

«OPERATION «DECISIVE STORM»» (SAUDI-LED INTERVENTION IN THE
YEMENI CIVIL WAR)

Umurbaev Rustam Shakirjanovich

4th-year student of Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

Tashkent city

urustam316@gmail.com +998946995982

Abstract: *This paper offers an alternative explanation of abrupt Saudi aggressiveness toward Yemen. It argues that this intervention is driven by a non-material need; Saudi leadership aims to assert the Kingdom's status as a regional power in the Middle East. Scholars and policy analysts moved quickly to examine the Yemen war as a by-product of Saudi-Iranian rivalry in the region and a sectarian struggle. These traditional explanations fall short of unravelling the Saudi motive behind launching a large-scale operation in Yemen, a severely weakened and politically divided neighbour.*

Key words: *instructions, government, political backing, concern.*

INTRODUCTION

On 26th March, 2015, Saudi Arabia launched airstrikes on Yemen with the aim to restore the rule of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and eliminate the Houthi movement. Located at the Bab al-Mandab Strait in the southern entrance of the Red Sea, Yemen has always constituted a cornerstone of Saudi foreign policy. Since the Kingdom's foundation in 1932, the Saud family (al-Saud) has strived to expand its control to its southern neighbor and prevent it from threatening its interests. In 1934, the first modern war broke out between the two Arabian states. The 1934 Treaty of Ta'if put an end to this military confrontation, ceded the three provinces of Asir, Najran and Jizan to the army of ibn Saud, and established a peaceful coexistence between the two countries.

Since then, the Saudis have avoided confrontation and, instead, maintained precarious stability in Yemen through meddling in internal politics, backing local groups against others, using Yemeni guest workers as leverage, buying off tribal leaders, and conducting limited, occasional military operations, especially over border disputes. Operation «Decisive Storm», the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen that began in March 2015 constituted a break with this decades-long peaceful coexistence.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Although Saudi Arabia had spent substantial resources on military procurement and training over the last two decades - especially after the 1991 Gulf War - never before had the Saudi Kingdom, or any of the Gulf states, so proactively and aggressively deployed their military forces or engage in a large, offensive mission as the operation in Yemen. The intervention in Yemen has unveiled a new era in Saudi foreign policy and appears to overshadow Gulf politics for years to come. This paper attempts to explain this abrupt aggressiveness in Saudi policies toward Yemen while situating it in a more comprehensive

understanding of the Kingdom’s foreign policy in the region as an emerging regional power fighting for its status.

Saudi Arabia’s motivation in the Yemen offensive arguably reflects a Kingdom that is starting to rely on its own resources in fighting for and assert its status as a leading power in the region. Scholars, commentaries in the Arab media, and government officials have often characterized the war in Yemen as part of a larger struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran over influence in the Middle East. From this perspective, the war is the reaction to the influence of Iran expanding in the Arabian Peninsula through the rebel Houthi movement.⁴ A proxy war with Iran, along a Sunni-Shiite divide, became central tropes in Saudi state-owned media. Meanwhile, other scholars and commentaries focus on personalities at the expense of more structural factors. In particular, the ascendancy of King Salman al-Saud in January 2015 to power, and the parallel rise of his ambitious son, Prince Mohamed bin Salman, to a minister of defense, are often considered at the origin of this intervention.

RESULTS

Many scholars explore the evolution in the decision-making process in the Saudi Kingdom that followed the passing of King Abdullah and attributed the Yemen War to centralization of the decision in the office of the crown prince. Despite the importance of individual decision-makers, the preparation for the operation in Yemen has started since the Houthi take over Sana’a in September 2014, which preceded Salman’s reign by several months. This paper offers an alternative explanation of the Saudi intervention in Yemen and argues that this aggression is driven by a non-material need, that is a will for status. In the post-2011 order, the Kingdom has fought for its status as a regional power at both regional and international levels. In this context, the Saudi leadership responded to regime change in Yemen with a violent intervention to confirm its status as a leading power in the region. The paper starts with an overview of the Yemen crisis while outlining the current developments in the war.

The second section explores the drivers of the Saudi intervention in Yemen; it argues that this aggressive strategy can be considered as a status-seeking behavior and contextualizes this explanation within the International Relations literature. The last section presents an assessment of the overall performance of Saudi forces in the war and, furthermore, draws out the implications of the intervention on the Yemen crisis and its ramifications on the evolving role of the Saudi Kingdom in the Middle East.

DISCUSSION

Yemeni politics is complex and often plagued with shifting alliances at domestic and regional levels. Saudi Arabia has historically seen Yemen as a source of threat, and its stability is inextricably connected to the security of the Arabian Peninsula. Whether the threat is real or imagined, the Saudi Kingdom employed several measures to control politics in Yemen. Mainly, it has relied on Ali Abdallah Saleh, president of North Yemen from 1978 and later of a unified Yemen from 1990 until 2012, to maintain stability. Fears of Yemen’s instability peaked with the appearance.

CONCLUSION

However, identity perceptions are more subjective and fluid by nature. For this reason, the transformation from a Sunni-Shiite dyadic conflict to a tri-polar rivalry, and especially the polarization of the hitherto Sunni camp, has caused the three main actors of this camp - Turkey on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the other - to further define and protect their identity, in part by increasing their military involvements in the region's intra-state conflicts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It seems that the change that has taken place in the scope and nature of the military interventions of Middle East regional powers in the post-Arab Spring conflicts during the last decade indicates the change in the threat perception of these actors. While the «first generation» interventions - Saudi Arabia in Bahrain and Iran in Syria - were driven by an acute necessity due to what was perceived as an immediate threat to the state's security, the «new generation» interventions are more related to these states' identity, following the rise of another pole within the Sunni camp. As long as the Sunni-Shiite struggle dominated the Middle East arena, Iran and Saudi Arabia were ready to take the immense risk inherent in a military intervention in an intra-state conflict only when there was an imminent danger to a state perceived as an essential sphere of influence.

REFERENCES:

1. Akpınar, P. (2015). Mediation as a foreign policy tool in the Arab Spring: Turkey, Qatar and Iran. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 17(3), 252-268.
2. Altunışık, M. (2020). The new turn in Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East: Regional and domestic insecurities. *Istituto Affari Internazionali*.
[https:// bit.ly/2M52SxI](https://bit.ly/2M52SxI) Aras, B., & Yorulmazlar, E. (2016).
3. Bakeer, A. (2020, June 23). As- Sisi won't send his army to Libya, but the UAE demands otherwise. *TRT World*. <https://bit.ly/2NEYrtV> Birol, B. (2019).
4. Turkey between Qatar and Saudi Arabia: Changing regional and bilateral relations. *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 16(62), 85-99. Blanga, Y. (2017).
5. Saudi Arabia's motives in the Syrian civil war. *Middle East Policy*, 24(4), 45-62.