

## THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL POWERS IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT: THE YEMEN EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

*The paper investigated the Impact of Regional Powers in International Conflict: The Yemen Experience. Socio-economic and political development cannot thrive in an atmosphere of conflict. The Yemen conflict is regarded as one of the most devastating conflicts in the international system as the crisis has created grave humanitarian concern in the international system resulting to the loss of lives, destruction of properties and the social displacement of people. The varied interest espoused by different countries in the Middle East (regional powers) such as Iran and Saudi Arabia has further escalated the conflict making it difficult to bring the conflict to an end. The Conflict Theory developed by Karl Marx in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Secondary source of data was employed for the study; it involves the collection of data from textbooks, journal, article and seminar papers etc. The work found out that there are numerous regional powers to the Yemen conflict; Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan etc. These countries have specific interest which they seek to actualize in Yemen. Their involvement as further complicated the conflict and impacted negatively on the outcome of the war. The study recommends that there is need for continuous negotiations among the various groups with the involvement of the international community to arrive at a peaceful resolution to the protracted conflict in Yemen.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Regional Powers, Yemen, Houthis, International

### Introduction

The study of international conflict provides one of the most veritable instruments of studying international relations. The World Health Organization (WHO) has described conflict as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, leading to injury, death, physical harm or deprivation” (WHO, 2002, p.5). Akpuru-Aja (2009) noted that prior to the existence of any conflict (violent and non-violent conflict) there are usually indicators or catastrophic signals exhibited by the factional leaders in the conflict. These signals include unpleasant utterances, unfriendly attitudes and non-compromising posture, which would normally be noticed among the persons in a conflict. When these warnings are ignored in their early stages, they would normally metamorphose into violent conflict and genocides (Akpuru-Aja, 2009). The international system has witness several conflict which include; Congo crisis of 1960, Myanmar civil disobedience of 2021, Israel-Palestine ongoing crisis, Russia-Ukraine ongoing war and the Yemen conflict, etc.

The conflict in Yemen, often referred to as the Yemeni Civil War, is regarded as one of the complex conflicts in the international system due to varied actors and interest in the conflict. Historically, Yemen has a history of political instability and conflict, including the North Yemen Civil War

(1962-1970) and the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990. The country has also experienced long-standing economic challenges, tribal divisions, and a weak central government (Lackner, 2019). The key actors/parties involved in the conflict are; Hadi Government; which was led by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, recognized internationally but challenged domestically by various factions. The Houthi rebels; the Houthis are a Shiite Zaidi group from northern Yemen (Lackner, 2019). They initially took up arms due to political and economic grievances and have been fighting against the Hadi government since 2014. They took control of the capital, Sana'a, in September 2014, forcing Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia. The Southern Transitional Council (STC); a separatist group that seeks independence for South Yemen, they have been both allied with and opposed to the Hadi government at various times. Al-Qaeda and ISIS both extremist groups have exploited the chaos to expand their influence and carry out attacks.

The Yemen conflict is one of the devastating conflicts in the international system. Apart from the loss of lives, properties and the humanitarian crisis it generated, the conflict has attracted vast interest especially from within the region. Prominent among the regional powers in the conflict are; Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Iran etc. Each of these regional powers has specific interest they seek to protect. For instance, Saudi Arabia led a coalition supporting the Hadi government, launching airstrikes against Houthi-held area. On the other hand, Iran allegedly supported the Houthis with military and logistical assistance. These diverse interest and support further complicated the conflict making it difficult to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

It is against this background that this paper intends to examine the impact of regional powers on the Yemen conflict

### **Statement of the Problem**

Yemen, a small country on the Arabian Peninsula, has become the site of grievous civilian suffering amid an intractable civil war. The conflict has become complex and complicated as it has turned into a proxy war by two countries (Iran and Saudi Arabia) dominant regional powers in the Middle East. Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who overthrew the Yemeni government, are pitted against a Multinational coalition led by Saudi Arabia. The involvement of other combatants, including militant Islamist groups and separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has complicated the picture. The conflict has displaced more than four million people and given rise to cholera outbreaks, medicine shortages, and threats of famine (WHO, 2023). Yemen remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. After seven years of devastating and unrelenting war some 23.4 million Yemenis (73% of the country's population) depend on humanitarian assistance to survive, including 4.3 million internally displaced persons (Red Cross, 2023).

The country has the fourth-largest IDP population due to war. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Yemen remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. After seven years of devastating and unrelenting conflict, some 23.4 million Yemenis (73% of the country's population) depend on humanitarian assistance to survive, including 4.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The country has the fourth-largest IDP population due to conflict (UNHCR, 2023). The body further noted that escalation of conflict, ongoing insecurity, embargoes and a collapsed economy have pushed an estimated 80% of the

population below the poverty line. The protection environment throughout the country remains dire, and civilians keep bearing the brunt of the conflict (UNHCR, 2023).

According to the UNDP (2023) over 150,000 people have been killed in Yemen, as well as estimates of more than 227,000 dead as a result of an ongoing famine and lack of healthcare facilities due to the war. Many hospitals, schools and critical infrastructures destroyed. The conflict has overstretched the healthcare system in the Yemen as there are reported shortages of medical personnel and equipment to provide care for victims of the war. The devastating impact of the war on economy and basic infrastructure has made the Global Initiative Index to rank Yemen as 13th among the 13 low-income group economies and 131st among the 132 economies featured in the GII in 2021 (GII, 2021). The conflict in Yemen has raised problem for serious humanitarian crisis

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of regional powers in the Yemen conflict. The specific objectives include:

- i. Examine the impact of the Yemen conflict on humanitarian crisis.
- ii. Analyze the impact of Regional Powers in the Yemen conflict.
- iii. Examine the factors that fuel the conflict.

### **Methodology**

The historical research design was adopted for the study. Scholars are of the view that the historical research design is advantageous in several ways. For instance Thomas (1995), asserted that it is easy to use, not costly and permits the use of historical materials. In the view of Babbie (2007), it blends well with the grounded theory approach. Using the historical method, raw data could easily be transformed into standardized information based on the conceptual framework peculiar to the issue at hand. The secondary source of data was utilized for this study. Secondary source of data refer to the set of data collated or authored by another person, archives, in the form of documents collected for the purpose other than the present one in which it is being used (Asika, 2006). Selltiz et al (2008), has declared that the usefulness of secondary sources of data lies in the fact that information of this sort is collected periodically. Also, gathering of information from such sources does not require the cooperation or assistance of the individual about whom the information is being sought. The source of data for this study includes: magazines, textbooks, journals and seminar papers among others. The content analysis was adopted as the method of data analysis.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted for the study is the Conflict theory. The theory was propounded by Karl Marx in the mid-19th century. Marx believed that society is a dynamic entity constantly undergoing change driven by class conflict. According to Marx, cited in (Anikpo, 1998), society is made up of individuals competing for limited resources (e.g., money, leisure, sexual partners, etc.). Competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships.

Competition, rather than consensus is the characteristic of human relationships. Broader social structures and organizations (e.g., religions and government, etc.) reflect the competition for resources and the inherent inequality competition entails; some people and organizations have more resources (i.e., power and influence), and use those resources to maintain their positions of power in society (Anikpo, 1998).

Conflict theory is predicated on certain assumptions which are as follows:

- i. Power and Inequality:* Conflict theory posits that international relations are characterized by power imbalances and inequalities between states. Powerful states dominate and exploit weaker ones, leading to tensions and conflicts.
- ii. Competition for Resources:* States are seen as competing for limited resources such as territory, wealth, and strategic advantages. This competition often leads to conflicts as states pursue their interests at the expense of others.
- iii. Conflict as Inevitable:* Conflict is viewed as an inherent and inevitable aspect of international relations. The anarchic nature of the international system, where there is no overarching authority, contributes to the prevalence of conflicts.
- iv. Focus on Interests:* States act primarily based on their self-interests and are motivated by the desire to maximize their power and security. This self-interest often leads to aggressive and competitive behaviors.
- v. Resistance and Change:* Conflict theory acknowledges the potential for resistance and change within the international system. Oppressed or marginalized states and groups may resist domination and seek to alter the existing power structures.

### **Application of Theoretical Framework**

Relating and applying the conflict theory in understanding the Impact of Regional Powers in the Yemen conflict, it becomes pertinent to state that the protracted nature of the Yemen conflict can be attributed to the varied interest espoused by regional powers in the Middle East such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate and Egypt etc. For instance, Iran seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and views Yemen as a strategic location to project its powers. By supporting the Houthi rebels, Iran can effectively challenge Saudi Arabia's dominance in the Arabian Peninsula. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia shares a long border with Yemen and the instability posed by the Houthi rebellion is perceived as a direct threat to its national security. The presence of a hostile group with potential Iranian backing on its southern border is unacceptable to Saudi Arabia. The conflict theory therefore is relevant as the theoretical framework as it explains the rationale behind regional powers in the Yemen conflict.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### ***Concept of Conflict***

Conflict refers to contradictions arising from differences in the interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations and precipitous tendencies of the people concerned. These contradictions are inherent at all levels of social and economic interactions of the human race. It may therefore exist at the individual, group, institutional, regional, national and international levels. Conflict is thus a pervasive phenomenon in human relationships and has been seen as the basic unit for understanding social existence (Nnoli, 1998).

Generally, the major sources of conflict include economic, value, ineffective communication and power conflict (Mack & Snyder, 2010). As gleaned from Mack & Snyder (2010), they are elaborated below.

1. **Economic conflict:** This type of conflict arises when individuals or groups compete over resources. The aim of conflict in this case is directed towards the slicing of the national cake. Each conflict actor's aim here is to gain or even control economic resources.
2. **Value conflict:** In this case, conflict occurs over incompatibility in culture (the inclinations, main beliefs, customs and traditions that people make up a particular society believe in). Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country where most activities, which should have been secularized, are dominated by ethnic and religious inclinations. The divergence in both ethnic and religious beliefs has always generated conflicts.
3. **Ineffective communication:** Another major source of conflict is miscommunication and misunderstanding. The inability of parties to communicate effectively often creates confusion and anger which would have been resolved amicably had the parties involved communicated the facts of the contended argument. Groups or individuals may have diverse perceptions regarding the actual fact of a specific situation, which could trigger animosities until the information is tactfully and skillfully clarified. A typical example of a consequential conflict as a result of ineffective communication was the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on the premise that Ukraine interactions with members of NATO will undermine her security interest.
4. **Power conflict:** In this context, conflict arises from an individual's or a group's determination to maintain and maximize the level of influence possessed in the associations and particularly the social settings concerned. Paradoxically, in this regard, Fisher (2010) argued that one party is usually stronger than the other; especially with reference to direct exert influence over a weaker party. Accordingly, in the power tussle, the stronger party usually ends up victorious, defeats the weaker group. This is one source of conflict that is evident in all sources of conflict; all conflict actors directly or indirectly attempt to control each other.

Conflicts may have negative or positive effects. The resolution of conflicts helps to push society towards preserving humanity. Conflicts are inevitable in human affairs but if carefully handled, they can lead to social and economic progress. When unresolved contradictions are allowed to linger and explode into violence, however, conflict becomes undesirable and may develop into a menace. Violent conflict is therefore the consequence of the inability or failure to accommodate and resolve contradictions in society through arrangements and procedures that eliminate their negative effects and maximize their positive effect.



## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Impact of the Yemen Conflict on Humanitarian Crisis**

After years of fighting in Yemen between government forces and rebel groups, Yemen is still one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. As reported by Action Against Hunger (2024), in a country with a population of 32 million, 23.4 million people are in dire need. The report noted further that 21.6 million Yemenis need humanitarian assistance as over 377,000 people have lost their lives due to both direct and indirect consequences of the war—violence, hunger, disease, and social displacement (Against Hunger, 2024). The country faces one of the worst hunger crises in the world; in 2023, 17 million Yemenis were food insecure. An estimated 1.3 million pregnant or breastfeeding women and 2.2 million children under the age of five are in need of treatment for acute malnutrition. In 2023, 23 million Yemenis live without access to health care, but just half of the country's health facilities were fully functional. 15.3 million people lack access to water since the conflict extensively damaged Yemen's water and sanitation infrastructure (Action Against Hunger, 2024).

Yemenis across the country have little or no food, water, and access to primary healthcare and mental health services. Decreasing funding and increasing regional tensions threaten to make their living conditions even worse. Years of fighting have exacerbated systemic vulnerabilities, leading to the collapse of essential services and economic activities and increasing dependence on aid. On food crisis, the organization noted that Yemen is largely dependent on imported food. It declining currency value, rising prices, limited job opportunities, and low wages have made essential foods unaffordable for a large proportion of the population. Many families go to bed without food because they can't afford food while others limit the amount of food they eat and resort to food with little nutritional value. Parents—especially mothers—often go without food so that their children can eat (Against Hunger, 2024).

On healthcare needs, the conflict has impacted negatively on the health sector; without sufficient resources, including water purification products, the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks, such as cholera, is high. Health care costs are out of reach for most people, and health centers are often too far away for families to access them. Additionally, without sufficient supplies and qualified staff, quick and easy access to quality health care and malnutrition treatment is a major challenge in Yemen (Against Hunger, 2024). Today, more than a quarter of Yemenis—over eight million people—suffer from mental disorders such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia. The continuing conflict, forced displacement, deteriorating economic situation, poverty, and food shortages are exacerbating the prevalence of mental disorders, which affect all communities and social groups in the country. More importantly, there is no national mental health programme in Yemen. Just 10% of the country's primary health care facilities have staff trained to identify or treat mental disorders. The stigma surrounding mental health issues delays treatment and by devaluing the related professions, discourages students from getting training to tackle these issues (Against Hunger, 2024).

Yemen ranked sixth position on the list of Fragile State Index as the country fare better than Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and DR Congo which ranked first, second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. The conflict in Yemen which has triggered serious humanitarian crisis has

influence the country's position. Below is a table that depicts the ranking by Fragile State Index:

**Table 1: Data on fragile state index 2024**

S/N	Countries	Fragile state index	Position
1	Somalia	111.3	1
2	Sudan	109.3	2
3	South Sudan	109.0	3
4	Syria	108.1	4
5	DR Congo	106.7	5
6	Yemen	106.6	6
7	Afghanistan	103.9	7
8	Central African Republic	103.9	8
9	Haiti	103.5	9
10	Chad	102.7	10
11	Myanmar	100.0	11
12	Ethiopia	98.1	12
13	Palestine	97.8	13
14	Mali	97.3	14
15	Nigeria	96.6	15

Source: Fragile States Index (2024)

The conflict has exacerbated the ongoing malnutrition crisis in Yemen. As reported by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, around 2.7 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition, including hundreds of thousands of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition – a life-threatening condition if not treated urgently can damage the development of children. The damage and closure of schools and hospitals has also disrupted access to education and health services. More than 4.5 million children of school age do not attend schools, and those who go to school are forced to cope with overcrowded classrooms and overburdened and unequipped teachers (UNICEF, 2024).

Many countries cut back on critical aid to Yemen during the covid19 pandemic (thereby compounding humanitarian crisis during the period) as the United Nations reduced food rations for some eight million Yemenis in January 2022. Three out of four Yemenis require humanitarian aid and protection, and four million are internally displaced, according to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR, 2023).

The situation has worsened under the de facto land, sea, and air blockade imposed by coalition forces, which has obstructed the flow of vital supplies of food and medicine and helped drive up prices of essential goods. Under the 2022 cease-fire, prices dropped significantly, but with the expiration of the truce, prices went up again. The UN Development Programme estimates that more than 370,000 people have died as a result of the war, with indirect causes such as lack of food, water, and health services causing almost 60 percent of deaths (UNDP, 2023). In addition, the United Nations has found that both Houthi and coalition forces have knowingly attacked civilian targets in violation of international law. This includes the destruction of a hospital run by Doctors without Borders in 2015. Torture, arbitrary arrests, and forced disappearances are among the other alleged war crimes perpetrated by both sides (UNDP, 2023). These among others have worsened the situation in Yemen. What then are the forces fuelling the crisis? It is paramount to examine the role of regional powers in the scheme of things

### **Impact of Regional Powers in the Yemen Conflict**

The interest of these countries further escalated and worsens the conflict. Saudi Arabia is one of the regional powers in the conflict, views the conflict in Yemen as a way to counter Iranian influence in the region (Bonney, 2018). The Houthi rebels, who are Shia and have received some level of support from Iran, are seen by Saudi Arabia as a proxy for Iranian expansionism. In 2015, Saudi Arabia launched a military intervention in Yemen, leading to the formation of a coalition mostly Sunni Arab states (Juneau, 2016). The coalition has carried out airstrikes, supported ground operations, and imposed blockades. Iran is another regional power that has been backing the rebel groups in the Yemen conflict. Iran's involvement in Yemen is part of its broader strategy to expand its influence in the Middle East and counter balance Saudi Arabia (Juneau, 2016). Supporting the Houthis aligns with Iran's geopolitical interests in the region. Iran has provided the Houthis with political support, arms, and military training, although the extent of this support is debated. Iran's backing has bolstered the Houthis' capabilities and resilience.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is also another regional power in the Yemen conflict. According to Salisbury (2017), the UAE's involvement is driven by its desire to combat Islamist extremism, secure maritime routes and assert its influence in the region. Initially part of the Saudi-led coalition, the UAE has played a crucial role in southern Yemen, supporting local militias and establishing a foothold in strategic ports like Aden. In recent years, the UAE has reduced its direct military



involvement but continues to exert influence through proxy forces (Salisbury, 2017). Qatar is another regional power that has played strategic role in the Yemen conflict. Initially part of the Saudi-led coalition, Qatar's involvement was aimed at countering Iranian influence. However, Qatar's priorities shifted following the 2017 diplomatic rift with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Qatar involvement has been more on humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts, distancing itself from military operations. Egypt and Sudan are regional powers in the Yemen conflict with strong involvement and interest (Salisbury, 2017). Both countries have been motivated by financial incentives and geopolitical considerations to support the Saudi-led coalition. Egypt has provided naval support, while Sudan has contributed ground troops to the coalition efforts.

Table 2: Table on the identities of regional powers in the Yemen conflict and their level of involvement

S/N	Countries	Level of involvement	Impact
1	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia leads a coalition that launched a military intervention in 2015, supporting the Yemeni government against the Houthi rebels. This intervention included airstrikes and ground operations, aiming to restore the internationally recognized government.	<b>The Saudi-led intervention has been criticized for contributing to a severe humanitarian crisis, with widespread destruction of infrastructure, civilian casualties, and a blockade exacerbating food and medical shortages.</b>
2	Iran	<b>Support for Houthis; Iran is accused of providing military and financial support to the Houthi rebels, including supplying weapons and training. This support has strengthened the Houthis' military capabilities and emboldened their</b>	<b>The conflict serves as a proxy battleground between Iran and Saudi Arabia scaling up humanitarian conflict in the region</b>
3	United Arab Emirates (UAE)	<b>Military involvement; the UAE has played a significant role in the coalition, particularly in southern Yemen, where it has supported local militias and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks greater autonomy or independence for southern Yemen.</b>	<b>Intensification of the conflict which further complicate humanitarian crisis</b>
4	Qatar	<b>initially part of the Saudi-led coalition, Qatar has since shifted its role, focusing on diplomatic efforts to mediate the conflict following its rift with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members.</b>	<b>Intensification of the conflict which further complicate humanitarian crisis</b>

**Source:** Researcher's compilation (2024)

At Hadi's behest in 2015, Saudi Arabia cobbled together a coalition of Sunni-majority Arab states: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Brehony, 2015). By 2018, the coalition had expanded to include forces from Eritrea and Pakistan. They launched an air campaign against the Houthis with the aim of reinstating Hadi's government. For Riyadh, accepting Houthi control of Yemen would mean allowing a hostile neighbor to reside on its southern border, and it would mark a setback in its long-standing contest with Tehran (Brehony, 2015). After Saudi Arabia, the UAE has played the most significant military role in the coalition, contributing some ten thousand ground troops, mostly in Yemen's south. However, the UAE removed most of them after entering into conflict with its coalition allies in 2019, when it backed the separatist Southern Transitional Government (STC), which captured Aden. That November, Hadi and the STC president signed the Riyadh Agreement, which affirms that the factions will share power equally in a postwar Yemeni government (The Yemen Data Project, 2023). The separatists reneged on the deal for several months in 2020, but eventually they joined a unity government with equal representation of northerners and southerners. Though the formation of a government signaled progress in bridging Yemen's internal divisions, it did little to accelerate peace talks. In April 2022, Hadi ceded power to a governing council and fired a deputy scorned by the Houthis in hopes that the rebels would return to the negotiating table (The Yemen Data Project, 2023).

Although the U.S. Congress has been divided on the matter, the United States has backed the Saudi-led coalition, as have France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. U.S. interests include security of Saudi borders; free passage in the Bab al-Mandeb strait, the choke point between the Arabian and Red Seas and a vital artery for the global transport of oil; and a government in Sanaa that will cooperate with U.S. counterterrorism programmes (International Crisis Group, 2022). But uproar over civilian deaths in coalition air campaigns, which often use U.S.-made weapons, and Saudi Arabia's role in the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi led the United States and other Western powers to limit some weapons sales and refueling of coalition aircraft. Lawmakers have also raised concerns that U.S.-made weapons are falling into the hands of AQAP and Houthi fighters. Still, the United States is Saudi Arabia's largest arms supplier, and then President Donald Trump thrice vetoed bills that would have halted arms sales to Saudi Arabia (United Nations Panel of Experts on Yemen, 2021).

President Joe Biden said he would end U.S. support for the coalition's military offensive, including the sale of weapons, and signaled a shift to diplomacy by appointing a special envoy to Yemen. Yet, U.S. defense contractors still oversee the servicing of Saudi aircraft that carry out offensive operations, and the administration has approved the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia for defense purposes (U.S Department of State, 2023). Shortly after taking office, Biden reversed the Trump administration's last-minute designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group, citing the move's potential damage to aid deliveries in Yemen.

The intervention of regional powers in Yemen's conflict, including Iran and Gulf states led by

Saudi Arabia, also drew the country into a regional proxy struggle along the broader Sunni-Shia divide (Juneau, 2016). In June 2015, Saudi Arabia implemented a naval blockade to prevent Iran from supplying the Houthis. In response, Iran dispatched a naval convoy, raising the risk of military escalation between the two countries. The militarization of Yemen's waters also drew the attention of the U.S. Navy, which has continued to seize Yemen-bound Iranian weapons. The blockade has been at the center of the humanitarian crisis throughout the conflict. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also led an unrelenting air campaign, with their coalition carrying out over twenty-five thousand air strikes. These strikes have caused over nineteen thousand civilian casualties, and from 2021 to 2022 the Houthis responded with a spate of drone attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

For instance, the Saudi-led intervention has significantly intensified the conflict, contributing to widespread destruction and humanitarian suffering. It has also failed to achieve a decisive military victory or restore the internationally recognized Yemeni government, leading to a prolonged stalemate. Iran's support has strengthened the Houthis' position, allowing them to maintain control over significant parts of Yemen, including the capital, Sana'a. This involvement has also escalated the regional proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Juneau, 2016). The UAE's actions have contributed to the fragmentation of Yemen, particularly in the south, where competing factions vie for control. This has complicated efforts to reach a unified political solution to the conflict. Qatar's reduced role in the conflict has limited its direct impact but highlights the shifting alliances and rivalries within the Gulf region. The involvement of Egypt and Sudan has added military capabilities to the coalition but has not significantly altered the course of the conflict.

### **Factors that fuel the Yemen Conflict**

**Several factors were responsible for the Yemen conflict, they include:**

- i. Fuel price hikes:* Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, which had extended to Yemen a \$550 million loan premised on promises of economic reforms, Hadi's government lifted fuel subsidies in 2014. The Houthi movement, which had attracted support beyond its base with its criticisms of the UN transition, organized mass protests demanding lower fuel prices and a new government. Hadi's supporters and the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated party al-Islah held counter rallies which signal the outbreak of the conflict. In a nutshell, the hike in pump price of fuel impose more financial burden on the people which trigger the conflict
- ii. Houthi takeover:* The Houthis captured much of Sanaa by late 2014. Reneging on a UN peace deal, they consolidated control of the capital and continued their southward advance. Hadi's government resigned under pressure in January 2015 and Hadi later fled to Saudi Arabia. In a nutshell, the aggressive tendency of the rebel group necessitated the outbreak of the conflict
- iii. Military division:* Military units loyal to Saleh aligned themselves with the Houthis, contributing to their battlefield success. Other militias mobilized against the Houthi-Saleh

forces, aligning with those in the military who had remained loyal to the Hadi government. Southern separatists ramped up their calls for secession which all created the atmosphere for the outbreak of the conflict

- iv. *Saudi intervention:* In 2015, with Hadi in exile, Riyadh launched a military campaign; primarily fought from the air to roll back the Houthis and restore the Hadi administration to Sanaa. The involvement of the Saudi government forced Iran to offer support to the rebel group so as to neutralize the Saudi influence in Yemen.

### **Findings**

- i. The study found out that the conflict in Yemen have created grave humanitarian crisis in the country; over 21.6 million Yemenis need humanitarian assistance as over 377,000 people have lost their lives due to both direct and indirect consequences of the war; violence, hunger, disease, and social displacement. The country has the fourth-largest IDP population due to conflict.
- ii. The work found out that there are numerous regional powers to the Yemen conflict; Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan etc. These countries have specific interest which they seek to actualize in Yemen. Their involvement in the conflict has further complicated the conflict and impacted negatively on the outcome of the war.

### **Conclusion**

The conflict in Yemen has evolved into a complex civil war which has significantly influenced by the involvement of regional powers. These powers have not only shaped the trajectory of the conflict but have also impacted the prospects for peace and stability in the region. The involvement of regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, has exacerbated the conflict by polarizing the factions. Saudi Arabia leads a coalition supporting the internationally recognized government, while Iran is accused of supporting the Houthi rebels. This external support has prolonged the conflict by providing resources and legitimacy to the warring parties, making it harder to reach a peaceful resolution. The military interventions and blockades imposed by regional powers have contributed significantly to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition's airstrikes and naval blockade have restricted access to food, medicine, and fuel, worsening the famine and health conditions in the country. This has drawn international condemnation and increased pressure on regional powers to find a peaceful solution.

The conflict in Yemen is a reflection of broader geopolitical rivalries in the Middle East, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Yemen has become a battleground for these powers to assert their influence, impacting regional stability. This rivalry complicates peace efforts, as any resolution is perceived as a victory or loss for these powers, influencing their willingness to compromise. The involvement of regional powers in the Yemen conflict has been a double-edged sword. While their influence has contributed to the conflict's complexity and duration, their engagement is also essential for achieving a sustainable peace. A shift from competitive intervention to cooperative diplomacy is necessary to bring about a resolution that ensures the

stability and prosperity of Yemen and the broader region.

### Recommendations

- i. There is need for the international community to create a special fund for Yemenis to enable victims of the conflict to get back on their feet. Those displaced; children and women need to be reintegrated to the society why infrastructures destroyed as a result of the war need to be rebuilt.
- ii. There is need for continuous negotiations among the various groups with the involvement of the international community to arrive at a peaceful resolution to the protracted conflict in Yemen.

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