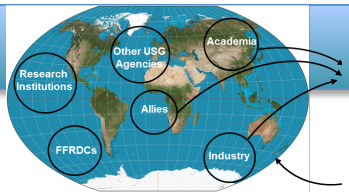


Question (R4.11): *What are the implications for the U.S. and GCC countries if the Arab coalition does not succeed or achieve an acceptable outcome in Yemen?*

Contributors: *Kim Cragin (National Defense University), Gerald Feierstein (Middle East Institute), Hussein Ibish (Arab Gulf States Initiative), Vern Liebl (CAOCL, Marine Corps University), Shoqi A. Maktary (Search for Common Ground), Fahad Nazer (National Council on US Arab Relations), Abdulaziz Sager (Gulf Research Institute), Daniel Serwer (Middle East Institute), Martin Styszynski (Adam Mickiewicz University), PiX Team (Tesla Government Services), Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (Rice University)*

Executive Summary

Weston Aviles, NSI

Overview

Conflict in Yemen is now reaching the third year of its current incarnation, and despite the foreign intervention of GCC nations and several failed ceasefire attempts, the Houthi movement (Ansarullah) has continued to succeed on the battlefield. Several SMA contributors (e.g., Anonymous, Ulrichsen, & Cragin) suggest that the GCC campaign is unlikely to produce a desirable and timely military victory in Yemen. Ulrichsen and Cragin argue that rising domestic socio-economic costs of the Arab coalition campaign are outpacing a realistic timeline of a satisfactory outcome; moreover, Ulrichsen asserts that the Houthis have sufficient Iranian support and that the coalition is unable to combat "a foe that has nearly 40 years' experience of running proxy groups throughout the Middle East." Only one author (Styszynski) contends that an impending coalition offensive on the strategic West Coast ports of Yemen will be successful and force Houthi forces to engage in a peaceful, diplomatic end to the conflict.

Nazer notes that while the parties to the conflict generally understand what measures are necessary to end the conflict, they lack the political will to make necessary and difficult compromises. Because Saudi Arabia views a Houthi victory as an existential threat to Saudi Arabia, major concessions are unacceptable to GCC actors. Experts expect this to remain the case for the foreseeable future (Nazer, Ulrichsen, Feierstein and Ibish). However, this raises the importance of exploring realities where the Arab coalition fails to achieve the pre-2014 status-quo of a marginally stable, GCC-friendly Yemeni regime and has to grapple with some form of Houthi victory in Yemen.

Even defining what the success of the Arab coalition in Yemen looks like is not immediately clear among contributors. In large part this is due to the lack of a unified goal or vision of success among the Arab coalition. Feierstein, Ulrichsen, and Ibish all agree that a significant amount of disagreement and discord exists among coalition partners (particularly between Saudi Arabia and the UAE) as how to engage and end the Yemeni conflict; furthermore, all three contributors agree that losing the conflict exposes and exacerbates divides among the GCC. Disputes over strategy like engaging the Muslim Brotherhood as allies (Ulrichsen and Ibish) and friction over levels of coalition contributions among member states highlight the cracks in GCC unity. Considering Cragin's timeline of the Hadi government being unable to regain "full control within the next 3-5 years," a weakening of GCC cohesion is one of several far-reaching repercussions that extend beyond the borders of Yemen. It is worth noting that among the various

implications of the Arab coalition failing to achieve a strategic victory in Yemen, there is remarkably little disagreement among the authors; rather each contributor emphasizes or discusses different consequences.

End State Discussion

Research conducted by the PiX team foresees "no end in sight" for the Yemen conflict. However, three contributors (Anonymous, Ibish, and Styszynski) discuss the possibility of a resolution where Houthis and other factions negotiate a settlement of partition to end the conflict. Ibish contends that the Arab coalition is entertaining the notion of conceding a degree of autonomy to the Houthi rebels in the north, whereas Anonymous puts forth an end of three territories with a southern governate supported by GCC countries and neutral middle governates buffering Houthi control to the north. All three authors agree that this scenario will likely set the stage for future conflict. The historical background provided by Liebl provides the cyclical evidence for such phenomenon.

One other outcome discussed by the contributors (Ibish, Liebl and Nazer) is the transition of the Houthi movement to a Hezbollah-like organization. Nazer states that a Hezbollah-styled insurgency would be considered an unacceptable outcome for Saudi Arabia; but again, as the conflict deepens and the GCC weakens, these difficult outcomes may have to be entertained by Gulf States.

US, Iran, and GCC relationships

The most commonly discussed implications in this corpus are the adverse strain among the various relationships of actors involved in Yemen, both internal and external. Many contributors argue that the Houthi uprising and subsequent Saudi involvement has become a severe liability to the domestic legitimacy of the House of Saud (Ulrichsen, Feierstein, Ibish, and Nazer) and that continued conflict and/or defeat will significantly contribute to the unraveling of the Saudi regime. Financial expenditures coupled with the unpopularity of losing to the less funded Houthi movement reveal the lack of experience and ability of the KSA to engage in a proxy conflict.

Iran is largely perceived as being the aggravating force behind the conflict, although Liebl contends that the Iranian-Houthi relationship is little more than passive and "serendipitous" cooperation. Liebl also argues that the Houthis are not Iranian puppets but Zaydi revivalist/nativists-Yemeni nationalists. Whatever the relationship between Iran and Ansarullah, several authors argue that Iran is risking relatively little for its involvement in Yemen and even more contributors agree that Iran will gain much from an Arab coalition defeat (Ulrichsen, Liebl, Sager). Heightened tensions with Iran is a sentiment that is robustly agreed upon by every author who discusses Iran and a Houthi victory of any kind will only embolden Iranian aggression across the region (Ulrichsen, Feierstein, Ibish and Sager). Iran views Yemen as a highly valuable bargaining chip that it can afford to lose and understands that Saudi Arabia is in no position to retaliate in a meaningful way.

A deterioration of relations between Riyadh and Tehran is one of many reasons why the American interests are threatened by the Yemeni conflict. Ulrichsen, Feierstein, Ibish, Sager, Serwer and Nazer all posit that the US is significantly affected by developments in Yemen but for different reasons. Feierstein and Nazer both emphasize that the U.S. will suffer strategic setbacks with a Houthi/Iranian victory and that a lack of robust U.S. support will severely strain the US-GCC relationship. Both authors also agree that a failure on the part of the U.S. to display overt support in the conflict will lead the GCC nations and Saudi Arabia in particular to seek support elsewhere out of necessity. Another key component at play in the discussion of

US interests at risk in Yemen are the counterterrorism operations that will suffer a serious setback if the GCC relationship is called into question. This risk is further heightened by the possibility of Iranian proxies operating without impunity in the Arabian Peninsula.

ISIS, AQAP, and Counterterrorism

Serwer suggests that the US's main interests in Yemen are counterterrorism and securing passage of trade in the surrounding Yemeni waters. Cragin also emphasizes the negative consequences of the Yemen conflict on American CT efforts and that ISIS and AQAP have and will continue to benefit the most from conflict in Yemen. Ibish also frames a narrative of outcomes that will further fuel extremism and terrorism, namely through inflaming sectarian tensions, continued humanitarian disasters and famine, and lastly a vindication of anti-Western propaganda and disdain. These consequences allow and ISIS and AQAP to further advance their agenda despite their divergent methods and goals in Yemen. Cragin articulates that ISIS and AQAP both ultimately seek to supplant the Yemeni crisis with their sponsorship of revolution and both highly value the strategic nature of basing operations in Yemen. The combined saliency of Yemen and the inherent chaos have provided both terror groups with the ideal platform to extend operations externally from Yemen.

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Kim Cragin, National Defense University

This publication is currently unavailable.

Gerald Feierstein, Middle East Institute

Depending on the nature of the failure, the consequences of an unacceptable outcome to the Yemen conflict could be extremely damaging to GCC cohesion and U.S.-GCC relations. A failure could also damage Saudi Arabia's internal stability and increase tensions between Saudi Arabia and an emboldened Iran that would also threaten U.S. interests. These consequences are based on an assumption that failure would involve a Houthi takeover of the government or, at least, dominance in a government.

In particular, failure of the Saudi-led Coalition to achieve a positive outcome could cause damage to:

- GCC Cohesion: Saudi Arabia and the UAE are unhappy over the role that Oman has played in the Yemen conflict, which they see as enabling the Houthis and facilitating Iranian intervention. Should the Houthis succeed and establish a government in Sana'a that is hostile to Saudi Arabia and the GCC states, there will likely be fingers pointed at the Omanis from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. But a failure may also generate tension between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. The Emiratis joined the Coalition to demonstrate support for Saudi Arabia, but they have been clear that they have reservations about the conflict, are dissatisfied with many aspects of Saudi leadership, and believe the conflict has gone on too long. Failure would create repercussions in Saudi-Emirati relations and could make the Emiratis less willing in the future to follow the Saudi lead on security matters.

- U.S.-GCC Relations: Although the U.S. has been heavily criticized domestically for what is perceived as open-ended support for an illegitimate Saudi war on Yemen, this is not the way it is perceived in the region. The Saudis see that U.S. assistance, including arms sales and tactical and logistics support, has been grudging from the start and steadily scaled back over the course of the conflict. This is despite the fact that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia share a common perspective on the nature of the conflict and its desired resolution. While the Trump Administration has shown signs of wanting to reverse some of the Obama Administration's restrictions on assistance, the extent of the reversal is unclear. Significant opposition to support for Saudi Arabia remains in Congress and the public arena. The Saudis may well conclude that U.S.-GCC security cooperation is a one-way street. When the U.S. perceives a security challenge, it calls for GCC support. But when the reverse is true, even in an instance where the Saudis perceive an existential threat to their security, the U.S. is at best a reluctant and unreliable partner.

- Saudi Arabia's Internal Stability: Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is generally viewed as the architect of the Saudi military campaign in Yemen. The costs have been steep for Saudi Arabia. The military has suffered heavy casualties and its performance has been criticized domestically and internationally; the financial burden has been enormous at a time that Saudi Arabia is suffering financially; the social safety net has been cut back as a consequence; and the country's security forces have proved incapable of defending the southern regions … Jizan and Najran … from missile and ground attack. A failure in the campaign would open the Al Saud, especially King Salman and his son, to charges of mismanagement and incompetence. It could increase tensions over the line of succession and undermine Mohamed bin Salman's second major initiative: the Vision 2030 project to fundamentally re-shape Saudi society and its economy to position it for a stable future. Failure could also affect the Saudi military, generating restiveness and a loss of morale.

- Heightened Saudi-Iranian Tensions: In 2014, the Iranians exploited Houthi successes in Sana'a by encouraging and facilitating threatening actions on the Saudi-Yemeni border. A Coalition failure to ensure that Yemen's government remains in friendly hands would almost certainly mean that the Iranians would, once again, seek to establish a military presence in Yemen threatening Saudi Arabia's southern border. The Saudis would interpret this again as an existential threat to their security and would seek means to respond, either militarily against Iran or by destabilizing the government in Yemen. There would be a likelihood, at the very least, of prolonged instability on the Saudi-Yemeni border.

- Implications for the U.S.: As Saudi Arabia perceives a heightened threat from an Iranian-supported, Houthi-dominated regime in Sana'a, they will almost certainly expect that the U.S. will step up its campaign to maintain pressure on Tehran. At the same time, the Iranians may see Houthi success in Yemen as further evidence of their regional domination and become more aggressive at challenging U.S. interests, particularly in the Gulf. A pro-Iranian regime in Sana'a would also represent a continuing security concern for freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Iranians may see that holding the global economy hostage by credibly threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb simultaneously is their most effective insurance policy against international pressure. At the same time, a Houthi-led or dominated government in Sana'a is unlikely to be a strong partner for the U.S. in the fight against AQAP. The idea that the Houthis are a "natural enemy" of AQAP because of their sectarian differences is a misconception. They have no history of fighting against AQ and may well see violent extremist groups as useful leverage in neutralizing western and regional opposition to their rule.

Hussein Ibish, Arab Gulf States Institute

Potential implications include:

1) Particularly in the South, the continued spread of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (**AQAP**), and the potential for the development of a new and viable front for **ISIL**, with all the obvious dangers that implies.
2) The consolidation of an **Iranian beachhead** on the immediate southern border of Saudi Arabia, exposing the Kingdom to a range of ongoing threats including land incursions, missile attacks and maritime harassment.
3) The **strengthening of Iran**'s regional position and credibility, and a dangerous affirmation of its preferred strategy of promoting militias and **non-state actors** to destabilize other countries, thereby spreading and taking advantage of chaos.
4) The spread of influence of **Hezbollah**, assuming the Houthis continue to develop a closer relationship with the Lebanese Shiite extremist group.
5) **Loss of credibility** and weakening of the Saudi and Emirati coalition, leading to greater vulnerability on their part and less burden-sharing, which would imply a return to a heavy reliance on American power.
6) The continuation, and possible expansion, of **sectarian tensions** between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in the Middle East in general and the Gulf region in particular, since a mutually acceptable political agreement to end the conflict in Yemen is probably an essential step in easing these tensions and restoring greater levels of regional security and stability.
7) The potential to **expose and exacerbate differences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE**, which have already become apparent during the course of the conflict as the Saudis have taken the lead in the battle against the Houthi-Saleh alliance in the north, which has become a stalemate if not a quagmire, while the UAE has taken the lead in the antiterrorism counterinsurgency campaign in the south. The fundamental aims of these two partners have already began to diverge, as have their tactics (for example, the Saudi willingness to partner with political figures from the Yemeni Islah party, which is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, while the UAE will not work with them).
8) The potential for the **partition** of Yemen between North and South, and possibly the **secession** of additional areas such as Hadramawt. History suggests none of these parties would be amicable and all would set the stage for future conflicts. There are already signs that the Arab coalition that has intervened in Yemen, particularly the UAE, is preparing to content itself with decisive influence over the southern part of the country, either in an independent or radically autonomous form, because the costs of liberating most of north, particularly in humanitarian terms, may be simply unacceptable. Yet such a development would only postpone a further day of reckoning in the country.
9) Coalition failure implies potential **humanitarian disasters**, especially **famine**, although so do ongoing or expanded conflict.
10) The practical vindication of the Houthi's radical, **anti-Western, agenda** and Saleh's **extreme cynicism** and opportunism.

Shoqi A. Maktary, Search for Common Ground (SFCG)

This is not a very far [developed] scenario and the indications point to the fact that a military victory is not possible. I can not elaborate on this more but one possible result would be the breakdown of the country into three different parts, one up in the north that are under Houthis control and have natural allegiance to them due to religion identity, southern part under government control with possibility of some stability provided that financial support is provided by gulf countries (still there is the high risk of division among southern powers which could results in total destabilization and further division based on graphical lines), and the third part would be middle governorates (Taiz , Ibb, Hodeida) which would benefit from weaker Houthi control but in the same time would not be welcomed to join the south.

Vern Liebl, CAOCL, Marine Corps University

There is an article recently put out by "War on the Rocks", titled "Doubling Down on America's Misadventure in Yemen" and dated 10 April.[1] The cited article delineates the new Trump Administration's top three articulated priorities in regards to the Middle East, touches heavily on Saudi internal strategic drivers and briefly discusses a possibility of the Houthi becoming something akin to Lebanon's Hezbollah, only birthed in Yemen via the midwifery of Iran. However, it really doesn't shed light on who and what the Houthi are, especially in regards to the internal conflict within Yemen nor in the external conflict driven by Saudi Arabia (in which it has managed to drag in numerous allies as well as begun creating an entity called the Islamic Military Alliance, or IMA, known informally as the "Islamic NATO").

Additionally, there is a common misperception of events in Yemen, epitomized by the following, which while extracted from a RAND document addressing the Islamic State, states this about Yemen as a U.S. ally:

> "Locals can be fickle, poorly trained, ineffective, corrupt, and undemocratic. They can also lose power. In Yemen, the United States lost a valuable partner in its fight against al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula when the Houthis overthrew the government of Abd Rabo Mansur Hadi."[2]

Obviously the Hadi government is considered the legitimate government of Yemen, is so designated by the United Nations and is supported by Saudi Arabia. So this is the valuable ally lost to the U.S., or one at least restricted to the southern area around the port of Aden, propped up by foreign military forces drawn largely from the GCC or Saudi allied (mercenary?) forces from places like Sudan, Morocco, Jordan and Senegal.

So, without commenting on the Al Qaeda Arabia Peninsula (AQAP) or smaller Islamic State (IS) participants vying for space, legitimacy and possibilities in Yemen (nor to mention the Hadramautis, the Sunni Arabs of Al-Islah [Muslim Brothers-linked], etc.), who are the Houthis and why does the U.S. find it so difficult to separate them (the Houthis) from Iran? For this analyst believes that the Houthis are misunderstood and underestimated.

To bottom line who the Houthis (read Zaydis) are, they are considered, by themselves and increasingly today by non-Zaydi Yemenis, to be the true and staunch defenders of Yemen, fighting for Yemen against Wahhabi and Muslim Brothers associated invaders, as well as against Gulf Arabs, Americans and other foreigners. Zaydism has little in common with Imamiyya (Twelver) Shia Islam, much less with Iran. For both Iran and the Houthis, any support is serendipitous. As Saudi Arabia essentially attacked Houthi Yemen to prevent illegal migration (Saudi view), Iran has taken advantage of this to provide limited assistance (including some weapons, a few expendable Lebanese Hezbollah trainers and lots of propaganda) and Yemeni Houthis have actually volunteered to assist the Damascus regime with the provision of approximately 700 volunteer fighters (Liwa Saada, or "Saada Brigade").

Simply, the Houthi "Ansar Allah" is a Zaydi revivalist/nativist movement of Yemenis, they are not Iranian puppets. And if the Zaydi are supposedly so pro-Iranian as current U.S. decision-makers fear, then why the following? In early January 2010, the Houthis chose Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to mediate in their political standoff with the Sana'a government to find a solution to the conflict. This choice was criticized by

[1] See https://warontherocks.com/2017/04/doubling-down-on-americas-misadventure-in-yemen/
[2] "Rolling Back the Islamic State" by Daniel Byman, Ben Connable, Seth Jones et al; 2017 https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1900/RR1912/RAND_RR1912.pdf

Saudi cleric Mohammad al-Arifi, an Imam at Riyadh's central mosque, who dismissed al-Sistani as "an infidel and debauched." These remarks were considered extremely insulting by Shi'as around the world, causing major outrage in some Shi'a dominant countries like Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.

Supporting Historical background material on Zaydi Yemenis

The Houthis themselves are merely a representation of the Zaydi tribes and people resident within Yemen. The very name Houthi is not a tribal name nor is it a group descended from the traditional the Banu Rassi tribe, called the Qasimids. Rather, they are essentially a creation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh from the very late 1990s, who viewed them as a counter-weight to the increasing Saudi efforts to inject Wahhabism into Yemen as well as a counter-balance to the Muslim Brothers-linked Al-Islah. In doing so, then-President Saleh, himself a descendent of Zaydis, was referring to an old tactic in mobilizing one group of Yemenis to fight against another, and against "outsiders" as well.

Yet, still if the Houthis are merely today a representative of a portion of the Yemeni population, what are they and what do they want? Are they the willing "puppets" of Iran? What prompted Saudi Arabia to initiate "Operation Decisive Storm" in March 2015, which has since transitioned (since April 2015) to "Operation Restoring Hope," which it clearly isn't in the wake of at least 10,000 dead, millions of IDPs and a quagmire for Saudi Arabia. Is this a revisitation of the Saudi victory of the 1934 Saudi-Yemen war started by Yemeni (read Zaydi) irredentist desires to take Asir, Jizan, Najran and Al-Baha?

First, history must be examined, as objectively as possible. With Yemen one can declaim long and loud about religions, ideologies, politics, colonialism, in fact, just about every "ism" one might want in trying to look at the current situation of Yemen. Yet if there is no understanding of the historical basis for current events, then efforts at resolution are firmly built on quicksand.

In 740 AD Zayd ibn-'Ali, brother of the 5th Shia Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (in the Imamiyya [Twelver] reckoning), rose in rebellion against the Umayyads in south central Iraq. Zayd ibn-'Ali, is the founder of the Zaydi movement, and he was killed in this rebellion, with his son Yahya succeeding him and likewise killed by the Umayyads in 743. The Zaydi movement, although defeated, remained in existence, based itself in Kufa, near to the 'Abbassid capital of Baghdad (the Umayyads having been overthrown in 750). The Zaydis participated in various Shi'a rebellions led by descendants of 'Ali, all of which were suppressed by the Abbasids.

Ultimately most Zaydis fled, one group in 864 in the inaccessible mountains of Tabaristan (Mazandaran of today) on the coast of the Caspian Sea. Thru various tribulations, by 914 the Zaydi Imam al-Nasir al-Utrush succeeded in converting many of the Zoroastrian inhabitants of the regions of Daylam and Gilan (west of Tabaristan) to the Zaydi faith. Communications between the Caspian Zaydis and the Yemen Zaydis were sporadic, but most of the Caspian Zaydi literature had reached Yemen by the twelfth century, thus now preserved in Yemen. The Zaydi Caspian communities survived until the sixteenth century, when they were forcibly converted to Twelver Shi'ism by the Persian Safavid dynasty.

It was the other group that survived to today. Founded in 897 by Imam al-Sadah after fleeing the Abbasid Caliphate, they relocated themselves to the remote mountains of northern Yemen. The native tribes professed a nominal allegiance to Islam and it was the Zaydi who actually "Islamized" them (even today some Yemeni tribes are fairly ignorant of Islamic law and retain heathen practices and pre-Islamic tribal laws that often conflict with the Shari'a). In the mid-12th century a Zaydi Imam managed to extend his rule

into north Arabia and southward to the Yemeni lowlands, but most of the time their control was limited to the highlands of North Yemen. During their long rule the Imams used the military force of the warlike Zaydi mountain tribes in their many wars of defense and expansion.

The leader of the Zaydi state was an Imam, thus the state and its successors were called an Imamate;, and all the various Imami dynasties were sourced from a single tribe, the Banu Rassi, and from Al-Qasim al-Rassi of that tribe. All descendent dynasties were therefore Rassids who were from the Qasimi dynasty, with the first to establish itself being the Yu'firids, from 847 (in Iraq then in Yemen) to 997. From this dynasty followed several others, often ruling contemporaneously in the fractious highlands of northern Yemen:

- Najahids – 1021 to 1158
- Sulayhids – 1047 to 1138
- Zurayids – 1080 to 1174
- Hatamids – 1098 to 1174

In 1174 the Ayyubids, a Kurdish Muslim dynasty ruling Egypt out of Cairo (Saladin, victor over the Crusaders at the Battle of Hattin in 1187, was the son of Ayyub) conquered Zaydi Yemen, temporarily eclipsing all competing Zaydi Imams. In 1229 the Ayyubids were themselves displaced by the Rasulids, a Turkic dynasty of Sunni Muslims who ruled in name for the Abbasid Caliphate. The Rasulids ruled Yemen until 1454, a period considered one of the best eras, economically, in Yemeni history. The Rasulids suffered greatly in its last hundred years from repeated Zaydi Imami rebellions, until gravely weakened, the Rasulids were supplanted by the Tahirids, an Arab Sunni Hadramauti dynasty which had already conquered the Aden area.

The relatively short Tahirid rule was greatly complicated by continual Mamluke interference (the Mamlukes continually encouraged and funded repeated Zaydi Imami rebellion, leading to tenuous Tahirid control over northern Yemen) and the rising threat of the Portuguese. In 1517 Zaydi forces, reinforced by Mamluk detachments and supported by the Portuguese, overthrew the Tahirid dynasty, only to have the Mamluks themselves be defeated the same year by the Ottoman Empire. In 1518 Ottoman naval forces entered Yemeni territory, encountering the Portuguese, who controlled the Tihamah(Red Sea coast) and Sana'a itself. With the Zaydi stuck between, an imperial struggle began between the Ottomans and the Portuguese. Controlling most of Yemen until 1538, the Portuguese were forced temporarily by the Ottomans. Resurgent Portuguese forces in 1547 in turn drove out the Ottomans and stayed until 1645, again at the hands of the Ottomans. Despite all this, the remote northern interior of Yemen had devolved out of both Portuguese and Ottoman control, being controlled by Zaydi Imams, about whom is little known until almost 1800.

The Ottomans did make some efforts at occupying Zaydi regions but were repeatedly defeated. During the 17th century the Zaydi capital was removed from the northern city of Sa'da to the more centrally located San'a. The Zaydi Imams ruled the Yemen as a medieval Islamic state under the Shari'a (Islamic religious law), doing their best to isolate it from all foreign influences.

The Ottomans invaded Yemen again in the middle of the nineteenth century, but their occupation of the north (starting in 1870) was nominal. In the Zaydi areas the Imams continued to exercise political and spiritual autonomy. Conflict continued against the Ottomans into the early 20th century, with Imam Muhammad (1891-1904) of the Hamid ad-Din family effectively changing the 1.000 year old elective Imamate into a hereditary dynasty. His son, Imam Yahya, became the leader of an independent Yemen in

1918, called the Mutawakkil Imamate, and with the departure of the Ottomans, imposed Zaydi doctrine over all of Yemen.

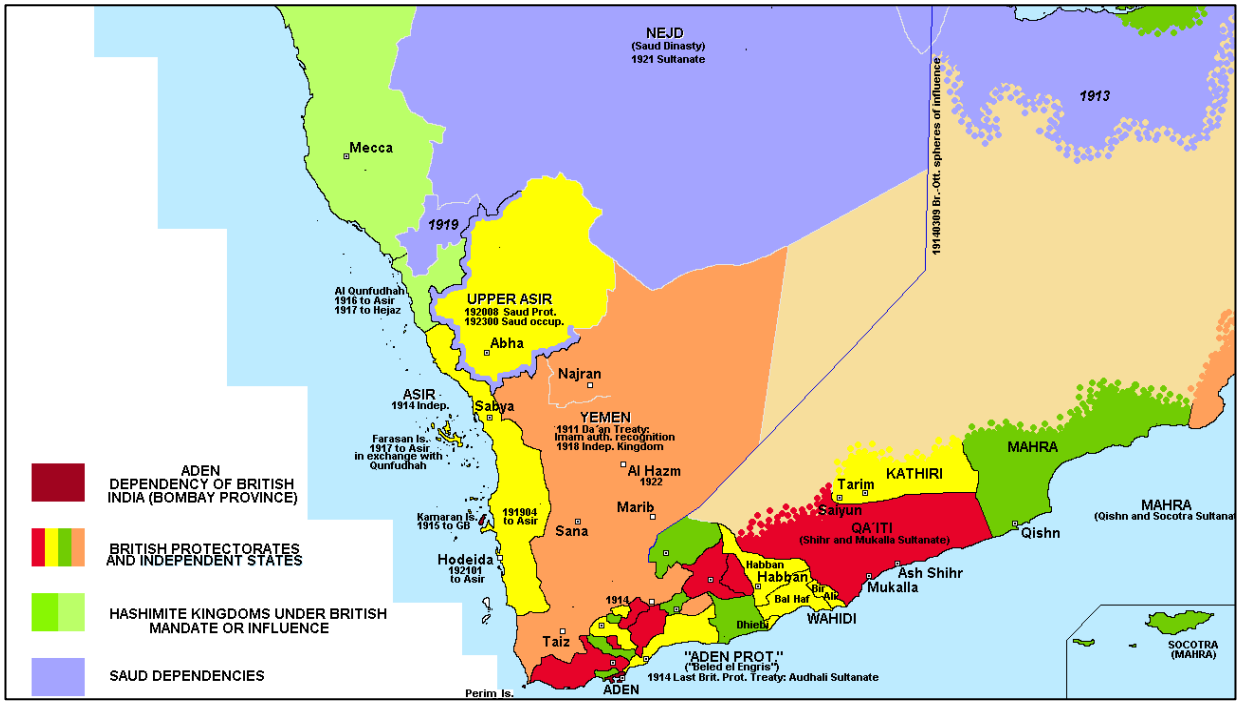
He succeeded in uniting and pacifying the quarrelsome mountain tribes by a mixed policy of punishing dissident tribes, clever political marriages and hostage taking. However, by continuing the insular policies of his father, Yemen's economy stagnated and "illegal" Sunni Arab immigration grew. Yahya was assassinated in 1948 but his killers, members of the "Free Yemenis," were defeated in their uprising by Yahya's son Ahmad (who also crushed a subsequent uprising in 1955).

The independent Yemeni state came into territorial conflict with Saudi Arabia. This resulted in war in 1934, which Yemen lost badly, leading to the victorious Saudis imposing the treaty of Ta'if (1934) which forced the Zaydi Imams to cede to the Saudi's control over four ethnically Yemeni inhabited provinces claimed by San'a - Asir, Najran and Jizan. This remains a major issue between the two countries ever since. In the south, Aden, ruled from British India, became a Crown colony in 1937 while continuing to maintain the Aden Protectorate. Such was the situation until 1962.

In 1962 the Mutawakkil Kingdom was deposed, with Egyptian assistance. The deposed ruler fled to the northern Zaydi tribal areas and rallied his forces, which came to be called the Royalists. The new government, heavily reinforced with tens of thousands of Egyptian soldiers and technicians, were called the Republicans. The Republicans were supported by Egypt and the Soviet Union, the Royalists by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and unofficially, Great Britain. The struggle continued until 1970, but was essentially won by the Republicans in 1967 when Great Britain departed southern Yemen, removing the support structure the Royalists had been using. Egypt had departed in 1967, having lost approximately 20,000 soldiers and then humiliated by Israel in the Sinai. Total dead Yemeni dead are estimated to have been approximately 200,000.

Relations between northern and southern Yemen were normally tense and often violent, even after unification in 1990. Below is a timeline of "events":

- 1972 – "Minor" border conflict between YAR and PDRY, resolved by Cairo Agreement, both countries agreed to eventual unification.
- 1979 – Major border conflict caused by PDRY support to rebels in North Yemen, southern forces took Ta'izz before Arab League (mainly Egypt) intervened; Ta'izz returned.
- 1986 – Civil war in PDRY, ~10,000 dead.
- 1990 – Unification, single Yemen renamed as Republic of Yemen, simply called Yemen.
- 1992 – Beginning of Al Qaeda insurgency, ongoing.
- 1994 – Civil war, mainly in south; ~25,000 dead.
- 1994-1995 – Founding of the "Believing Youth", a Zaydi religious revivalist movement
- 1999 – Formation of Houthi Movement (political) upon basis of the "Believing Youth".
- 2004 -2010– Sa'ada War (Houthis)(Operation Scorched Earth-2009, Operation Blow to the Head-2010, Houthi incursion into Saudi Arabia, Saudi incursion into Yemeni Sa'ada).
- 2009 – Southern secessionist movement (Hirak), ongoing.
- 2011 – Arab Spring/Yemen Revolution, overthrow of Saleh, ~2,000 dead.
- 2015 – Current conflict(s), ~10,000 dead to date.



An example of how complicated "Yemen" was in 1923, the mindsets still remain, making cooperation difficult at best.

Fahad Nazer, National Council on US Arab Relations

Saudi-Yemeni Relations: An Overview

In late January 2015, in the span of only a day, both Saudi Arabia and Yemen turned a new leaf. Ninety-year-old Saudi King Abdullah passed away on January 23 after years in power. Earlier in Sanaa, Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi announced his resignation after the Houthis, an Iranian-supported Zaidi revivalist group, besieged the presidential palace. Although the insurgent group's influence had been growing for months, its advance on the capital in September of 2014 set off alarms across the Middle East and in the West. For the Saudis, the change of power within Yemen could have potentially weakened the leverage they once had with Sanaa and signaled the growth of an even larger threat: Iran.

Saudi-Yemeni relations have been strained more often than not. Because the two share a border, the Saudis have intervened whenever Yemen's volatile mix of political and tribal tensions and perennially stagnating economy threatened to throw the country into endless violence and chaos. Some Yemeni critics of Saudi Arabia regard the kingdom's involvement in its domestic affairs over the years as an attempt to exacerbate existing problems and keep the country weak. In return, the Saudis argue that they were only trying to ensure that Yemen's crises stay within the country's own borders.

For years, the Saudis provided billions in aid to Yemen to prop up the Yemeni state, enabling it to build infrastructure, provide welfare, and even fund its military. These payments **largely stopped** when the Houthis took power in 2014, signaling the Saudis' disapproval at their rise. The suspension of aid may also have been an attempt by the Saudis to force the rebel group to rethink its aggressive posture, as well as a way to ensure—given heightened sectarian tensions across the region—that their aid would not be perceived as support for a "Shiite" group in Yemen. Such a view could have been exploited by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and other Sunni militant groups to bolster their recruitment efforts.

This was not the first time that Saudi Arabia had withdrawn aid or support of the Yemeni government. In 1990, when Yemen held the rotating position of UN Security Council presidency, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh decided to use his power to vote against a resolution authorizing the use of force to expel Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his troops from Kuwait. The Saudis interpreted the move as a tacit endorsement of the invasion and retaliated by revoking the special status of millions of Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia, forcing many of them—an estimated one million—to return to their homeland, putting tremendous pressure on an already overburdened economy. It is estimated that at that time, Yemen lost close to $3 billion in remittances. Recent figures indicate that the remittances of Yemeni workers currently in Saudi Arabia constitute 4.2 percent of Yemen's GDP.

A Legacy of Civil Strife:

After existing as two separate countries for decades, North and South Yemen chose to unify in 1990 under Saleh, largely because the south lost the financial and military support of its biggest patron, the Soviet Union. Only four years later, the two regions broke out in civil war when some former leaders of the south attempted to secede. The Saudi support for the split—which ultimately failed—reinforced the idea among some Yemenis that their northern neighbor saw a strong and unified Yemen as a threat. Like Saudi Arabia, other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) supported the split because of their lingering mistrust of Saleh—after his perceived betrayal during the Gulf War over the UN vote.

Overnight, the Houthis' control of Sanaa erased the strides made toward national reconciliation in November 2011 after Saleh, who had ruled since 1978, agreed to step down in the face of "Arab Spring" inspired protests, signing an agreement brokered by the GCC to transfer power to his vice president. The deal held so much promise that Jamal Benomar, the UN secretary-general's special adviser for Yemen at the time, **had said**, "Yemen's transition has been an extraordinary story . . . [The country] was definitely head-ing towards a Syria-type scenario. Now Yemen is undergoing a peace-ful transition."

The comparison of Yemen with Syria was not unjustified. Both countries were and continue to be in the grip of tribal and sectarian strife, competing factions that receive external support from other countries, a loss of control by the central government over vast territories, and the presence of terrorist groups. In Yemen, AQAP is trying to exploit Sunni grievances, much like the so-called Islamic State. All these factors suggest that it will be very difficult for Saudi Arabia's leader, King Salman and Defense Minister Mohamed Bin Salman, who is considered the architect of the military campaign in Yemen, to suddenly abandon the effort to restore the internationally recognized government of President Hadi. But for the Saudis, the most dangerous common denominator among all these threat perceptions is Iran.

Saudi-Iranian Relations:

The election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian president in 2014 initially led to a slight improvement in Saudi-Iranian relations—for example, senior officials from the two countries met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York in September 2014. But the Saudis and Iranians quickly found themselves on opposite sides in just about every conflict in the Middle East: in Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. And while Saudi relations with Iraq have improved markedly since Haider al-Abadi became prime minister in 2014, his predecessor, Nouri al-Maliki, was regarded by the Saudis as Iran's stooge. Now, many countries that belong to the GCC regard the Houthis in the same light: as proxies helping Iran "encircle" the Sunni-led monarchies with its Shiite-allied states, from Beirut to the Persian Gulf.

It is not only the Saudis who feel that way. U.S. Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein has expressed her own anxieties about Iran's growing influence. She **explained**, "My concern is, where is Iran going? Iran has been supporting the Houthis. Is Iran trying to begin the development of an Iranian crescent?" More recently, U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis paid a visit to Riyadh where the Yemen conflict was high on agenda. Addressing reporters in Riyadh, Secretary Mattis said, "Everywhere you look if there is trouble in the region, you find Iran."

For the Saudis, Syria is a critical example of where Iran's meddling in regional politics is only fostering instability, whether it's through supporting President Bashar al-Assad in Syria or Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militant group. The Saudis regard Assad as the reason why the bloodshed in Syria has not stopped and ISIS was able to surge.

Despite the international community's initial high hopes—some organizations, such as the UN, maintained as recently as 2013 that Yemen was the only country in the Middle East that had sought a negotiated power transition—optimism has given way to resignation that Yemen is once again on the verge of disintegration. While Western backers of the Hadi government tried to make sense of the rapid developments on the ground and the dizzying speed with which alliances were forged and broken in Yemen, King Salman and his Minister of Defense, Prince Mohamed Bin Salman, observed with great alarm as Yemen seemed on the verge of yet another civil war.

Saudi Arabia's limited Options:

Saudi Arabia has a long and mixed track record of involvement in Yemen's numerous political conflicts, dating back to the early 1960s. Until 2015, the kingdom's inclination was to either use its extensive contacts with political and tribal elements in Yemen to forge negotiated settlements or to choose a side in the conflict, assist it financially—occasionally provide it with weapons—but not involve its own troops in the fighting. That all changed in March 2015. The prospect of Yemen being in the throes of yet another civil war, in which two equally hostile militant groups—the Iran-supported Houthi rebels in the North and the terrorist group al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the South—would try to impose their will on the rest of the country, was deemed a serious threat to the kingdom's security. Over the years, the Saudis had spent millions trying to contain the violence in Yemen by building a sophisticated security fence along their southern border. However, in addition to the Iran-supported Houthis, with whom Saudi Arabia was engaged in serious border clashes in 2009, Yemen has been further destabilized by AQAP. In fact, the terrorist group also crossed the Saudi border in June 2014 and managed to kill several Saudi security personnel. To add to the volatile mix, there are strong indications that the most ruthless terrorist group yet, the so-called Islamic State, has also established a presence in Yemen, claiming credit for several deadly bombings that targeted Shia mosques in Sanaa.

The decision to launch a military operation to drive the Houthi rebels back to their strongholds in the North and force them to the negotiating table marks a significant departure from Saudi Arabia's characteristic behind-the-scenes, quiet diplomacy that had played a role in ending the fifteen-year Lebanese civil war and, more recently, calmed tensions between Egypt and Qatar. Three Messages:

The Yemen campaign appears intended to send strong messages to three different audiences. It is meant to be a warning to Iran to stop its encroachment on what is traditionally considered Saudi Arabia's "backyard" of Yemen specifically, and what Saudi officials have repeatedly characterized as Iran's "meddling" in Arab affairs in general. It was also a message to the kingdom's allies, including the United States, which at the start of Saudi Arabia's military campaign was under the leadership of President Barak Obama.

The decision to lead a ten-nation military "Arab Coalition" in support of the internationally recognized government of President Hadi appeared to carry a message to the Obama administration: while Saudi Arabia still considers the United States to be a valuable partner, going forward, it will take "whatever measures are necessary" to defend its national security, with minimal consultation if necessary, should the United States—and the wider international community—prove unable or unwilling to do so. Just as importantly, it was a message to the Saudi public at large that the billions of dollars that have been spent on military forces, weapons, and training are paying dividends. This self-reliance, however, has also entailed an important adjustment that is reflective of the dangerous times—and neighborhood—that Saudi Arabia lives in: hundreds of Saudis have made the ultimate sacrifice during the Yemen campaign, including a few hundred civilians who have died as a result of Houthis' cross-border shelling. Some will maintain that this new thinking and more assertive foreign policy is the brainchild of King Salman's thirty-year old son, the defense minister and deputy crown prince Muhammad Bin Salman. Whether or not that is the case, Saudi Arabia has opened a new chapter in its history that seems intent on not just conveying to the world how the Saudis view their own changing role in the region, but also seems equally determined to compel the international community to think of Saudi Arabia in a whole new light.

Wide Support for a Political Resolution:

Efforts to find a political resolution to the conflict in Yemen are continuing. The UN's special envoy for Yemen has maintained that the parties to the conflict generally have a robust understanding of the measures necessary to end the conflict but that they must show the political will to make the necessary compromises. However, the Saudi-led Arab Coalition and troops loyal to President Hadi that it is supporting have made significant gains on the ground in early 2017. The Coalition maintains that the internationally recognized government is in control of over seventy five percent's of Yemen's territory. However, the capital Sanaa remains under the control of the Houthi rebels and their allies, in addition to some key ports like Hodeida.

Implications for the United States:

As far as the United States is concerned, it seems that the Trump administration has expressed its willingness to increase logistical and intelligence support for the Saudi-led campaign. At least one senior State Department official has publicly indicated that the administration will likely approve certain precision guided munitions that the Saudis have requested that had been halted by the Obama administration over concerns about civilian casualties.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other members of the Arab Coalition supporting have maintained that the conflict in Yemen has ramifications for the international community's effort to counter the threat from terrorist groups, as well regional efforts to prevent Iran from expanding its influence and from establishing yet one more proxy ally in Yemen. In addition, US officials have also expressed concerns about the impact that the conflict could have for maritime security and commercial navigation in the strategically important waterway of Bab Al Mandab. It is a safe assumption that the Arab Coalition members, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have, certain expectations of the Trump administration. There is a perception in the GCC countries that the US under President Trump has realigned itself with its traditional allies in the Gulf, or at the very least has "re-set" relations with Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries. There is an expectation that the Trump administration's foreign policies in the Middle East would be more assertive and more clear than President Obama's. Should the Trump administration choose to not increase its support of the Saudi-led military campaign, that could possibly lead the Saudis and other members of the Arab Coalition to expand their diplomatic outreach to other countries, seeking support, potentially further complicating the conflict in the process.

While Saudi Arabia does support efforts to find a political resolution to the conflict, it has publicly stated that an Iranian "proxy" along its border, modeled on the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, is not a result that it is willing to accept.

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Such an outcome could be seen as a clear victory for Iran's expansionist and interventionist policy. And a clear victory for the Iranian's strategy of creating sectarian / religiously motivated armed militias to, directly or indirectly, control the region.

Thus, failure in Yemen will have grave and far reaching consequences for the future regional stability, far beyond Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. The confrontation in Yemen is a regional confrontation, and has a lasting and irreversible strategic consequences for the regional states, as well as, for the US.

Iranian aggressive behavior, and its strategy of undermining stability will continue and expand if the effort to contain the conflict in Yemen failed, or the Gulf coalition action in Yemen did not achieving its basic objectives.

Daniel Serwer, Middle East Institute

Saudi Arabia and the UAE will be seriously embarrassed if their coalition fails in Yemen, but U.S. interests are not directly at stake in the fight against the Houthis. The main U.S. interest in Yemen is counter-terrorism, in particular Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State, insofar as it is present. It is arguable that any Houthi-controlled regime would want to continue the fight against them. They might even be better at it than the Hadi-led government, which leaves most of the counterterrorism fight in U.S. hands.

We also have an interest in the free flow of commerce through the Bab al Mandeb. That interest, as Andrew Exum suggested recently (https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/yemen-trump-aqap/522957/), would be best be served by diplomatic rather than military means.

Martin Styszynski, Adam Mickiewicz University

The ongoing military campaign headed by GCC countries against Houthi militias in Yemen demonstrates sectarian crisis between regional power (Iran and Saudi Arabia) and it shows increasing humanitarian crisis. So far, worldwide concerns and adoptions of resolutions, including UN resolution 2216 haven't succeed. Moreover, political and social initiatives proposed by UN's envoy Ould Sheikh Ahmad didn't decrease the tension. However, president Abdu Mansur Hadi stabilized his power in Aden and started reconstruction of local institutions and international credibility.

Recently, the conflict has intensified because of military provocations led by Houthis who carried out some attacks against shipping in Bab al-Mandib Stain and the Red Sea by the end of 2016. The situation encouraged GCC forces to start a new offensive on the West coast of Yemen in order to encircle Houthi troops and to cut them from weapons other supplies delivered by ports situated in the West coast.

This strategy will force Houthis to start political negotiations with GCC countries and accept peaceful resolutions between both sides of the conflict. The ongoing offensive in al-Hudayda port seems to be a crucial point of the future scenarios in Yemen.

Furthermore, Yemen still faces jihadist threats from *Al-Qaeda fi Jazirat al-Arab* ('Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula- AQAP') but recent antiterrorist actions have decreased operational activities of the organization. After the death of AQAP's leaders Anwar Al-Awlaki in 2011, Yemeni jihadists implemented a new strategy by establishing operational branches in the southern provinces of Abyan and Aden or tribal villages and local territories in Hadramawt governorate. Jihadists also took advantages of the conflict between Houthi and southern Sunni regions by stablishing the Islamic Emirate of Abyan. The Emirate was recaptured by president Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi's forces in 2012 during the Abyan Offensive. In 2015, a US drone strike killed AQAP's leader Naser al-Wuhayshi. This was an additional hit for Yemeni jihadists who relocated to smaller districts like Al-Mukalla or Al-Bayda that allowed the group to conduct terrorist attacks against local authorities, military checkpoints and bases. However, Al-Mukalla was recaptured in April 2016. On 29 January 2017, US drone strikes killed 14 AQAP fighters and more than 10 civilians, including Anwar Awlaki's daughter and Abdulrauf al-Dhahab, the group's senior jihadist operatives.

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Ph.D, Rice University

One major problem for the Arab coalition is that they lack clear political or military definitions of what 'success' (or even an 'acceptable outcome') would look like in Yemen. This is due partially to the very different challenges that face the two most important partners in the coalition. For Saudi Arabia, the Houthis present a very real physical threat to national security (and to the human security of Saudi communities in border areas), and the minimal achievement for Saudi leaders to declare the Yemen intervention a success likely would involve a Houthi withdrawal from Sana'a and a comprehensive ceasefire along the border. The UAE lacks the immediacy of the security threat but is motivated by a combination of ancestral tribal links to southern Yemen (for the Al Nahyans of Abu Dhabi), geostrategic interests in the broader Horn of Africa region, and the region-wide campaign to stamp out the Muslim Brotherhood in all its variants.

For these reasons, the UAE has supported very different groups within Yemen and is increasingly at odds with those groups supported by Saudi Arabia. The actions of Emirati special forces in smashing down doors and hauling off suspected Yemeni Islamists in the Hadramawt to secret prisons in Abu Dhabi has caused friction within the coalition. The recent firefight at Aden airport between a militia linked to Abu Dhabi and a Sudanese unit belonging to the Saudi-led coalition provided an instance of these tensions coming into the open, as did the denial of landing rights in Aden to an airplane carrying President Hadi, which had instead to continue to Socotra. The UAE had thrown its support behind Prime Minister Khalid Bahah and were extremely displeased when Hadi (who enjoys a degree of Saudi support) dismissed Bahah in 2016. Senior Emiratis are believed also to want to draw down the military element of the Yemeni operations but have come under Saudi pressure to stay the course; thus, in addition to the lack of common agreed-upon political or military objectives, there is also a lack of consensus on how long (and how far) combat operations should go on for. While the tension between Saudi Arabia and the UAE (over the future role of the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood) is probably manageable while combat operations continue, it is likely to erupt into the open if and when talks on a political settlement begin.

There is a danger both for the GCC coalition and (by extension) for the US that the Saudis (in particular) will believe that anything less than a symbolic 'victory' (e.g. border security and the return of Hadi to Aden) equates to a strategic defeat at the hands of Iran. This raises the possibility that the Saudis will continue to intensify the war in the hope that they can begin to turn the tide, buoyed by the change in administration in DC. The challenge for the Saudis (and the US) is that the Saudis have proved themselves fairly inept at waging military operations on the ground and working through proxies; moreover, they are fighting a foe that has nearly 40 years' experience of running proxy groups throughout the Middle East, and who has rung rings around the Saudis both in Yemen and in Syria. For very little direct involvement, Iran has managed to drag the Saudis deeper and deeper into Yemen with little possibility of a clear-cut outcome. It is likely that, absent a strategic or public relations disaster (such as the taking of mass casualties), the Saudis will merely continue to pour resources and manpower into a war they simply cannot realistically hope to win (or afford to lose), and all this at a time of continuing budget pressures within Saudi Arabia itself.

Recent comments by senior USG personnel indicate that the Trump presidency will become more closely involved in the Gulf-led coalition in Yemen. This raises the stakes of any potential failure to achieve decisive results because such an outcome will likely be viewed against the backdrop of the struggle for regional hegemony between Gulf Arab states and Iran. An emboldened Iran on the ascendancy in Syria and with little direct stake in Yemen could try to draw the GCC and US more deeply into Yemen in the knowledge

that deeper involvement would more likely hurt Iran's adversaries more than it does Iran itself. Iran could also try to provoke Saudi Arabia into over-retaliation in ways that further expose the Kingdom (and, probably by extension, its US partnership) to growing international criticism for its role in Yemen. 2017 is likely to be the year that the humanitarian situation in Yemen approaches catastrophic proportions, and there is a possibility that the assertive young leadership in Riyadh will react badly to global criticism of Saudi policies (such as the naval blockade) in Yemen. Finally, as King Salman ages and (if and when) his health declines, the concentration of power and authority in Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and, now, his 28 year old brother Khalid bin Salman, the new Saudi Ambassador to the US, raises the possibility that Saudi decision-making will lack the decades of experience and expertise in navigating complex regional circumstances that defined Saudi Arabia's largely pragmatic and cautious approach toward policymaking for decades, and will become, instead, more unpredictable, volatile, and prone to taking dangerous risks.

Biographies

Kim Cragin

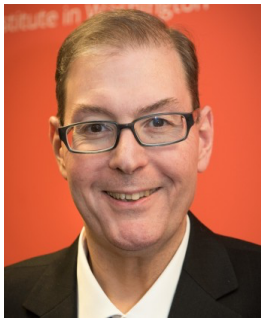
R. Kim Cragin is a senior research fellow at the National Defense University. She recently left a position as senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. Cragin focuses on terrorism-related issues. Cragin has conducted fieldwork in Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, northwest China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, among others. Her RAND publications include Severing the Ties that Bind (2015), Disrupting Global Transit Hubs (2013) and Social Science for Counter-Terrorism (2010). Cragin also has published academic articles, including "Resisting Violent Extremism" in the reviewed journal Terrorism and Political Violence (2013), "al-Qa'ida Confronts Hamas" in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism (2009), and "The Early History of al-Qa'ida" in the Historical Journal (2008). Her book entitled *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* was released by Praeger in 2009. Cragin has a master's degree from the Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University. She completed her Ph.D. at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

Gerald Feierstein

Jerry Feierstein retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in May 2016 after a 41-year career. At the time of his retirement, Feierstein held the personal rank of Career Minister. Over the course of his career, he served in nine overseas postings, including three tours of duty in Pakistan, as well as tours in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Tunisia. In 2010, President Obama appointed Feierstein U.S. Ambassador to Yemen, where he served until 2013. From 2013 until his retirement, Feierstein was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs.

In addition to his career-long focus on the Near East and South Asia, Feierstein also played a prominent role in developing and implementing State Department policies and programs to counter violent extremism. As Deputy Coordinator and Principal Deputy Coordinator in the State Department's Counter-Terrorism bureau, Feierstein led the development of initiatives to build regional networks to confront extremist groups as well as to counter terrorist financing and promote counter-terrorism messaging. He continued to focus on defeating terrorist groups through his subsequent tours as Deputy Chief of Mission in Pakistan and as Ambassador to Yemen.

Hussein Ibish



Hussein Ibish is a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. He is a weekly columnist for The National (UAE) and a monthly contributing writer for The International New York Times. Ibish is also a regular contributor to many other U.S. and Middle Eastern publications. He has made thousands of radio and television appearances and was the Washington, DC correspondent for the Daily Star (Beirut). Many of Ibish's articles are archived on his Ibishblog website.

His most recent book is *What's Wrong with the One-State Agenda? Why Ending the Occupation and Peace with Israel is Still the Palestinian National Goal* (ATFP, 2009). Ibish was included in all three years (2011, 2012, and 2013) of Foreign Policy's "Twitterati 100," the magazine's list of 100 "must-follow" Twitter feeds on foreign policy.

Ibish is the editor and principal author of three major studies of *Hate Crimes and Discrimination against Arab Americans 1998-2000* (ADC, 2001), *Sept. 11, 2001-Oct. 11, 2002* (ADC, 2003), and 2003-2007 (ADC, 2008). He is also the author of "At the Constitution's Edge: Arab Americans and Civil Liberties in the United States" in *States of Confinement* (St. Martin's Press, 2000), "Anti-Arab Bias in American Policy and Discourse" in *Race in 21st Century America* (Michigan State University Press, 2001), "Race and the War on Terror," in *Race and Human Rights* (Michigan State University Press, 2005) and "Symptoms of Alienation: How Arab and American Media View Each Other" in *Arab Media in the Information Age* (ECSSR, 2005). He wrote, along with Ali Abunimah, "The Palestinian Right of Return" (ADC, 2001) and "The Media and the New Intifada" in *The New Intifada* (Verso, 2001). He is the editor, along with Prof. Saliba Sarsar, of *Principles and Pragmatism* (ATFP, 2006).

Ibish previously served as a senior fellow at the American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP), and executive director of the Hala Salaam Maksoud Foundation for Arab-American Leadership from 2004 to 2009. From 1998 to 2004, Ibish served as communications director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. He has a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Shoqi A. Maktary

Shoqi A. Maktary is the Yemen Country Director for Search for Common Ground (SFCG). Mr. Maktary is a former Fulbright Scholar with Masters Degrees in conflict transformation and peacebuilding, and security management. Prior to joining SFCG, he was Risk Management Advisor for Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) where he advised GIZ Country Directors and Project Heads on conflict, risk and security issues through in-depth context analysis and trend developments, and provided guidance on conflict sensitive planning and safe and effective implementation of activities.

Fahad Nazer

Fahad Nazer is a political consultant to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington and an International Fellow at the National Council on US Arab Relations. Previously, he was a Non-resident Fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington and a terrorism analyst at the US Department of US (contractor).

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Vernie Liebl is an analyst currently sitting as the Middle East Desk Officer in the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). Mr Liebl retired from the Marine Corps and has a background in intelligence, specifically focused on the Middle East and South Asia.

Prior to joining CAOCL, Mr. Liebl worked with the Joint Improvised Explosives Device Defeat Organization as a Cultural SME, and before that with Booz Allen Hamilton as a Strategic Islamic Narrative Analyst. He has also published extensively on topics ranging from the Caliphate to Vichy French campaigns in WW2.

Mr Liebl has a Bachelors degree in political science from University of Oregon, a Masters degree in Islamic History from the University of Utah, and a second Masters degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College (where he graduated with “Highest Distinction” and focused on Islamic Economics).

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Abdulaziz Sager

Born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in 1959, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager is chairman and founder of the Gulf Research Center. He is also President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments.

In addition to the work of the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager holds numerous other appointments. In November 2003, Dr. Sager was appointed as a member of the Makkah Province Council. He also serves as a member on the advisory board of the Arab Thought Foundation; the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF); the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University; the Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia; the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); the German Orient Foundation; and sits on the advisory group for the 4th Arab Human Development Report for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He is further part of the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations. In May 2011, Dr. Sager was awarded an honorary fellowship from the Università Ca'Foscari in Venice, Italy.

Dr. Sager has special research interest in Gulf strategic issues and is a frequent contributor and commentator to international and regional media. He regularly participates in regional and international forums and conferences held on issues relevant to the Gulf region.

He is the author of numerous publications including *Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Gulf Research Center, May 2004); *GCC Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq* (GRC, April 2004); *Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions* (GRC, September 2003); "Political Reform Measures from a Domestic GCC Perspective," in *Constitutional Reform and Political Participation in the Gulf*, Abdulhadi Khalaf and Giacomo Luciani, eds. (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2006); "Political Opposition in Saudi Arabia" in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs,* Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman, eds. (London: Hurst & Company, 2005); Energy Shapes new Gulf Security Architecture, *Journal of Middle Eastern Geopolitics* (2006); and "Why for all its problems, the EU is still a model for the Arab world," *Europe's World*, no. 14, Spring 2010. He has also been the chief editor for the Gulf Yearbook (2003 to 2009 editions).

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

Daniel Serwer

Daniel Serwer is a Professor of the Practice of Conflict Management, director of the Conflict Management Program and a Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Also a scholar at the Middle East Institute, Daniel Serwer is the author of Righting the Balance (Potomac Books, November 2013), editor (with David Smock) of Facilitating Dialogue (USIP, 2012) and supervised preparation of Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction (USIP, 2009). Righting the Balance focuses on how to strengthen the civilian instruments of American foreign policy to match its strong military arm. Facilitating Dialogue analyzes specific cases and best practices in getting people to talk to each other in conflict zones. Guiding Principles is the leading compilation of best practices for civilians and military in post-war state-building.

As vice president of the Centers of Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Serwer led teams working on rule of law, peacebuilding, religion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance and gender. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, overseeing its peacebuilding work in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq and Sudan and serving as executive director of the Hamilton/Baker Iraq Study Group. As a minister-counselor at the U.S. Department of State, Serwer directed the European office of intelligence and research and served as U.S. special envoy and coordinator for the Bosnian Federation, mediating between Croats and Muslims and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton Peace Talks; from 1990 to 1993, he was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, leading a major diplomatic mission through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War. Serwer is a graduate of Haverford College and earned Masters degrees at the University of Chicago and Princeton, where he also did his PhD in history.

Marcin Styszynski

Marcin Styszynski (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. He also served as the cultural and scientific attaché in the Embassy of Poland in Egypt (2009-2012) and the second secretary in the Embassy of Poland in Algeria (2012-2014). In 2016 he started the new duties of Consul in the Embassy of Poland in Riyadh.

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Ph.D., is a Fellow for the Middle East at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and the author of four books on the Gulf, including Insecure Gulf: the End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era (2011), Qatar and the Arab Spring (2014), The Gulf States in International Political Economy (2015), and The United Arab Emirates: Power, Politics, and Policymaking (2016).

Weston Aviles

Weston Aviles is an analyst at NSI, Inc. He studied criminology and political science at Arizona State University (BS) with minors in Middle Eastern history and economics, and certificates in political thought and leadership, international studies and religion and conflict. Weston then studied Government at the InterDiscplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel graduate school with a focus in counter-terrorism and security studies (MA). His graduate studies focused on Arab Spring dynamics, international security in the MENA region and radical Islam. Weston is an alumni of the University of Virginia's Semester at Sea program and has participated in several academic programs in Israel to study terrorism and counter-terrorism. Weston is now an analyst for NSI and continues a research focus on Middle Eastern politics and conflict studies.