

RESEARCH TITLE

**EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS IN INTERNAL CONFLICTS:
A CASE STUDY OF YEMEN.**

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Abstract

This research paper aims to understand the effectiveness of external interventions in internal conflicts by analyzing the case study of Yemen. The research is significant as it seeks to explore the outcomes of interventions in a complex conflict where multiple actors have been involved. The research questions: what factors led to outside intervention in the Yemeni conflict, how the outside intervention proceeded, and what are the intervention's outcomes? A comprehensive overview of previous studies on external interventions and their effectiveness in resolving internal conflicts is provided by the literature review. The methodology used for the research comprises of analyzing qualitative secondary data sources such as academic articles, reports, and news articles. According to the research's findings, an inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict and engages all relevant sides in the peace-building process is needed, as external interventions have failed to resolve the conflict in Yemen and have contributed to an increase in the humanitarian crisis.

Key Words: External interventions, Internal conflicts, Yemen, Humanitarian crisis, Conflict resolution.

التدخلات الخارجية في النزاعات الداخلية: دراسة حالة اليمن

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المستخلص

تهدف ورقة البحث هذه إلى فهم فعالية التدخلات الخارجية في النزاعات الداخلية من خلال تحليل دراسة حالة اليمن. الدراسة مهمة لأنها تسعى إلى استكشاف نتائج التدخلات في صراع معقد حيث تم إشراك عدة جهات فاعلة. يتساءل البحث عن العوامل التي أدت إلى التدخل الخارجي في الصراع اليمني، وكيف استمر التدخل الخارجي، وما هي نتائج التدخل. يتم توفير نظرة عامة شاملة للدراسات السابقة حول التدخلات الخارجية وفعاليتها في حل النزاعات الداخلية من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات. تتكون المنهجية المستخدمة في البحث من تحليل مصادر البيانات الثانوية النوعية مثل المقالات الأكاديمية والتقارير والمقالات الإخبارية. وفقًا لنتائج الدراسة، هناك حاجة إلى نهج شامل يعالج الأسباب الجذرية للصراع ويشرك جميع الأطراف المعنية في عملية بناء السلام، حيث فشلت التدخلات الخارجية في حل النزاع في اليمن وساهمت في زيادة الأزمة الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدخلات الخارجية، النزاعات الداخلية، اليمن، الأزمة الإنسانية، حل النزاع.

1. Introduction:

Whether in a historical or contemporary setting, internal conflicts are frequently more complicated than they initially appear to be. It is an oversimplification to assume that these conflicts simply include two sides -one supporting and one opposing the ruling party or government-; in reality, there may be several sides to domestic disputes, and foreign powers may choose to intervene directly or indirectly. Direct interventions include methods like sanctions and invasions with military powers, whereas indirect interventions include methods like withholding financial and economic aid. The democratic changes that were attempted to stabilize Yemen following its unification in 1990 were unsuccessful, resulting in a Civil War. As part of the Middle Eastern Arab Spring movement, protests took place demanding the fall of Yemen's authoritarian regime; the population gave Saleh's vice president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who was at the time seen as a more appealing choice, a chance to replace him as president. Despite at first refusing, Saleh ultimately announced his resignation in 2012, ending his 33-year presidential period. A full-scale civil war eventually broke out as a result of the opposition demonstrators and regime supporters clashing after his departure. Moreover, in 2015 A rebel group that goes by the name of Houthis AKA. Ansar Allah used this state declaration of emergency to gain control over the government's institutions and Yemen's capital city Sana'a, the group succeeded in taking control of major parts of the state, which led to the break of violence and worsened the civil war, the effects of that is still present in the country until today.

The long term conflict in Yemen has evolved from minor protests into a larger regional conflict over the past few years, this conflict has also led to many political consequences and has had a significant humanitarian effect. Two major Middle Eastern countries -Saudi Arabia and Iran- have played an active role in the involvement in Yemen's political situation. Saudi Arabia, with the help of other states, has attacked the Houthi majority parts in Yemen with airstrikes, with the goal of weakening the movement. Iran, although it has provided major financial and logistical assistance to the Houthi movement, has been strongly opposed to the direct involvement of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Iran's support for the Houthi movement can be traced back to before 2015, its assistance has grown more evident with the escalation that made way for the Houthis' operations to extend into Saudi cities in response to the military airstrikes on Yemen, the rebels have been successful in targeting and launching strikes on Saudi Arabia's borders, which in its turn has had severe consequences for Yemeni citizens facing Saudi's defense. Yemen has become an arena of operations for an indirect clash between these two major nations, with the Yemeni people left to face the majority of its destructive consequences. despite international institutions' and organizations' best efforts to find an effective solution, they still face challenges in resolving this conflict; a long-term fix to the conflict has not been achieved.

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran's external interventions in Yemen have had catastrophic outcomes; as a result of their ongoing struggle for regional dominance, both nations are now involved in the Yemeni crisis. Their engagement has had a notably detrimental effect as Yemenis were the majority of victims of this conflict since thousands of them died as a consequence of airstrikes and aid blockage that was either backed or applied by both countries. In addition to the consequences of the external interventions, the Houthis' control over the government insitutions has made the already critical situation much worse, leaving the Yemeni people very vulnerable as the unemployment and poverty rates have also grown, affecting millions of people. Although the Saudi-led coalition was launched to fulfill specific objectives, it has not been successful in doing so even after almost a decade; there has been no indication that the Houthis' authority has decreased due to military intervention; the fact is

that it has only increased. Moreover, the state's overall environment was affected as the intervention made it possible for the culture of violence, rebels, and terrorism to grow; the issue appears to have no end in sight despite countless attempts to resolve it over the years. This paper aims to look more into Yemen's external involvement since 2015; it also explores the reasons behind the external interventions in internal conflicts to offer insights into the underlying dynamics of such political events.

2. Key Actors:

2.1. Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia has been one of the most significant actors in the Yemeni conflict since its both direct and indirect forms of involvement in 2015 and onwards; Saudi Arabia established a coalition that included a number of Gulf Countries as well as Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Sudan that all contributed to the Operation Decisive Storm led by Saudi as the direct military form, this operation took place in support of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi the legitimate Yemeni president, and his government after the Houthi rebel movement gained control of his administration and government institutions. At the same time, Saudi also had an indirect form of involvement in Yemen as they have provided the Yemeni government and its allies with major financial and logistical assistance.

2.2. Iran:

Another significant actor in the conflict in Yemen is Iran; it historically has had a small amount of influence in Yemen in both the southern and the northern parts of the country; Iran's involvement in Yemen has magnified since the changes of the Arab spring. The involvement comes as an indirect form of involvement; in contrast to Saudi Arabia, Iran only provided financial support to the Houthis not only after they gained power in 2015 but also before that.

2.3. Houthi Movement:

The group, officially known as Ansar Allah, is a Yemeni Zaidi Shia Muslim group that originated in the northern province of Saada in the late 1990s, after 2011 the Houthis had a great influence on the politics of the state as the group seized control of the presidential palace and the Yemeni capital city Sana'a, in 2014, the conflict escalated in 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition of several Gulf states and Egypt launched a military intervention in Yemen with the goal to restore the legitimacy of president Hadi's government by weakening the movement.

3. The significance of the study:

The significance of this study can be summarized in the following points:

- A. The study examines the effectiveness of external interferences by studying the case of Yemen; although labeled a humanitarian intervention, the Saudi-led intervention failed in achieving its primary objective of resolving the conflict and reestablishing the government's dominance in the country; in addition to that, it is evident that the interference had far more consequences than benefits for the state and its population. The study also analyzes the creation of further divisions as a possible outcome of the intervention.
- B. The study offers awareness of the challenges posed by external interventions by exploring the political and economic factors that contributed to the failure of the intervention process, focusing on the

challenges specifically faced by Yemen both before and after the conflict. The findings of this study can serve as a blueprint for tackling similar conflicts in the future.

4. Research questions:

- What were the reasons behind the external intervention?
- What were the methods used by the external intervention in the Yemeni conflict?
- How far did the external intervention reach in resolving the conflict?

5. Literature review:

Literature exists covering the conflict in Yemen and the international interferences for that matter; this chapter provides an overview and evaluation of these existing research and scholarly publications relevant to the case study. The literature review will be divided here into three sections: Firstly, examining the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Secondly, the reasons behind the intervention, and finally, the outcomes and impact of the intervention on the Yemeni people.

- The Saudi engagement in Yemen is viewed by Darwich (2018) from the perspective of Saudi Arabia's regional status, as the country aims to preserve its dominance in the region and counters Iran's growing influence in Yemen was the motivating factor for the involvement. According to Darwich's (2018) article, the Saudi intervention in Yemen has aggravated the humanitarian crisis and caused countless divisions within the state itself while also failing to accomplish its primary goal despite having a military advantage; in this situation, it has been assumed that Saudi Arabia and Iran are engaged in a proxy war in Yemen by supporting opposing actors. "The Al Saud's decision to go to war in Yemen in 2015 finds its origins in a struggle to assert the Kingdom's status as a regional power in the Middle East." to add to this perspective, Popp (2015) states that the conflict in Yemen may be regarded as a continuation of the Arab Spring, which spread across the region in 2011, the author also explores the hypothesis that Saudi Arabia engaged in Yemen to stop the Houthi rebels from gaining control and to preserve their own regional dominance. The author makes the case that a political solution is required to put an end to the conflict and minimize the suffering of the Yemeni people as the international community has mostly failed to address the issue at hand.
- And according to Tzimas's (2018) article that examines the legality of the intervention under international law, the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen can be justified under international law because it was carried out with the approval of the internationally recognized government of Yemen and was intended to reestablish the government's authority in the face of a rebel group that had seized control of significant parts of the nation's territory. Tzima argues that since the intervention was carried out as a joint effort by a number of states, then the operation's legitimacy under international law was established. In addition, according to Jan and Haruna's article (2015), The Saudi-led coalition does not violate the UN charter as it acted in defense of its territory and the request of the head of state. On the other hand, Iran's involvement cannot be justified as it is involved in the political and territorial sovereignty of another state. Jan and Haruna conclude that Iran must withdraw its involvement in Yemen because it is a violation of international law and that it runs the risk of escalating the conflict and adding to the humanitarian suffering; they also point out that Yemen is a sovereign

state and that the Houthi rebellion while posing a threat to Yemeni stability, does not justify foreign intervention.

- Clausen (2019) discusses how the instability of the whole region was threatened by the Houthi uprising, which resulted in the fall of the Yemeni government, and this, in its turn, can be used to legalize and justify the necessity of foreign involvement in order to restore security. The decision, according to Clausen, was not merely a response to the Houthi violence but also a calculated effort by the Saudi government to maintain its interests in the region, given the country's failure to uphold its responsibilities and status as a failed state, particularly in light of Iran's expanding influence in Yemen as a result of its support for the Houthi rebels. Therefore, the goal of the operation was to increase the authority of the Saudi-led coalition and reduce Iran's influence in the area. In contrast to Tzimas' and Clausen's articles, which restricted discussion of the humanitarian effects of the intervention, Laub and Robinson's (2016) report focuses on the humanitarian crisis. According to the authors, the situation was made more severe by the involvement of external actors like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people and left millions more in need of assistance. Additionally, by limiting the entry of food, medicine, and other necessities into Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition's blockade of the country's ports has made the humanitarian crisis critical.
- The Saudi-led intervention in Yemen was driven by various factors, according to both Li (2023) and Al Salehi (2021); the action was viewed as a response to the security threat posed by the Houthi rebels to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Houthis have long been a source of instability in Yemen, and their movement of rebellion has expanded into Saudi Arabia's soil, endangering the security and stability of the whole region; as a result, the Saudi-led coalition attempted to contain the Houthi threat while also restoring Yemeni stability. In addition, throughout modern history, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been involved in a regional power struggle, with Yemen functioning as a proxy battleground; hence, the Saudi-led intervention was viewed as a strategy to counter Iranian influence in the area and restore Saudi Arabia's regional dominance. The authors also highlighted the Saudi government's economic interests in Yemen, which influenced the involvement decision. Yemen is strategically located near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, an important transportation route for oil tankers; therefore, the Saudi-led coalition intended to prevent the Houthi rebels from seizing control of this critical route, which would have threatened Saudi Arabia's oil exports and economy. Salisbury (2015) points out that controlling Yemen would allow either Saudi Arabia or Iran to exert more significant influence over the region; Furthermore, the author also explained that Saudi Arabia saw the Houthi insurgency in Yemen as a direct threat to its national security and that the Houthis were seen as a proxy of Iran that had to be stopped before gaining control of the region, especially that Houthis were able to fire rockets and missiles into Saudi Arabia, targeting cities close to the border which increased the threat.
- While the intervention may have initially been justified as a response to the threat posed by the Houthi rebels (Mao & Gady, 2021) discuss how the Saudi-led coalition's persistent and indiscriminate use of force has resulted in serious human rights violations and a worsening of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The intervention's effects on regional security suggest that the conflict has increased divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the area and has prompted Saudi Arabia and Iran to pursue a more forceful foreign policy. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

published a report in 2019 that examined the effects of the conflict on Yemen's infrastructure, economy, and human development. According to the report, the conflict has caused major obstacles for Yemen's development, with poverty and unemployment rates skyrocketing, food insecurity getting worse, and public services like healthcare and education collapsing under the impact of conflict. The report states that the war has forced millions of Yemenis to flee their homes, with 80% of the population reportedly in need of humanitarian aid. As a result of skilled workers and professionals leaving the country, dying or being injured, the conflict has caused a loss of human capital; violence has also made the state less able to maintain security and deliver necessary services, which could prevent further economic growth, Yemen's economic prospects have also been further restricted by the extended instability and conflict, which have damaged international trade and investment. The report additionally focused on the long-term effects, such as how they could influence potential future economic growth and development.

6. Research Methodology

The research methodology for this paper adopts a qualitative approach to examine the external interventions in Yemen, both historically and contemporarily. Previous literature that already exists in the field of external interventions in Yemen will be collected and studied to extract any theories, observations, or findings that previous researchers have concluded; this study utilizes two main types of qualitative research, which are historical research and case study analysis. The historical research method is aimed at gaining an understanding of the external interventions by collecting and analyzing secondary sources of data, such as academic literature, reports, and articles. Furthermore, the case study method offers an in-depth analysis of the impact of external interventions on the Yemeni conflict; through this approach, the research seeks to identify the used mechanisms that affect external interventions and the factors that contribute to their success or failure.

6.1. Data Collection:

The data collection methodology adopted in this research is a secondary sources approach, as the research uses a variety of academic literature, reports, and articles that explore external interventions in Yemen. By viewing different sources, including opposing opinions, the research aims to conclude reliable findings that can be used in future policy decisions and academic research on the Yemeni conflict and other similar conflicts. The secondary sources provide an in-depth understanding of the historical and contemporary perspectives of external interventions in Yemen; this approach enables a more systematic and controlled analysis of the given phenomena. The research seeks to uncover the motivations, objectives, and challenges of external interventions in Yemen by analyzing the historical, political, and strategic factors that have shaped the interventions; in addition to that, it seeks to gather information about the outcomes. This approach enables the research to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of external interventions on the Yemeni conflict.

7. Findings:

Although a considerable number of studies have analyzed the impact of external interventions on the Yemen conflict, there is still a noticeable gap that needs to be addressed; this part divides the findings into three main points:

Firstly, the intervention of external actors in Yemen has contributed significantly to the complexity of the conflict by creating divisions among the state and the active political parties; it also reduced their willingness to negotiate and made it difficult to reach a

peaceful resolution. Among these divisions is an intra-state conflict that took place between the southern and northern parts of the state that formally united in the 90s; both the southern and northern parts are also opposed to the government and are calling for a separation of the state as a whole making way for the creation of new governments. As a result of that escalation of violence, suffering, and human rights violations committed in both parts of the state, this has further weakened the central government's control over the country and made it harder to establish a unified state. By addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting a Yemeni-led peace process that must include all participating parties, it is possible to achieve peace in Yemen and improve the humanitarian situation of its people.

Secondly, external interventions have undermined the government's legitimacy, making it challenging to provide essential services and protection to citizens since the president and most of the country's politicians fled the state to Saudi Arabia after the Houthis took over the presidential palace and government institutions in the capital city Sana'a in 2014, the absence of a stable government and the presence of weak institutions have also made it easier for the Houthis to increase their powers and expand their roots across the state. In addition, in the absence of a functional state apparatus, terrorist organizations and non-state actors have taken advantage of the situation, perpetuated violence and spreading fear and instability throughout the country; this has also threatened the well-being of the citizens, and the stability of the region, for example, the growing threat from Al-Qaeda (AQAP) in Yemen.

Thirdly, increased violence, as well as widespread weapons ownership, has played a major role in aggravating Yemen's humanitarian crisis, with millions suffering from serious shortages of basic needs such as food supplies, clean drinking water, and medical facilities. The difficulty of accessing basic services like hospitals, schools, water, and sanitation systems is due to the extensive damage inflicted on infrastructure by the intervention. The United Nations has stated that more than 80% of Yemen's population, or roughly 24 million people require humanitarian assistance; additionally, the condition in Yemen has been made worse by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of cholera, according to the World Health Organization, there have been over 2 million suspected cases of cholera and over 3,000 deaths in Yemen since 2017. Furthermore, over 4 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to the conflict, and many are living in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

8. **Conclusion:**

Throughout history, different states have shown a very clear interest in Yemen; the reason for this wide interest would be its strategic location on the map and the importance of this location regionally as it controlled the seas of the Arabian Peninsula. After 2011 and with the military, economic institutions collapsed in the state, making Yemen an easy target for non-state actors to be involved in the state's political arena calling for the involvement of the international community because of the protests, the failed power transaction, and the foreign intervention have created an unsafe environment for the civilians. In the case of Yemen, not only did the Saudi and Iran intervention fail to achieve its goals of restoring the government's status, but it also contributed significantly to the complexity of the Yemeni conflict and negatively affected the peacebuilding progress. The root causes of the conflict, including political, economic, and social factors, must be addressed in order to achieve peace and stability in Yemen; there is a need for increased collaboration among regional and international actors to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict; this includes supporting the

Yemeni government in its efforts to rebuild and strengthen state institutions, providing humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict, and promoting dialogue among conflicting parties. Ultimately, A long-term solution to the conflict requires the involvement of regional and international actors and a commitment to address the root causes of the conflict.

Finally, the study concludes that the international community must recognize the impact of external interventions on the Yemeni people and take responsibility for their role in the conflict; the international community can help Yemen achieve a lasting peace that benefits all Yemenis. The negative outcomes of the intervention do not only affect Yemen but also highly influence the politics in the region. Without reaching common ground in the struggle for power in the region between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the chances of resolving the conflict in Yemen and establishing a safe environment for its citizens become very slim. The case study of Yemen is very clearly not an ordinary one, so many sides are involved internally and externally; it is also an excellent example of the negative effects that external interventions can cause.

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