerged as the largest military operation that Saudi Arabia had launched since the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Saudi tactics in this war included heavy artillery fire and air bombardment in addition to sending infantry forces in this operation. The purpose of this form of warfare was to destroy important elements of the Houthi forces in such a way that the Saudi infantry could easily defeat the remaining military forces. Such tactics were only partially successful. In the meantime, Iran defended the Yemeni people's revolution and condemned Saudi Arabia's support for the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh (Najat, 2013, p. 72). In general, Iran claims that Saudi Arabia intervenes in Yemen and suppresses Shiites for major reasons, as following:

- 1- The lack of democracy in Yemen;
- 2- Preventing the acceleration of developments and trying to manage and control them;
- 3- Maintaining the structure of the Yemeni government and trying to bring people and related movements to power;
- 4- Reducing the influence of Houthi Shiites and currents who are close to Iran (Jaafari Veldani, 2008, p. 42).

Currently, the political system of Saudi Arabia is the most authoritarian political system in the region, which severely violates human rights, women's rights, democracy, and freedom of speech. For this reason, it is one of the countries that is involved in the crises caused by the Arab Spring in the Middle East region and is trying to find some way to prevent the crisis from entering his country. In other words, Saudi Arabia has traditionally been a conservative actor in the region, and in relation to the developments of Islamic awakening in the Arab world, it seeks to eliminate threats and maintain its security (Barzegar, 2012, p. 3).

On the other hand, Iran accuses Saudi Arabia of trying to

legitimize its involvement in Yemen and the killing of Yemeni Shiites by linking the Houthis and Al-Qaeda and exaggerating the danger of Shiites in the region and expanding Iran's influence while gaining the support of other Arab countries. In contrast to Saudi Arabia, it accuses Iran of taking part in the civil war in Yemen and supporting the Houthis and revolutionaries. The presence of a significant number of Shiites in Yemen and their cultural and political influence from Iran, which is particularly evident in the Ansar Allah movement, is one of Saudi Arabia's concerns. Accordingly, preventing Shiites from gaining power has been one of the most important strategic priorities of Saudi Arabia in the recent crisis in Yemen. In this regard, Farid Zakaria says: "What led the Saudis to attack Yemen is that they do not want a Shiite government in Yemen." In other words, Saudi Arabia sees the Shia government in Yemen as a big problem for its regime (see Zakaria, 2014, p. 43). The Wahhabi ideology of the Saudi kingdom has put Saudi Arabia in sharp conflict with the Shiites. The Saudi government believes that the Yemeni Shiites have a close relationship with the Iranian government and the Saudi Shiites, so that any success of the Yemeni Shiites will quickly affect the Saudi Shiites, and it will also increase the influence and credibility of the Islamic Republic of Iran (see Al Jazeera Studies, 2015, p. 3). In fact, the effort to expand the role of individuals and related and parallel movements has been one of the axes of Saudi Arabia's efforts regarding the recent developments in Yemen. Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars to maintain the power and supremacy of Sunni religious groups over Shiite groups at the regional level. Currently, we can mention tens of thousands of opposition forces in the form of various groups such as Al-Qaeda, Daesh, supporters of Mansour Hadi, southern separatists, and tribal forces, which the Saudis seek to support and make active against the army and Ansar Allah. Currently, the Saudis are focusing all their efforts on this issue to prevent Ansar Allah from becoming a model like the Lebanese Hezbollah model. For this reason, he considered the reason for Saudi Arabia's direct involvement in the Yemen issue and the attempt to arrange arbitrary elements in the power structure in this country in the framework of regional competition with Iran, and of course, due to their understanding of the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamist currents in the region (Khezri, Safavi & Parhizkar, 1394, p. 183).

3. Evolving Dynamics in Iran-Yemen Relations: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

The relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Yemen during the past 36 years have always been a function of regional and international variables. Before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the two countries of North and South Yemen did not have a clear definition and position in Iran's foreign policy. Especially since South Yemen was one of the allies of the Soviet Union, and these conditions led to the military presence of the Soviet Union in the Red Sea and the Sea of Oman and the control of the strategic Bab al-Mandab strait, and the movement of Western military and commercial ships in these areas was also disrupted, which was part of Iran's regional concerns in that period. Therefore, Tehran's foreign policy in the second Pahlavi period towards South Yemen was a concern. Therefore, on behalf of America and the West, Iran stationed part of its military forces in Dhofar to defend the Kingdom of Oman (Houshi Sadat, 2013). The Dhofar movement was created in 1962 with the aim of overthrowing the royal regime of Oman and dividing Dhofar and was supported by Jamal Abdul Nasser and the leaders of South Yemen, and finally, with the presence of Iran in Oman (1975-1972), it led to the total defeat of the forces of the liberation movement of the people of Dhofar. This event is the most important stage in Iran-Yemen relations in the years before the Islamic Revolution.

After the victory of the Islamic revolution, we are witnessing a shift in the direction of the foreign policy of North and South Yemen towards Iran. It is worth mentioning that North Yemen was one of the first countries to recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran on 25 Bahman 1357, and the ambassador of this country went to visit Imam Khomeini (RA) and presented a volume of Kalam Allah Majid to the Imam on behalf of Ali Abdullah Saleh. But with the beginning of the imposed war, North Yemen, under the leadership of Ali Abdullah Saleh, was influenced by the positions of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and also supported the invasion of Iran by the Iraqi Baath regime. North Yemen, which initially showed itself as a supporter of the Iranian revolution, even sent soldiers to the front during the imposed war to help the Iraqi Baath regime. While South Yemen, led by Ali Nasser Mohammad, supported Tehran. On the other hand, after the revolution, the government of South Yemen freed an Iranian captive pilot, who had been arrested since 1967 due to the crash of his plane at the Dhofar border, with the mediation of the Oman People's Liberation Front

(Amirdehi, 1389, p. 127). On May 22, 1990, the two Yemens united with each other, and after this union, the relations between Iran and Yemen were accompanied by ups and downs. At first, the Iranian embassy was reduced to a consulate, and then the consulate was reduced to a representation. The ups and downs of the political relations of the two countries did not prevent the development of cultural relations and their growth; therefore, after the unification of the two Yemens, Iran and Yemen signed various cultural, scientific, and educational agreements together. In general, it can be said that the end of the imposed war and the unification of North and South Yemen did not change the relations between Tehran and Sana'a. Because the Republic of Yemen was still under the influence of the policies of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. Ali Abdullah Saleh was strongly dependent on Saudi Arabia and coordinated his domestic and foreign policies with the Saudi regime. The Al Saud regime's opinion is that because the Houthis are inclined towards the Shiite religion, their influence in the northern regions of Yemen is similar to Iran's influence. In this regard, from 2004 to 2010, two armies of Saudi Arabia and Yemen organized six ground and air attacks against Yemen's Houthis.(Nejat, Mousavi, Sarmi, 2016, p. 140)

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a critic of the Saleh government's policies. Therefore, it was one of the few countries that welcomed the Yemeni revolution. This caused the dark relations between Iran and the Yemeni government during Saleh's period and after that during Mansour Hadi's time. After Ansarullah's control over Sana'a, Mansour Hadi had to make a distance himself and Congress in order to maintain his power. For this reason, Ansarullah made it his agenda to improve relations with Iran, and the reopening of the Iranian embassy in Sana'a is one of the measures of this new policy. However, this policy has been opposed by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and the Congress Party, and the departure of the members of the Congress Party from the Yemeni cabinet is largely due to these differences (Mirzadeh Kouhshahi, 2013, p. 62). In fact, the Islamic Republic of Iran evaluates the developments in Yemen in the form of Islamic awakening, which reduces the influence of the West in the region. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned about the efforts of Saudi Arabia to manage the developments in Yemen and to empower the affiliated currents and demands that all religious and political currents play a role in the future of this country. In the meantime, we should mention Iran's extensive spiritual influence

among the Zaidi Shiites and especially the Houthi movement, which has aroused the concerns of Saudi Arabia and the United States. The impact of Iran's Islamic Revolution on the Yemeni Shiites and especially the Houthi movement has been great, and among them, the emphasis on the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, such as the fight against Zionism and anti-arrogance, is quite evident. Based on this, Saudi Arabia has made a lot of efforts to marginalize the Shiites, which includes helping the Yemeni government suppress the Houthis. In any case, during the developments in Yemen, as in Bahrain and Syria, the competition and conflict between the interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia is quite evident, and the competition of these two important regional players is one of the most important international aspects of the recent developments in this country.

What is important for Iran is, firstly, to play a constructive role in the developments of this country to solve the existing challenges towards the understanding of political groups, and secondly, to support its allies to prevent their forced withdrawal from the power scene. The first policy will increase Iran's power and position in the regional arena. This issue in itself increases the second policy, which is to promote the weight of aligned groups in Yemen. If the conditions change and it is not possible to participate in the implementation of the first policy, the pursuit of the second policy can be a trump card for Iran in the regional arena against rival powers, especially Saudi Arabia (Mirzadeh Kouhshahi, 2013, p. 62). Since the beginning of the Yemeni crisis, Iran has emphasized that this crisis has no military solution and the only way to establish peace and stability is to create conditions where all Yemeni parties can form a national and comprehensive unity government without foreign interference. Fighting extremism and terrorism, helping to strengthen political processes, solving crises, rejecting foreign intervention, opposing militarism, and supporting the fulfillment of the demands and demands of the people of the region have been the main indicators of Iran in the Middle East for years, which has shaped Tehran's activism and foreign behavior. Iran has followed the same path regarding the Yemen crisis. The foreign policy leaders of our country have emphasized since the beginning of the popular movement of this country, especially in the recent period, that the beginning of national dialogues is the way to establish stability and peace and fulfill the wishes of the Yemeni people. Iran emphasizes that these talks should be held with the aim of ending the tension and power struggle in this country and with the presence

of all influential political and ethnic parties and groups. In this regard, the Senior Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while pointing out that the final decision-maker on the fate of Yemen is the people of this country, called the lifting of the cruel siege a prelude to the political solution of the Yemeni crisis. He also valued the role of the United Nations in the Yemen crisis and considered the lack of trust as the missing link in the progress of the negotiations and emphasized that the restoration of trust should be accompanied by practical measures, especially in the field of humanitarian affairs.

On April 18, 2014, referring to the Saudi attack on Yemen, Hossein AmirAbdollahian, Deputy Arab and African Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained the fundamental policies of our country to end the violence and killing of civilians in Yemen as follows: Saudi Arabia to Yemen and national dialogues are possible with the presence of all parties in a neutral country. According to the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, one of the important requirements of these national dialogues is the absence of foreign interference in internal affairs and decision-making in the field of political developments. Also, the government that takes over the affairs of the country in this situation must be the representative of all Yemeni people and pursue the national unity of this country and not the interests of a particular group or country. The use of such an approach by the Islamic Republic of Iran seems completely logical. Because the situation in Yemen is very unstable, and besides the insecurity caused by the invasion of Saudis, the living conditions of this country are also very bad. Many people in this country are having problems providing their basic needs, and in the current situation, due to the constraints imposed by Saudi Arabia, the need of the Yemeni people for humanitarian aid is felt more than ever. Since the beginning of the crisis in Yemen, the Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasized that the crisis cannot be ended by force of arms, and the only way to solve this issue is through political dialogue and negotiation. (Nejat et al., 2016, p. 170). In this regard, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, in April 2014, referring to the air operations of Saudi Arabia and its allies in Yemen, stated: "It is clear that an air attack is not the solution... All ground and air operations must be stopped." At the end of April, in a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, while explaining Iran's policy regarding the Yemen crisis, Zarif stated: "The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes that this conflict has no military solution, and the only way to establish peace and

stability is to create conditions that all Yemeni parties can form their inclusive national unity government without foreign interference. At the same time, in order to achieve this goal, within the framework of the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the basic principles of international humanitarian law, Zarif presented a plan with the following principles:

- 1- Establishing a ceasefire and quickly stopping all foreign military attacks;
- 2- Immediate and uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people
- 3- The resumption of the Yemeni national dialogue under the guidance of the Yemeni people and with the participation of representatives of all political parties and social groups of this country;
- 4- The formation of the inclusive government of national unity in Yemen. Based on these four principles, our country's rational and humanitarian policy towards Yemen and similar crises in the region and even outside the region has been aimed at avoiding violence and war, preventing various interventions, including military, and paying attention to the wishes of the people of the countries. From the point of view of Tehran authorities, considering the fragile and challenging conditions of the Middle East and the influence of terrorist groups in the countries of the region, this crisis must be ended as soon as possible because the devastating and unfavorable consequences of the expansion of the crisis in Yemen will affect not only this country but also the surrounding areas and will lead to the spread of extremism, violence, instability, and insecurity (Fars News, 2017).

The conflicts in Yemen over the past decade, having experienced fluctuations and recently reached a peak, now appear on the verge of resolution with the Yemeni government's openness to Iran's diplomatic efforts. President Obama's initiatives for Yemen's "unity and security" were outlined in a formal letter to Yemen's president, but Iran, previously accused by the Yemeni government of meddling in internal affairs, this time urged the government to resolve the conflicts. Faced with the crisis in Yemen, international actors proposed various solutions for the Saada region, with Yemen being the first to tackle its own internal problems. The region, along with the United States, pledged assistance to Yemen in overcoming obstacles to progress and implementing reforms with support from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and international donors like the Gulf Cooperation Council. However, Obama's letter

received little response from regional governments. As the conflicts in Saada continued, Iran officially addressed the security of the Yemeni people, stating that the ongoing situation was not in Yemen's best interest. Meanwhile, the Iranian parliament anticipated hosting the Iran-Yemen parliamentary friendship group after representatives from the Yemeni parliament visited. This opened the door to closer cooperation between the two governments, highlighted by the then Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Muttaki's visit to Yemen. While these actions did not bring about complete resolution or lasting stability in the Yemen crisis, they demonstrated that Yemen rejected intervention from extra-regional powers such as the United States, South Korea, or China, even when framed as humanitarian aid. Instead, it emphasized that only neighboring countries, particularly Iran, with its cultural similarities and shared experiences, could play a constructive role in resolving the crisis.

Conclusion

Regional competition with Iran and Riyadh's hegemonic ambitions against Tehran have not only reduced the cost of military operations for Saudi Arabia but also encouraged the kingdom to broaden its decision-making and form a regional coalition. By framing the war in Yemen as both a competitive and religious conflict with Iran, Riyadh rallied Arab nations, showcasing the Arab-Sunni coalition in the region. The connection between Iran and the axis of resistance, and the creation of a new power bloc on the global stage, has raised concerns among dominant global powers. Consequently, the United States and Saudi Arabia act to counter any potential growth of Iran's influence wherever opportunities arise. Yemen, a strategic Muslim country with a significant population of Zaidi Shiites, has been a particular source of concern for both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's military actions there are aimed at preventing Yemen from aligning with Iran. One of the key objectives of Saudi Arabia's aggressive stance and military intervention in Yemen is to assert its role as the leading regional power. Saudi Arabia rejects the post-Arab Spring regional order that conflicts with its perceived interests, and views the current balance of power as contradictory to its self-assessment. For this reason, the Al-Saud regime seeks to reshape the regional order by exploiting existing crises and opportunities. Its active policy, particularly regarding Yemen, underscores its ambition to reshape the regional balance of power in its favor. From the onset of the Yemen crisis, the Islamic Republic

of Iran has maintained that the conflict cannot be resolved through military means, advocating instead for political dialogue and negotiation. Iran's foreign policy, as enshrined in Chapter 10 of its constitution, emphasizes the rejection of domination, the defense of all Muslims' rights, and peaceful relations with non-aggressive nations, while upholding its independence and territorial integrity. Based on its constitution and actions, Iran's goals can be categorized into three main areas:

- 1- Economic growth and development, while safeguarding territorial integrity and national sovereignty;
- 2- Defending Muslims and liberation movements, and opposing Israel and Western powers;
- 3- Establishing an Islamic society grounded in Shiite principles. In Yemen, Iran has followed this policy by supporting a marginalized demographic group advocating for their rights. The demand for the formation of a democratic government by Yemeni revolutionaries aligns with Iran's regional interests and strengthens shared objectives. Consequently, Iran can strategically utilize this social capital in the southern Persian Gulf through effective planning and a dynamic foreign policy, although, at present, Iran's influence surpasses that of other international powers.

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