



BRIEFING PAPER

Number CBP7184, 27 April 2017

Yemen at war

By Ben Smith

Contents:

1. Background
2. Collapse of the Sana'a government
3. A proxy war?
4. Saudi-led intervention
5. Legality of intervention
6. Humanitarian situation
7. Alleged war crimes and UK-supplied armaments
8. A negotiated settlement?
9. Outlook for Yemen and the region
10. Conclusion

Contents

1. Background	4
1.1 History of Saudi-Yemeni Relations	4
Treaty of Taif	4
Yemeni Civil War 1962-1970	4
1970 to present day	4
1.2 The fragile 2011 settlement	5
2. Collapse of the Sana'a government	7
2.1 The Houthi movement	7
2.2 How have the Houthis had such success?	8
3. A proxy war?	10
3.1 Iran	10
3.2 Saudi Arabia	11
4. Saudi-led intervention	12
4.1 Members of the Saudi-led coalition	12
4.2 Goals of the coalition	13
4.3 Progress of the military action	14
Continuing stalemate in 2016	15
Sharp escalation after August 2016	15
4.4 AQAP and ISIS in Yemen	16
ISIS	17
4.5 The Trump Administration and Yemen	18
Arms transfers	19
Hodeida	19
Deeper US involvement?	19
5. Legality of intervention	21
6. Humanitarian situation	23
6.1 Impact on children	25
UN Children and armed conflict report	25
Education	26
7. Alleged war crimes and UK-supplied armaments	28
7.1 UK-supplied armaments	28
The judicial review	30
Cluster bombs	30
7.2 Involvement of UK personnel	32
7.3 Investigations	34
7.4 Child soldiers	35
8. A negotiated settlement?	36
9. Outlook for Yemen and the region	39
9.1 Iranian response and the outlook for the coalition	39
Saudi economic difficulties	39
Prospects for the coalition	40
Central Bank	41
10. Conclusion	44

Summary

Following the Houthi capture of Sana'a in September 2014, President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi resigned in January 2015 and was placed under house arrest. After escaping to Aden in February, he rescinded his resignation and declared the Houthi takeover a coup d'état. When the Houthis advanced on Aden, Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia, where he called upon the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) to intervene.

On March 26, a Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes on Yemen targeting the Houthis and, importantly, allied elements in the army still loyal to previous President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is held largely responsible for the striking success of the Houthi rebellion.

The conflict, which has now lasted more than two years, has been labelled by Amnesty International as the "Forgotten War". What attention the conflict has attracted in the UK is largely due to the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the sale and use of arms from the UK to Saudi Arabia. The UN has called Yemen the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

There have been allegations that UK-supplied armaments have been used to commit violations of international humanitarian law and that UK personnel are close to the Saudi-led coalition's targeting decisions. The UK Government says that it has faith in the UK's export licensing regime to prevent that from happening, and that UK advisers are not part of the coalition forces but do sometimes advise on how to comply with international humanitarian law. On February 7 2017, the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) took the UK government to court to obtain a judicial review of arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Since the intervention started on 26 March 2015, the Saudis and their allies have managed to push back the Houthis from Aden. Aden remains far from secure, however, with a number of key officials having been assassinated and the influence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS/Daesh is on the increase. Heavy fighting is ongoing around Taiz in the South and Marib, where Taiz until recently was effectively under siege, exacerbating the humanitarian situation there.

There have also been signs of dissent within the Saudi royal family and in the country concerning the conduct and cost of the war. The Saudi economy has been greatly affected by the drop in the oil price.

The Saudis and their allies see the conflict as having been instigated and fuelled by Iran, and there is some evidence for this. But many analysts see the conflict as being more about domestic Yemeni forces.

For Iran, the conflict is seen as a low cost way of bogging down their Saudi rivals in Yemen. The prospects for peace in the near future seem slim as neither side deems its situation to be weak enough to pursue a settlement, though there has been some progress on pursuing talks.

This paper discusses how AQAP and ISIS have benefited from the chaos. It also looks at the UK role in easing the humanitarian situation in Yemen at the same time as providing arms and assistance to the Saudis. Finally it looks at the chances of a peaceful solution to the conflict, the broader Saudi-Iranian rivalry and some likely outcomes in Yemen and the region.

1. Background

1.1 History of Saudi-Yemeni Relations

Treaty of Taif

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen were first established through the [Treaty of Taif](#) in 1934 following a brief war between them shortly after the establishment of the Saudi state. The treaty demarcated part of the border between the two countries particularly in the Western areas next to the Red Sea and in Yemeni eyes allowed for unrestricted Yemeni entry into Saudi Arabia.

Yemeni Civil War 1962-1970

Following a rebellion and the ousting of the Zaydi Imam, Ahmed bin Yahya of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom in 1962, civil war broke out between Royalist and Republican forces in Northern Yemen, which led to intervention by various states. Saudi Arabia, with the backing of Jordan and Britain, supported the Mutawakkilite Royalists, while Egypt supported the Republican forces, committing 70,000 troops to what became known as Egypt's 'Vietnam'. Saudi Arabia supplied military and financial assistance to the Royalists but, unlike Egypt, did not commit any troops.

Following defeat at the hands of Israel in the Six Day War in 1967, Egypt withdrew its forces but the Republicans eventually went on to win the civil war. In 1970 Saudi Arabia recognised the Yemen Arab Republic.

1970 to present day

Following the withdrawal of British forces in November 1967 from Aden, South Yemen became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1970. It was essentially a Marxist state. In the wars that followed between North and South Yemen, Saudi Arabia supported the North, given its strong anti-communist stance during the Cold War. Throughout the period, both countries expressed a desire for Yemeni unification and in 1988 discussions started between the two countries to achieve this goal. Unification was declared on 22 May 1990 and Ali Abdullah Saleh became the President of the newly unified state.

With Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Yemen's relations with Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf deteriorated, as a result of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's stance following the invasion. Yemen and Saleh had strong relations with Iraq, as Yemen employed Iraqi military advisors and with Egypt, Jordan and Iraq had formed the Arab Cooperation Council in 1989. Given Yemen's dependence on the Gulf economies, Yemen's stance was to oppose the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, while at the same time opposing any Western-led military intervention. Yemen was also a member of the UN Security Council at this time and registered the only vote against the UN Security Council resolution authorising the use of force to remove Iraq from Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia responded by expelling hundreds of thousands of Yemeni workers.¹

That left Yemen in a very weak position; it lost its financial help from Saudi Arabia and remittances from Yemenis in Saudi Arabia. On top of this Yemen had to find work for hundreds of thousands of Yemenis returning home. Trade with Iraq also suffered because of sanctions.

After the first Gulf War, Saudi Arabia backed southern forces against Ali Abdullah Saleh in a brief war in 1994, but Saleh prevailed. Following the outbreak of the Houthi rebellion in 2004, the Saudis supported Saleh in his attempts to quell their rebellion. He subsequently launched six wars against them, as well as combatting Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

According to one analyst, Saudi Arabian policy towards Yemen is 'containment and maintenance':² Saudi Arabia ensures that Yemen cannot challenge Saudi Arabia militarily, while Saudi aid prevents the Yemeni economy from collapsing, averting unwanted migration into Saudi Arabia.

In April 2013, the Saudi Kingdom announced a crackdown on illegal labourers resulting in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Yemeni workers. At the same time Riyadh began work on a fence across the Saudi-Yemeni border to prevent the cross border migration of economic migrants, smugglers and militant Islamists.

1.2 The fragile 2011 settlement

The Arab uprisings dethroned several authoritarian rulers and Yemen was not immune to the upheaval. President Ali Abdullah Saleh had been in power since 1978, an experience that he famously likened to "dancing on the heads of snakes."

Not only were there many different tribal interests to placate (often with the distribution of resources – patronage is particularly important in a traditional society such as Yemen's), central government in Sana'a also had to hold together the two halves of one country that used to be two, with left-leaning separatists as well as a serious al-Qaeda linked rebellion in the south.

While Yemen does not have a history of serious sectarian conflict, there is a sectarian divide. Houthi rebels belonging to the Zaidi Shia sect of Islam posed a serious threat to the mainly Sunni government in Sana'a. The Houthis have mounted many attacks against the Yemeni authorities, allegedly with the support of Iran. The Saudi armed forces have launched cross-border attacks on Houthi strongholds in northern Yemen.

As the position of Saleh became increasingly precarious, Saudi Arabia was one of the leaders in brokering a deal for a transition. The deal,

¹ For more on the two countries' relations, see Brian Whitaker, 'Yemen and Saudi Arabia: a historical review of relations', *Al-Bab*, 25 March 2015

² Peter Salisbury, *Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian 'Cold War'*, Chatham House, February 2015

backed by the UN, involved a transfer of power to Saleh's deputy, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, which finally took place in November 2011 after months of deadly clashes between protesters and the security forces.

The transfer of power to Hadi appeared to be having some success in establishing stability, but the Yemeni armed forces remained sharply divided after the defection in March 2011 of General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar from the government to the uprising. The manoeuvrings of tribal forces were behind many clashes between different parts of the official armed forces. Throughout 2012 and 2013 Hadi continued to struggle with the various challenges to central authority including the Houthis and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

More broadly, the 2011 'revolution' did not lead to a thorough change in the leadership of the country. Huge economic and social problems continue to afflict the population and Hadi is seen by many Yemenis as having been ineffective.

2. Collapse of the Sana'a government

In September 2014, Houthi armed forces took control of the capital Sana'a, culminating a simmering and often violent dispute over the drafting of a new constitution, particularly over its crucial decentralisation clauses.

Houthi forces forced the government to sign a Peace and National Partnership Agreement, foreseeing the formulation of a new government in one month, with the present President acting as caretaker. New political advisers from the Houthi movement and the Southern movement would be appointed. Most of Yemen's political parties signed the agreement, and it was welcomed by the United Nations.

However, although the terms of the agreement were in themselves reasonable, the fact that it had been signed under duress after the rout of the official Yemeni armed forces showed how far the 2011 settlement had come off the rails and how weak the government was.

In January 2015, the Houthis kidnapped a presidential adviser who was thought to be pushing a federal arrangement that the Houthis did not support. The President signed an agreement with the Houthis on 20 January, in which he agreed to implement to the provisions of the September agreement more quickly. The Houthi forces then moved to take control of the presidential palace. President Hadi and his Prime Minister resigned rather than continue to try to operate at gunpoint, and were placed under house arrest. On February 21 President Hadi escaped and fled to Aden, the former capital of South Yemen, where he rescinded his resignation and called on the Houthis to quit Sana'a.

On 20 March Sana'a was rocked by two suicide bomb attacks targeting Zaidi mosques and killing 137 people. Responsibility was claimed by ISIS, the first time they had claimed responsibility for attacks in Yemen. By 22 March Houthi sympathisers (reportedly Saleh loyalist units) were in control of the city of Taiz and its airport. Houthi forces then used Taiz as a staging post for the advance on Aden, forcing President Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia.

2.1 The Houthi movement

Yemen's Zaidi Shiite community forms a minority of about 35% of the population, largely in the northern governorate of Sa'ada. However, despite being considered Shiites, they are quite distinct from the majority of Shia, who are known as Twelvers. Rather than recognising twelve Imams succeeding the Prophet Mohammed, they only believe in five, with the fifth being Zaid ibn Ali.

Ansar Allah ('Supporters of Allah') is the name commonly used for Al-Shabab al-Muminin (The Believing Youth), the movement founded by the Houthi family in the late 1990s, originally as a religious force to protect Zaidi interests.

The group's strongly anti-US ideology soon brought them into conflict with the Saleh government, which was keen to retain its allegiance to the US and fight against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula with US help. Hostilities with the government broke out in 2004. When the original operational leader of Ansar Allah, Hussein al-Houthi, was killed by Yemeni security forces in 2004, his position was taken by his brother, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi. Their father, Badr al-Din al-Houthi, was the group's spiritual leader until his death but Abd al-Malik is, at the age of 38 years, the overall leader.

The group wants equal rights for Yemen's Zaidis, arguing that the Yemeni government's alliance with Saudi Arabia has led to increasingly intransigent Sunni Wahhabi or Salafi religion taking hold in the country, and greater discrimination against the Zaidis. (This is a complaint echoed in the more secular south, where southern Yemenis complain that they are oppressed by the fundamentalist Sunnis from the north.)

The 2011 protest movement against the Saleh government gave the opportunity for the Houthis to firm up their control of the Sa'ada governorate and to expand their influence beyond. Throughout 2012 and 2013, there were continuing clashes between Ansar Allah and pro-government Sunni tribal forces, forces aligned with Islah, the Islamist party, and Salafi groups. Much of the fighting took place in the governorates to the south of Sa'ada, such as Hajjah and Amran.

2.2 How have the Houthis had such success?

The Houthis' success in Sunni-majority territory surprised many observers. Yemen's government and armed forces have long been weak and fragmented, and have had too many forces lined up against them to put up a strong resistance to the Houthis.

One anti-Houthi activist in the southern city of Taiz said of the conflict: "It's one of Saleh's dances," referring to the famous quote from the former president that governing Yemen was like "dancing on the heads of snakes."

Saleh has allegedly been involved in a range of activities to undermine the rule of his successor, using his position as president of the General People's Congress party to thwart reforming legislation, and arranging demonstrations against the government and attacks on vital infrastructure, according to a report on Yemen prepared for the UN Security Council.³

This is the most important reason for the Houthis' success: they have linked up with former president Saleh. Because of the support of Saleh, elements of the regular armed forces, particularly of Saleh's disbanded Republican Guard, have joined in too. The Republican Guard used to be led by Ahmed Ali Saleh, the former president's son and once his prospective successor. The Houthis have managed to gather dozens of

³ [Letter dated 20 February 2015 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 \(2014\) addressed to the President of the Security Council](#)

tanks and plenty of heavy weaponry from these defectors and deserters.⁴

Saleh's support has also brought with it some of the Sunni tribes loyal to the Saleh family. This was crucial in taking such areas as Amran, where the conservative Sunni tribes had previously fought against the Houthis.

The Houthis' advance was also bolstered by popular anger following the ending of fuel subsidies. Sana'a has a considerable Zaidi population and Zaidis had been at the forefront of demonstrations in the capital against the government, particularly over the issue of fuel subsidies, and against the US. The mobilisation of Zaidis in the capital exacerbated divisions, increasing the tendency for Zaidi strongholds in Sana'a and easing the takeover by Houthi forces.

There are some reports of Iranian help for the Houthi rebellion, but not much evidence of material support.

This combination left Hadi unable to respond, as the Houthis swept south and took the capital.

The Houthis have had some success in attracting young radicals, not necessarily Zaidis, tired of the patronage and power plays between established groups and disenchanted with the outcome of the 2011 protests. Abd al-Malik al-Houthi has promised that fuel subsidies will be restored.

⁴ Florence Gaub, ['Whatever happened to Yemen's army?'](#), European Union Institute for Security Studies issue brief, April 2015

3. A proxy war?

3.1 Iran

The Houthi movement is based on the Zaidi community, which practices a version of Shiite Islam, and its leadership has shown support for the anti-Israel stance of revolutionary Shiite Iran. The former Houthi leader, Hussein al-Houthi (now dead), praised on occasion both Ayatollah Khomeini, then Supreme Leader of Iran, and Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Iranian-backed Lebanese militia Hizballah.

The Sunni monarchies in the Gulf argue that the Houthis are backed by Iran. However, there has never been a lot of evidence for concrete support for the rebellion from Iran, despite claims from the Yemeni, US, and Saudi governments that the Houthis have received weapons and other support from Hizballah and/or the Qods Force, the overseas branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. Nevertheless, the Houthi movement looks to Iran to support its anti-Western stance. The leader of the Houthi movement said in an interview in Iran that he expects help from Iran:

Ansar Allah expects the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries to support them and the Yemeni people...The revolution in Yemen...is inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran...but the intellectual and historical roots of revolution in Yemen stem from the fact that Yemenis are Zaidis and have more political experience than the Islamic Republic. From Ali's son, Imam Zaid up to now, Zaidis have witnessed many revolutions against unjust rulers.⁵

Zaidi leaders are keen to point out that they do not share the same religious beliefs, and particularly the jurisprudence, as the Twelver Shiites of Iran; Zaidis are considered to be theologically closer to Sunni Islam than other Shiites.⁶

Following the Houthi capture of Sana'a, relations with Iran were strengthened. Finding a depleted treasury in Sana'a, the Houthis reached out to Iran. A senior delegation made a lengthy visit to Tehran where he obtained a promise of a year's worth of oil supplies from Iran.

In February 2015 the Yemeni civil aviation authority signed an agreement with its Iranian counterpart to inaugurate four daily flights from Sana'a to Tehran, which is a frequent connection given the normally relatively small contacts between the two capitals.⁷

Four flights a day
from Tehran to
Sanaa

On the other hand, in early March 2016 the Houthi rebels held talks with the Saudis in Riyadh, after which the Houthi leadership called for

⁵ Mehdi Khalaji, '[Yemen's Zaidis: A Window for Iranian Influence](#)' Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2 February 2015

⁶ '[Who are the Houthis, the group that just toppled Yemen's government?](#)', *Washington Post*, 22 January 2015

⁷ Suzanne Dahlgren, '[Four Weddings and a Funeral in Yemen](#)', Middle East Research and Information Project, 20 March 2015

an end to Iranian interference in Yemen, although that may have been mainly for public consumption.⁸

3.2 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has taken a strong line against the Houthi rebellion, lending military support to the government's fight against them. The Houthis complain of incursions by Sunni Saudi Arabian forces into their area in support of Yemeni government troops. In November 2010, a group of Houthi rebels entered Saudi territory and killed two Saudi border guards, provoking retaliation, including air strikes. The conflict claimed many lives in 2009 and 2010 and there were as many as 250,000 displaced persons. The fighting died down in early 2011.

The Saudis continue to blame the Iranians for the unrest in Yemen and there is still a considerable Saudi force along its southern border, near the Houthis' strongholds. When the Houthis took over the capital in September, Saudi Arabia suspended its aid to Yemen, which is heavily dependent on foreign aid to feed its population.

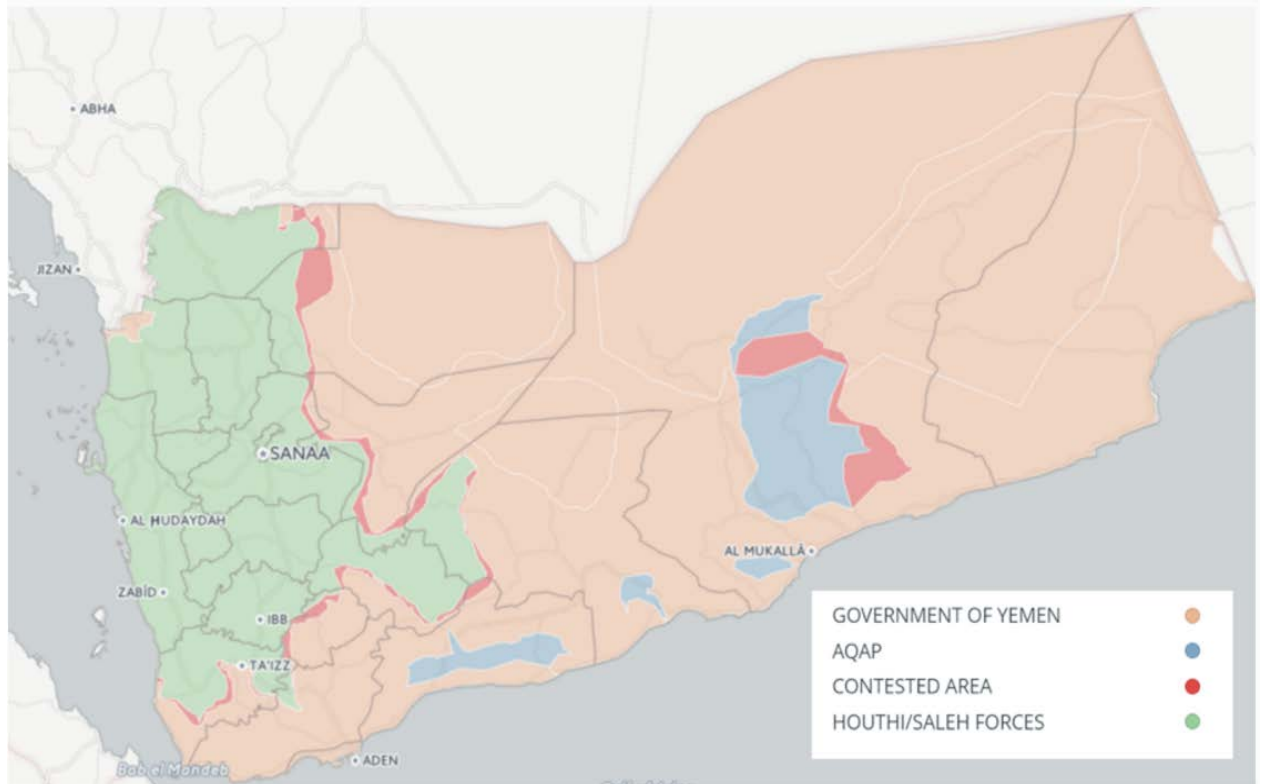
One of the reasons for the declining influence of Islah, the Islamist party, may be its role as the equivalent of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen. It has been Saudi policy to weaken the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudis have not been supporting Islah in Yemen.

The Saudi monarchy is alarmed by the situation in Yemen because of the long shared border and the potential for spill-over from Yemen. Riyadh is building a border fence along the Yemeni border, as well as along its northern, Iraqi border. But the Saudis are also worried about rebel Shia movements in general because of its fragile legitimacy among its own Shia minority, estimated at 15% or more of the population. The Shia community is concentrated in the Eastern Province of Qatif, the location of most of Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, and the Saudi government tends to see Iranian influence behind Saudi Shia protests.

⁸ ['Saudi Arabia, Houthi Rebels Hold Direct Talks on Yemen War'](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 9 May 2016

4. Saudi-led intervention

Control over Yemen as at February 2017



Source: Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies

4.1 Members of the Saudi-led coalition

The membership of the Saudi-led coalition includes all the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with the exception of Oman, which is seen as a possible mediator.⁹ Saudi Arabia has provided the bulk of the forces, with a commitment of a hundred jets and 150,000 troops in 2015.¹⁰

Saudis and the UAE have diverted the bulk of their air power from the fight against Daesh in Iraq and Syria to be used in Yemen against the Houthis, according to some sources.¹¹

The other Arab countries in the coalition include Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Morocco. The Egyptian navy has played a significant role, patrolling

⁹ 'Factbox: Saudi-led coalition against Yemen's Houthis', *Reuters*, 10 April 2015

¹⁰ 'Saudi deploys 100 fighter jets, 150,000 soldiers for anti-Houthi campaign', *AL-Arabiya*, 26 March 2015

¹¹ 'As U.S. Escalates Air War on ISIS, Allies Slip Away', *New York Times*, 7 November 2015

the straits leading from the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea and shelling Houthi positions.

On 4 May 2015 Senegal pledged to send 2,100 troops and on 10 May 2015 Malaysia joined the coalition.

4.2 Goals of the coalition

According to Adel al-Jubeir – the former Saudi Ambassador to the US and now foreign minister – the Saudis’ aim is to “Do whatever it takes in order to protect the legitimate government of Yemen from falling.”¹²

However, there are broader objectives. Saudi Arabia also wants to prevent what it sees as an extension of Iranian influence in the Arabian Peninsula and to firm up its dominance of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.¹³

Barbara Bodine, the former US ambassador to Yemen between 1997 and 2001 commenting on Saudi goals in Yemen notes:

The Saudis did not have a clear idea of an endgame beyond putting the Hadi government back in charge. Securing the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia was a strategic objective, but [most of] the fighting has been in the south. What their endgame is, beyond a Yemen that doesn’t threaten its borders and isn’t controlled by Iran, is pretty unclear. There has not been any real reconstruction—political reconstruction, physical infrastructure—and there is no “day after” plan.

The Saudis went in with the hubris that given the size and sophistication of their air force and the prowess of Emirati ground troops, this would be a short war; the Houthis, a ragtag insurgency, would collapse after “shock and awe.” It has not worked out that way.¹⁴

Tactically, the Saudi air strikes aim to target regular military units loyal to former President Saleh and their heavy equipment in order to break the alliance between them and Houthis.¹⁵

Before the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, there was evidence that what was always believed to be a fragile alliance between the Houthis and Saleh may have been on the verge of collapse. In March 2015, it was reported that the Houthis clashed with Republican Guard special-forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh over control of a military camp north of Sana’a.¹⁶

The army, Saleh and his family, and prominent members of the GPC were heavily targeted by the Saudi-led coalition in the early days of the conflict, in the hope that this would split the alliance. The opposite seems to have happened; significant sections of the army loyal to Saleh increased their cooperation with the Houthis.

Intervention strengthened Houthi alliance?

¹² [‘Saudi Arabia launches air strikes in Yemen’](#), *BBC News Online*, 26 March 2015

¹³ Bilal Y. Saab, [‘Houthi and the Blowback’](#), *Foreign Affairs*, 29 March 2015

¹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, [The Futility of Force in Yemen](#), 13 March 2017

¹⁵ Patrick Cockburn, [‘Yemen crisis: This exotic war will soon become Europe’s problem’](#), *Independent*, 26 April 2015

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, [Yemen is Peace Possible](#), 9 February 2016 p.8

Houthi and Saleh supporters both claim that the Houthis are running the war. After the fall of the Hadi government in February 2015, the Houthis moved to strengthen their relationship with the army in order to gain its loyalty, a move which concerns Saleh loyalists.¹⁷

4.3 Progress of the military action

After about 2,415 sorties and the release of more than 1,000 air-to-surface weapons, *Operation Decisive Storm* was ended on 22 April 2015 and replaced by *Operation Restoring Hope*.

Saudi Arabia has attempted to prevent Iran from getting help to the Houthis by blockading sea and air ports (and even destroying civilian runways, such as that at Sana'a international airport). This has had some success in frustrating Iranian efforts to coordinate with the rebels, but it has also made it more difficult for aid agencies to reach those in need.¹⁸

The war has become something of a stalemate, though the coalition has made some significant breakthroughs, particularly when the anti-Houthi alliance in the south, with the assistance of UAE and Saudi special forces, managed to drive the Houthis from Aden in July 2015.

In March 2016, the Houthi siege of Taiz seemed to have been broken though the Houthis control much of the city and there have been advances in Marib province, though the mountainous terrain and Houthi resistance prevents an easy advance on Sana'a.¹⁹

The Houthis remain firmly in control of their northern heartland and Sana'a, despite ISIS-inspired suicide bombings in the city, while fighting continues in the south around Taiz. The Saudis in turn claim that the operation in Yemen has been a qualified success and that operations around Sana'a have been brought to a halt at the request of the UN, to allow peace talks to succeed. One Saudi prince and former special forces officer argued:

You cannot say there is no progress...The enemy is on the back foot. They are surrounded in every single city...and they are blockaded from the sea.²⁰

On 26 April 2016 the coalition and Yemeni government troops launched an offensive against AQAP in the South of the country. The Saudi-led coalition claimed that 800 AQAP fighters had been killed in the fight for the port city of Al-Mukalla, though local sources dispute that figure, saying that many AQAP fighters had already left.²¹ In April 2016 pro-government forces re-took Mukalla, although ISIS-ordered bomb attacks continued in the city.

There have also been reports that the coalition has employed mercenaries from Latin America, particularly Colombia, supplied in a

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.6

¹⁸ ['Mixed success for Saudi military operation in Yemen'](#), *BBC News Online*, 12 May 2015

¹⁹ ['Yemeni pro-government forces stall in push toward capital'](#), *AP* 22 September 2015

²⁰ ['Yemen's guerrilla war tests military ambitions of big-spending Saudis'](#), *Reuters*, 19 April 2016

²¹ ['Al Qaeda fighters leave Mukalla'](#), *Al-Jazeera*, 25 Apr 2016

programme once run by *Blackwater*. The use of mercenaries by Gulf countries is appealing to them since while these countries are increasingly militarily assertive in the region, they do not have the forces with experience of sustaining long campaigns and have populations that are reluctant to volunteer for military service.²²

The Houthis in turn have launched cross-border attacks on Saudi territory killing or capturing hundreds of Saudi troops targeting Najran. One analyst claimed in 2016 that the Houthi/Saleh threat to southern Saudi Arabia was “off the charts”.²³

The Saudis acknowledged losing 300 troops in the Yemen conflict, but the real figure could be ten times higher according to a number of sources.²⁴

Continuing stalemate in 2016

The front lines in Yemen did not move much from April to October 2016. Despite mounting civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure, the Saudi-led coalition had little success in pushing back the Houthi forces.

The conflict resulted in the re-emergence of *de facto* south and north Yemen, with the pro-Saudi Hadi government installed in Aden, the old capital of South Yemen, and the Houthis and their allies in the official armed forces loyal to the former president Saleh still in full control of the former capital of North Yemen, Sana'a.

Concerted airstrikes, and ground forces particularly from the United Arab Emirates around the Hadi capital of Aden, has not moved the battle lines very much.

Sharp escalation after August 2016

A cessation of hostilities, which began on 10 April 2016, collapsed in August. In August and September 2016, the number of civilian casualties rose sharply, with six times as many of them the fault of the Saudi-led coalition, which was responsible for 279 killed and 339 injured in that period, than the Houthis/Saleh side, according to the United Nations.²⁵

On 8 October, an air strike by the Saudi-led coalition hit a funeral in central Sana'a. 140 mourners were killed and more than 500 were injured.²⁶ The air strike hit a well-known community centre and killed high profile political and tribal figures including mayor of Sanaa, two Yemeni members of the U.N. cease-fire monitoring team and a general who many hoped would play an important post-conflict security role. The Saudi Government announced an inquiry into the incident,

²² [‘Emirates secretly sends Colombian mercenaries to fight in Yemen’](#), *New York Times*, November 25 2015

²³ [‘Yemeni rebels pose a rising threat in Southern Saudi Arabia’](#), *Washington Post*, 23 February 2016)

²⁴ [‘What exactly is the UAE doing fighting a war in Yemen?’](#), *Middle East Eye*, 16 March 2016)

²⁵ [‘Yemen: UN says shelling in Taiz leaves dozens of civilian casualties’](#), UN press release, 4 October 2016

²⁶ [‘Yemen’s Terrible War Is About to Get Worse’](#), *Foreign Policy*, 12 October 2016

something welcomed by the UK Government.²⁷ Human Rights Watch described the incident as an “apparent war crime.”²⁸

The attack fed in to an increasing cycle of retaliation. In October the Houthi/Saleh side attacked a UAE-registered vessel in the Red Sea at the strait of Mandab. The Houthi/Saleh side has also launched an increasing number of missile attacks into Saudi territory.

Also in October, the US destroyer USS Mason came under sustained attack from positions in Yemen. On 12 October, the US retaliated, hitting radar stations operated by the Houthi/Saleh forces, destroying the three stations. It was the first time that the US had entered the conflict directly. The Pentagon said that the action was limited and defensive: “These limited self-defence strikes were conducted to protect our personnel, our ships, and our freedom of navigation.”²⁹

More recently there have been tensions between different pro-government armed groups on the ground. In February 2017, supporters of a faction supported by Saudi Arabia clashed in the city of Taiz with a faction backed by the United Arab Emirates. Aden airport is currently in the hands of a faction that has fallen out with President Hadi.

4.4 AQAP and ISIS in Yemen

Despite the setbacks of losing Nasir al al-Wuhayshi and a number of top commanders in US drone strikes in the conflict, AQAP has prospered. The International Crisis Group said that they, along with ISIS, are arguably the ‘principal beneficiaries of the war’.³⁰ According to US State Department estimates, the number of AQAP members has increased from 1,000 in 2014 to 4,000 by 2015.³¹

At the beginning of 2016, AQAP made significant progress in the south of Yemen, capturing five cities and two provincial capitals.³²

Some analysts think that AQAP is happy for US attention to be focussed on rivals ISIS for now, and has therefore avoided attacking US interests for the time being, giving them time to prepare themselves for future attacks.³³

Having captured the port of Al-Mukalla early in the conflict, AQAP set about consolidating its control in important areas of the large Hadramout province, which accounts for one third of the total area of Yemen.³⁴ Part of the reason for its success in Mukalla has been its ability

²⁷ ‘UK welcomes initial report into airstrike on funeral hall in Yemen’, Foreign and Commonwealth Office press release, 15 October 2016

²⁸ ‘Yemen: Saudi-Led Funeral Attack Apparent War Crime’, Human Rights Watch press release, 13 October 2016

²⁹ ‘US enters Yemen war, bombing Houthis who launched missiles at navy ship’, *Guardian*, 13 October 2016

³⁰ International Crisis Group, *Yemen is Peace Possible*, 9 February 2016, p17

³¹ International Crisis Group, *Yemen’s al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base*, 2 February 2017

³² Katherine Zimmerman, ‘AQAP Expanding behind Yemen’s Frontlines’ *AEI Critical Threats*, 17 February 2016

³³ Katherine Zimmerman, *AQAP: A Resurgent Threat*, Combating Terrorism Centre, 11 September 2015

³⁴ Ahmed Alwly, *Despite Arab, US attacks, AQAP still holding out in Yemen*, Al Monitor, 13 May 2016

to govern in coordination with a local tribal council forming a militia to provide security to protect banks, government buildings and schools.³⁵ It has adopted a strategy adapted from other Islamist groups in concentrating on providing basic social services in the absence of the state to, legitimise its rule.

Before the port's liberation in April 2016, AQAP used the revenues raised from the control of the strategic oil harbour of Mukalla to fund its fighters. AQAP was offering higher wages than that paid to government soldiers and the attractiveness of joining AQAP in an impoverished war-ravaged country has been enhanced.³⁶ According to a Reuters investigation,³⁷ AQAP has access to an estimated \$100 million war chest from the funds raised from Mukalla and looted banks. Yemeni government officials and local traders have estimated that AQAP had extorted \$1.4 million from the national oil company and raised \$2 million daily from taxes on goods and fuel entering the port.

AQAP seeks to become a quasi-state in Yemen and sought permission from the Yemeni government to export crude oil and take 25% of the profits. The Yemeni government refused, fearful of legitimising an internationally recognised terrorist organisation.

One UAE official had described Mukalla as being AQAP's "lungs" and the loss in April 2016 of the port represented a major blow in terms of loss of funding.

Reports have emerged of AQAP fighters fighting alongside Saudi-led coalition forces in Taiz.³⁸ In northern Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition has either tacitly allied itself with AQAP or turned a blind eye to it in the fight against the Houthi/Saleh alliance.³⁹ The report also notes that three Hadi associates appeared on the US Treasury list of "global terrorists" for financing and representing AQAP.

ISIS

Several leading AQAP figures have defected to ISIS, and there are reports of strong rivalry between AQAP and ISIS, though armed clashes have not broken out.⁴⁰ Those who have defected were apparently frustrated at AQAP's lack of aggression in the current conflict.⁴¹ ISIS in Yemen is believed to be small, with the US State Department estimating in May 2016 that its membership numbered 150.⁴² The ISIS leadership in Yemen (unlike AQAP's) is mainly made up of non-Yemenis and its members have experience of fighting in Syria and Iraq. ISIS has struggled to gain acceptance in Yemen given its brutal methods and

³⁵ ['The truth behind al-Qaeda's takeover of Mukalla'](#), *Al Jazeera*, 16 September 2015.

³⁶ International Crisis Group, [Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base](#), 2 February 2017

³⁷ ['How Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen has made al Qaeda stronger – and richer'](#), *Reuters*, 8 April 2016

³⁸ ['Yemen conflict: Al-Qaeda joins coalition battle for Taiz'](#), *BBC news online*, 22 February 2016

³⁹ [Yemen's al-Qaeda – expanding the base](#), International Crisis Group, 2 February 2017

⁴⁰ 'Ashraf al Falahi, [Islamic State extends its tentacles into Yemen](#), *Al Monitor*, 30 November 2015

⁴¹ ['Islamic State Gains Strength in Yemen, Challenging Al Qaeda'](#), *New York Times*, 15 December 2015

⁴² International Crisis Group, [Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base](#), 2 February 2017

relatively more autocratic style. Furthermore, it appears disunited as evidenced by an incident in December 2015 where 15 senior members and 55 fighters accused the leader of IS in Yemen of violating Sharia. Listing a number of grievances, they received what was described as a “contemptuous” response from the central leadership in Iraq and Syria demanding obedience. In response the seventy disgruntled members rejected the letter and left the group.⁴³

ISIS has also shown itself to be successful in bypassing the security measures imposed by the government and coalition forces in both Aden and Sana’a, which is controlled by the Houthis, in order to launch attacks. The possibility remains of ISIS and AQAP fighters joining forces to mount terrorist attacks further afield.

Aden

In Aden, ISIS and AQAP, both opposed to the Houthis, have exploited the security vacuum. There have been assassinations in the city of top officials and of government related individuals after the Houthi/Saleh forces were expelled. On December 6 2015 Maj. Gen. Jaafar Mohammed Saad, governor of the city of Aden, was killed in a car bomb attack claimed by ISIS. Other attacks in Aden which ISIS have claimed saw a former Prime Minister’s residence and Saudi-led coalition military targets attacked, resulting in the deaths of 15 people, including four UAE soldiers in October 2015.⁴⁴ ISIS was also accused by the Yemeni government of orchestrating an attack on an elderly care home in Aden resulting in the death of 16 people including four foreign nuns acting as nurses.⁴⁵

4.5 The Trump Administration and Yemen

The inauguration of the Trump Administration signalled a change in US policy in Yemen. The new administration has signalled a willingness to provide greater assistance to the Saudi-led coalition.

The Trump presidency seems to be determined to tackle Iranian influence in the region having put Iran ‘on notice’ in February following an Iranian missile test and a Houthi attack on a Saudi warship⁴⁶. The Saudis viewed the Obama Administration as being hostile. The Saudi military spokesman Ahmed al Asiri has stated that they have a “commitment”, that under Trump, the US will increase its cooperation with the Saudi-led coalition.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ahmed al Alwly, [Assassinations, chaos cripple Yemen's Aden](#), *Al Monitor*, 18 January 2016

⁴⁵ [Yemen blames IS for 'treacherous' attack on Aden elderly home](#), *Middle East Eye*, 6 March 2016

⁴⁶ [Trump administration 'officially putting Iran on notice', says Michael Flynn](#), *Guardian*, 2 February 2017

⁴⁷ Foreign Policy, [Pentagon Weighs More Support for Saudi-led War in Yemen](#), 26 March 2017

Arms transfers

The Trump Administration began by overturning a decision made at the end of the Obama presidency to block the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia because of human rights concerns.⁴⁸ Other ways of increasing US cooperation with the Saudi-led coalition include sharing more intelligence on Houthi targets and helping to plan the proposed coalition offensive on the port of Hodeidah. It has been reported that there is no consensus within the Administration on how best to confront perceived Iranian involvement or if indeed Yemen is the best place to roll back the spread of Iranian influence in the region. There are also concerns that if confronted, the Iranians could retaliate by targeting US shipping and interests in the region.⁴⁹

Hodeida

A proposal to attack Hodeida was rejected by the Obama administration last year, as unlikely to succeed, likely to make peace-making harder and probably causing a deterioration in the humanitarian situation.⁵⁰ Similar fears have been expressed by officials in the Trump Administration, who doubt that the UAE, which would lead the operation, has the capability to complete it successfully and fear that US forces could be sucked in. The UAE plans for the offensive seen by US officials were described as “bare-boned” and the UAE has requested US special forces’ assistance.⁵¹

Deeper US involvement?

US Defence Secretary, James Mathis, in a memo sent to National Security Adviser, H.R.McMaster, has asked for restrictions imposed by the Obama Administration on US military assistance to the Saudi-led coalition to be lifted. According to the *Washington Post*, in the memo it is not recommended that every aspect of the Emirati request be agreed to. Also the use of US special forces to assist with the Hodeida offensive was not requested in the memo.⁵²

The Trump administration’s approach to confronting AQAP is less constrained than his predecessor’s.⁵³ In just one week the bombing undertaken by the Trump administration in Yemen surpassed the annual bombing total of any single year under the Obama administration.⁵⁴ A further indication of deeper US involvement in Yemen came in late-

⁴⁸ [Donald Trump's State Department approves Saudi Arabia weapons sales blocked by Barack Obama](#), *Independent*, 9 March 2017

⁴⁹ ['Pentagon Weighs More Support for Saudi-led War in Yemen'](#), *Foreign Policy*, 26 March 2017

⁵⁰ ['Statement on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team in Yemen, on the Critical Importance to Maintain Al Hudaydah Port Open'](#), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 4 April 2017

⁵¹ ['Trump administration weighs deeper involvement in Yemen war'](#), *Washington Post*, 26 March 2017

⁵² [Trump administration weighs deeper involvement in Yemen war](#), *Washington Post*, 26 March 2017

⁵³ [Trump Administration Is Said to Be Working to Loosen Counterterrorism Rules](#), *New York Times*, 12 March 2017

⁵⁴ ['Trump's Ramped-Up Bombing in Yemen Signals More Aggressive Use of Military'](#), *Foreign Policy*, 9 March 2017

January 2017, when US special forces attacked an al-Qaeda base in al-Bayda. Fourteen militants were killed, according to US sources, but so too were at least 29 women and children – as well as one US soldier. There have been claims – disputed by the US authorities – that the raid was botched.

While the military campaign has been strengthened, provision for humanitarian spending has been cut in the Administration's 2017 budget proposal. One analyst argues that this is a recipe for further AQAP success:

Such a myopic focus on the military option in the battle against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) indicates a failure to grasp why AQAP has expanded so successfully in Yemen despite well more than a decade of US counterterrorism efforts in the country.

Among AQAP's core strengths is its membership's understanding of the historical context and socio-political, tribal, security and economic dynamics at play in the areas in which the group embeds itself; this allows the group to tailor its tactics and leverage local circumstances to expand its support base, operational capacity, and absorb losses.⁵⁵

Heavy civilian casualties would serve AQAPs propaganda narrative and will lead to an increase in recruitment, according to this commentator.

⁵⁵ Farea Al-Muslimi and Adam Baron, [The Limits of US Military Power in Yemen: Why Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula continues to thrive](#), 27 March 2017

5. Legality of intervention

The legality of the Saudi-led intervention has been questioned. On 25 March President Hadi, having already requested support from the GCC and Arab League, wrote a letter to the UN Security Council asking for the support of other countries:

Willing countries that wish to help Yemen to provide immediate support for the legitimate authority by all means and measures to protect Yemen and deter the Houthi aggression...All our efforts for peaceful settlement have encountered absolute rejection by the Houthis who continue their aggression to subdue the rest of the regions out of their control.⁵⁶

Debate on the legality of military intervention has focused on the legitimacy of President Hadi's request for external assistance to save his government, but there are no clear-cut answers. Ashley Deeks,⁵⁷ of the University of Virginia Law School and former Assistant Legal Adviser for Political-Military affairs at the US State Department, questions President Hadi's invocation of [Article 51 of the UN Charter](#) in support of the legality of external intervention. Article 51 states:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations...

According to Ashley Deeks, Article 51 would only apply to Yemen if it was facing an external armed attack, which is not the case unless it could be proven that the Houthis and their allies were acting under direct instruction from Iran, and there is only weak evidence for this.

Ashley Deeks also argues that if the Saudi-led action is being taken under Article 51, the participants should have written to the Security Council, informing them of the situation and the legal rationale for taking the military action, as is normal practice. Such letters give the Security Council and other states the chance to respond to the development.

Other states have intervened militarily, with consent, in states to support leaders who have lost control of part of their countries. The most recent example being Iraq's request for US support to combat ISIS in Northern Iraq. The Iraqi government has a better claim to legitimacy, however, and had not lost control of so much of its territory. Crucially, in Iraq there was a strong international element to the threat, since ISIS was based largely in Syria.⁵⁸ The Houthis are based within Yemen.

Ashley Deeks reiterated her insistence that Article 51 does not apply:

Article 51 is relevant when a state is using force either in another state's territory or in response to an attack from outside.

⁵⁶ ['Yemen's President Hadi asks UN to back intervention'](#), *BBC News Online*, 25 March 2015

⁵⁷ Ashley Deeks, ['International Legal Justification for the Yemen Intervention: Blink and Miss It'](#), *Lawfare Blog*, 30 March 2015

⁵⁸ For more on this argument for the legality of the Iraqi action, see ['Airstrikes on Isis targets in Syria and Iraq are legal under international law'](#), *LSE*, September 2014

That is not the case here. This is the government of Yemen in a conflict with a significant rebel group inside the country – there are no Article 51 issues.⁵⁹

Apart from the question as to whether the threat to Yemen is external, there is also doubt about Hadi's legitimacy. A request for outside help under Article 51 would have to come from a legitimate leader to be acceptable under international law. In the 2012 election Hadi was the only candidate; full democratic elections were to follow. His term as President expired in 2014. Instead of fresh elections being held, his term as President was extended for a year. He then resigned and fled the capital, before rescinding his resignation. However, he did not re-establish control over Yemeni territory and its armed forces, nor did he return to the capital.

On the other hand, [UN Security Council Resolution 2216](#), passed on 14 April, reaffirmed the Security Council's support for the Hadi's legitimacy, perhaps answering that particular challenge to the intervention's legality.

Resolution 2216 also recognised that:

The continuing deterioration of the security situation and escalation of violence in Yemen poses an increasing and serious threat to neighbouring States and reaffirming its determination that the situation in Yemen constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

This supported the Saudi contention that the Houthi rebellion is a threat to Saudi security, helping to justify the Saudi intervention as self-defence. However, some legal experts argue that the Houthi threat to Saudi Arabia is not immediate enough to justify intervention in another state.⁶⁰

The resolution also demands that the Houthis withdraw their forces from all areas that they have seized including Sana'a and imposes an arms embargo on the Houthis and sanctions on the son of former President Saleh, Ahmad Ali Abdullah Saleh and Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi.

The resolution is regarded by the Houthis as 'one-sided' and an obstacle to successful negotiations to end the conflict.⁶¹ One analyst has argued that the resolution was hastily agreed by the Security Council for the benefit of Riyadh.⁶²

⁵⁹ ['Is The Saudi War On Yemen Legal? – Analysis'](#), *Eurasiareview*, 4 April 2015

⁶⁰ ['Is The Saudi War On Yemen Legal? – Analysis'](#), *Eurasiareview*, 4 April 2015

⁶¹ ['Three Questions That Could Make or Break Yemen's Peace Talks'](#), The Atlantic Council, 19 April 2016

⁶² Bruce Riedel, ['How to end the war in Yemen'](#), Al Monitor, 27 October 2015

6. Humanitarian situation



Source: [UN OCHA](#) (as of Jan 2017)

The UN says Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis.⁶³ As of the 24 March 2017, the UN reported that the total number of *civilian casualties* in Yemen was 13,045 of which 4,773 had been killed and 8,272 injured by the violence. These figures represent only the number of dead and injured that the UN have been able to corroborate and confirm as civilians and the death toll is likely to be much higher.⁶⁴

The latest figure for the number of children killed is 1,540 with 2,450 injured.⁶⁵ It was also reported by the WHO, that in Yemen, "More than half of all health facilities are closed or functioning only partially, "and that, "For more than six months, health facilities in Yemen had received no financial support to cover operational costs and staff salaries."⁶⁶

3.1 million people are internally displaced in Yemen, an increase of some 250,000 since June 2016. 83% of the World Food Programme's funding requirement for the present six months is not being met – leaving the organisation with a \$459.6 million requirement.⁶⁷

12 million Yemenis are being targeted for assistance by UN bodies in Yemen, and the funding requirement for 2017 Humanitarian response plan is \$2.1 billion. The requirement for 2017 is 8.4% funded at the time of writing.⁶⁸

Oxfam reported in February 2017 that there are now 17.1 million food insecure people in Yemen an increase of 3 million in seven months, it is anticipated that around 7.3 million are in need of immediate food assistance.⁶⁹

⁶³ Al Jazeera, [Famine 'largest humanitarian crisis in history of UN'](#), 11 March 2017

⁶⁴ UN OHCHR, [Two Years of War, 13,000 Civilian Casualties in Yemen](#), 24 March 2017

⁶⁵ [Half of all health facilities in war-torn Yemen now closed; medicines urgently needed](#), UN News Centre, 28 March 2017

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ [WFP Yemen Emergency Dashboard, February 2017](#)

⁶⁸ UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service, [Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2017](#)

⁶⁹ Oxfam, [Oxfam Yemen Situation Report](#), 15 February 2017

Child marriages are on the increase in Yemen, spurred by the economic crisis.

The Yemeni ministry of planning and cooperation has also estimated that real GDP per capita in Yemen declined by 35% in 2015 to an estimated \$320. According to estimates made by UN humanitarian partners, half of those affected by the conflict have seen their livelihoods destroyed as a result of the crisis. This has resulted in the traditional safety nets provided by family and friends in the form of remittances and other assistance, falling away.⁷⁰

The UN also warned in April 2015 that Yemen's water, sanitation and telecommunications systems were on the brink of collapse, adding that humanitarian operations would cease within days unless fuel supplies were restored. The situation has deteriorated due to the difficulties and delays of accessing Yemen by sea and air as a result of the coalition blockade. Giving evidence to the International Development Committee, *Save the Children* drew attention to a 'de facto blockade':

The de facto air and naval blockade imposed by the coalition has been the single largest contributor to the current humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.⁷¹

According to the UN OCHA, the Yemeni economy is "being wilfully destroyed." The UN OCHA preliminary results of the Disaster Needs Assessment estimated that the damage done to infrastructure was \$19 billion, the equivalent of half the country's GDP in 2013.⁷²

14.5 million Yemenis (9.8 million as a result of the conflict) are in need of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) assistance of which 8.3 million have been targeted for emergency WASH assistance.⁷³

Julien Harneis, the head of UNICEF in Yemen, told the International Development Committee that DFID had been an essential partner in Yemen:

First, I should say that the support of DFID has been absolutely essential to maintaining a very large nutrition programme in Yemen and other services, WASH and health. Without that, we would not have been able to provide the significant scale of assistance that we are providing today.

However, he stressed that maintaining a functioning health system on the ground was crucial:

There are about 80% of health centres that are still functioning and opening, but how many health staff actually go in? Even if you could go in, what services will you get? Most health centres sell their medicines. You will get free nutrition assistance, principally thanks to DFID. You will get vaccination but, beyond that, the assistance to the population is very limited [...] It is the

⁷⁰ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [Yemen Humanitarian Response plan](#), January 2016, p9

⁷¹ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Crisis in Yemen](#), Fourth Report of 2015–16, HC 532, 4 May 2016

⁷² OCHA, [2017 Humanitarian Response Plan](#), January 2017, p5

⁷³ *Ibid*; p30

long-term destruction of the health system that will affect us for 10 to 20 years.⁷⁴

6.1 Impact on children

The conflict has resulted in 18.8 million people requiring urgent humanitarian assistance, of whom 9.6 million are children, according to figures released in November 2016. There are also 462,000 children under the age of 5 suffering from severe acute malnutrition.⁷⁵

Julien Harneis estimated that 10,000 children under 5 will die from illnesses that they would not have otherwise contracted, such as measles and diarrhoea, as an indirect result of the conflict.⁷⁶

UNICEF has also declared that in accordance with the Humanitarian Response Plan, the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal in Yemen for 2017 will require \$237 million, of which \$85 million was available as of February 2017, leaving a 64% funding gap.⁷⁷

UN Children and armed conflict report

The UN produces an annual report on children in conflict that includes a list of conflict parties abusing the rights of children.⁷⁸ The 2015 annual report, published 20 April 2016, included the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen in that list and said that the coalition had been responsible for 60% of the child casualties in the conflict in 2015.

The fact of children's suffering in Yemen and the inclusion of the Saudi-led UN report had attracted attention in Parliament and elsewhere. In a debate on arms sales to Saudi Arabia Margaret Ferrier mentioned the report:

A recent UN Security Council report on children and armed conflict documents a verified sixfold increase in the number of children killed and maimed in 2015 compared with the previous year, 60% of which are attributable to the Saudi-led coalition.⁷⁹

After strong protests from the Saudi Ambassador to the United Nations, the UN Secretary General decided to remove the Saudi-led coalition temporarily from the report while a review was conducted.⁸⁰ The Saudis insisted that they had no problem with the review and said that the removal was "unconditional and irreversible."⁸¹

On 9 June, the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon revealed that he had been threatened with the loss of humanitarian funding for UN programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, Syria and other places if the Saudi-led coalition was not removed from the

⁷⁴ International development Committee [oral evidence session](#) 27 January 2016

⁷⁵ UNICEF [Yemen: Humanitarian Situation report](#), February 2017

⁷⁶ International development Committee [oral evidence session](#) 27 January 2016

⁷⁷ UNICEF [Yemen: Humanitarian Situation report](#), February 2017, p6

⁷⁸ [Children and armed conflict](#), Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations, 20 April 2016. [This link appears to be to the original version of the report, with the Saudi-led coalition still included]

⁷⁹ [HC Deb 6 June 2016, c119WH](#)

⁸⁰ ['Yemen: Ban removes Saudi-led coalition from report on conflict-affected children, pending joint review'](#), UN press release, 6 June 2016

⁸¹ ['UN takes Saudi coalition off Yemen list of child violators'](#), *Washington Post*, 6 June 2016

list. In an unusually frank interview, Ban Ki Moon acknowledged the “fierce reaction” to the decision:

At the same time, I also had to consider the very real prospect that millions of other children would suffer grievously if, as was suggested to me, countries would de-fund many UN programmes. Children already at risk in Palestine, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and so many other places would fall further into despair.⁸²

He and said that this was one of the most “painful and difficult decisions” he had ever had to make, and that it is “unacceptable” for Member States to exert undue pressure on the UN. He also said that the content of the report would not change while the investigations into the complaints were carried out.

Human rights groups had reacted to the decision with dismay. Amnesty International said that the decision had put the UN’s credibility “on the line after it shamefully caved in to pressure.”⁸³ Human Rights Watch said that the UN should immediately return the Saudi-led coalition to the “list of shame”. They said that: “Allowing governments that commit abuses against children to bully their way off the list makes a mockery of the UN’s children protection efforts.”⁸⁴

Education

As a result of hostilities since March 2015, 2 million children have been forced out of school representing 27% of school aged children.⁸⁵ As of February 2017, approximately 63% of teachers in at least 13 governorates had gone without pay for the last four months. In February 2017, it was reported that 249 schools were partially damaged, 1,223 totally damaged and 680 closed. Furthermore at least 143 schools are being used to house internally displaced persons⁸⁶

Yemen is also beset with other looming health crises: in October 2016 an outbreak of cholera was detected in Sana’a and Bayda;⁸⁷ Of the 96 cholera associated deaths reported in Yemen on December 27 2016, 34% were children. Since October 2016, there have been 23,506 suspected cholera case and 108 associated deaths.⁸⁸ An outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease dengue fever continued.

The UK Government answered a Parliamentary Question on UK efforts to tackle the emerging famine in Yemen in February 2017:

In 2016/17 UK Aid has so far supported 462,000 people with food or food vouchers in Yemen, and improved the nutrition of 889,000 women and children. In 2015/16, the UK helped over

⁸² [‘Content of report on conflict-affected children ‘will not change,’ asserts Ban’](#), UN press release, 9 June 2016

⁸³ [‘UN: Shameful pandering to Saudi Arabia over children killed in Yemen conflict’](#), Amnesty International press release,

⁸⁴ [‘UN: Return Saudi-led Coalition to ‘List of Shame’](#)”, Human Rights Watch press release, 8 June 2016

⁸⁵ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, [‘2017 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview’](#), November 2016, p38

⁸⁶ UNICEF [Yemen crisis situation report](#), February 2017, p5

⁸⁷ [‘Yemen: Cholera Outbreak Situation Report No. 1 \(as of 13 October 2016\)’](#), UNOCHA press release, 13 October 2016

⁸⁸ UN Reliefweb [Yemen: Cholera Outbreak - Oct 2016](#)

one million people with emergency humanitarian assistance, including over 730,000 benefitting from food.

The Secretary of State for International Development issued a call to action last week urging the international community to step up their response in Yemen, as one of four potential famines around the world in 2017. We will be making another significant pledge of humanitarian aid for 2017/18, which will include funding to help those most vulnerable to the risk of famine.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ [HC Written question – 65431](#), 23 February 2017

7. Alleged war crimes and UK-supplied armaments

Both parties to the conflict have been accused of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). The Houthis and their allies as well as local ground forces opposed to them have been accused of possible war crimes for using imprecise artillery in heavily populated civilian areas and of launching attacks from or near homes, schools and hospitals.

The UN claims, however, that most civilian casualties in Yemen have been caused by the Saudi-led coalition air strikes. In January 2016, a UN panel of experts documented 119 coalition sorties relating to violations of IHL.⁹⁰

Amnesty International published evidence in March 2016 that more than 30 air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition across six governorates in Yemen had resulted in 366 civilian deaths of which more than a half were women and children.⁹¹

According to Amnesty International, the attacks appeared, “to have deliberately targeted” civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, markets and mosques amounting to possible war crimes. The NGO documented evidence of the use Brazilian cluster munitions in residential areas by the Saudi-led coalition as recently as February 2017.⁹²

Partly as a result of the funeral attack, the UK Government sent the Middle East Minister Tobias Ellwood to the Saudi capital Riyadh to hold talks with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Jubair as well as the Yemeni president and the UN Special Envoy for Yemen.⁹³

7.1 UK-supplied armaments

In December 2015 Amnesty and Saferworld commissioned a study by international lawyers that concluded that the sale of weapons to be used in the Yemen conflict by Saudi Arabia would breach the UK's obligations under international humanitarian law, the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) and EU law:

...any authorisation by the UK of the transfer of weapons and related items to Saudi Arabia... in circumstances where such weapons are capable of being used in the conflict in Yemen, including to support its blockade of Yemeni territory, and in circumstances where their end-use is not restricted, would

⁹⁰ [Final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 \(2014\) \(S/2016/73\)](#), 26 January 2016

⁹¹ [Yemen: The Forgotten War](#), Amnesty International

⁹² [Yemen: Saudi Arabia-led coalition uses banned Brazilian cluster munitions on residential areas](#), Amnesty International, 9 March 2017

⁹³ [‘Yemen conflict: The UK’s delicate balancing act’](#), *BBC News Online*, 12 October 2016

constitute a breach by the UK of its obligations under domestic, European and international law.⁹⁴

Amnesty International and the other organisations made some recommendations for the government:

- Immediately suspend arms transfers and military support to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners which could be used to commit or facilitate further serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Yemen.
- Carry out a thorough and independent investigation into UK arms transfers and reported war crimes in Yemen.
- Make every possible diplomatic effort to help bring the conflict to an end.
- Continue to push for an end to the de facto blockade so that vital humanitarian and commercial supplies enter Yemen and reach those most in need.
- Fully implement the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, and encourage all other arms exporters to do the same.⁹⁵

When the question was raised in the House of Commons on 5 January 2016, the government referred to the UK's "vigorous" licensing regime:

Caroline Lucas: [...] Has his Department assessed the legal opinion published last month by Matrix Chambers which concluded that the Government have misdirected themselves in law and in fact in continuing to grant authorisations for the transfer of weapons to Saudi Arabia that are capable of being used in the conflict in Yemen?

Tobias Ellwood: We have one of the most vigorous export licensing schemes in the world. Indeed, it was set up by the previous Government. If there are any genuine examples of the misuse of weapons systems that have been sold to any country, the process is in place to ensure that they are examined. If such examples are brought forward, we will certainly look at them.⁹⁶

In October 2016, ministers re-iterated their position that it is not for the UK government to determine whether violations of international humanitarian law have taken place in Yemen:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) monitors incidents of alleged international humanitarian law (IHL) violations by the Saudi-led Coalition in Yemen using available information. This is used to form an overall view on the approach and attitude of Saudi Arabia to IHL. It is important to make clear that neither the MOD nor the FCO reaches a conclusion as to whether or not an IHL violation has taken place in relation to each and every incident of potential concern that comes to its attention. This would simply not be possible in conflicts to which the UK is not a party, as is the case in Yemen.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ [‘UK Government breaking the law supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, say leading lawyers’](#), Amnesty International press release, 17 December 2016

⁹⁵ [UK Government breaking the law supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, say leading lawyers’](#), Amnesty International press release, 17 December 2016

⁹⁶ [HC Deb 5 January 2016, c102](#)

⁹⁷ [HC Written question – 46496](#), 10 October 2016

The judicial review

At the end of June 2016 the English High Court granted lawyers for the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) permission for a judicial review of the UK Government's decision not to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia in the context of its military operations in Yemen.

CAAT said in response:

This is a historic decision and we welcome the fact that arms exports to Saudi Arabia will be given the full scrutiny of a legal review, but they should never have been allowed in the first place.

The fact that UK aircraft and bombs are being used against Yemen is a terrible sign of how broken the arms export control system is. For too long government has focused on maximising and promoting arms sales, rather than on the human rights of those they are used against.⁹⁸

The judicial review was heard on 7-9 February 2017 – some of it in closed session at the request of the Government. All parties to the judicial review supplied documents to the High Court setting out their arguments.⁹⁹

The High Court is expected to make a ruling in the spring. If it finds against the Government, this could have implications for the UK's legal and regulatory framework for arms exports.

Cluster bombs

On May 22 2016, Amnesty International announced that its field researchers in Yemen had discovered that UK-manufactured BL-755 cluster bombs had been used in a village near the Yemeni-Saudi border. The UK is among over a hundred countries to have banned cluster munitions and the discovery of the bombs is the first confirmed use of UK-made cluster munitions since the [2008 cluster munitions convention](#) entered into force. The weapon was sold in large quantities to Saudi Arabia and the UAE during the 1980s and 1990s and is known to be part of their ordinance stockpiles. The bombs are also designed to be compatible with the UK-supplied Tornado fighter-bomber jet.

Amnesty International wrote to the Prime Minister in May 2016, requesting an inquiry to determine if UK military personnel have played any part in the use of these cluster munitions. Amnesty International UK's Arms Control Programme Director said that the UK should be pressing for their destruction:

Cluster bombs are one of the nastiest weapons in the history of warfare, rightly banned by more than 100 countries, so it's truly shocking that a British cluster munition has been dropped on a civilian area in Yemen.

Given that this type of cluster bomb is very likely to have been used in combination with Tornado war planes which the UK has also sold to Saudi Arabia, there's even a possibility that British

⁹⁸ '[Permission granted for judicial review into legality of UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia](#)', CAAT press release, 30 June 2016

⁹⁹ They can be found [here](#) on the CAAT website, including: [CAAT skeleton argument](#) and [Government skeleton argument](#)

support personnel might have been involved in the cluster bombing of Yemen. This would be an absolute scandal if confirmed.

The UK should have been tracking down all the now-banned cluster bombs it's sold to Saudi Arabia over the years and pressing for them to be safely disposed of. Instead, shamefully, it's now come to light that a UK cluster bomb has been used in Yemen, spraying its deadly bomblets all over a village and jeopardising the lives of men, women and children.¹⁰⁰

Amnesty have also documented the use of US and Brazilian manufactured cluster munitions. Though not a signatory to the Cluster Munitions Convention, US law prohibits the sale of cluster bombs to be used in civilian areas.¹⁰¹

The Saudis have denied that cluster munitions have been used in civilian areas, arguing that they have been used only once, against a Houthi military stronghold in Sa'ada.

On 26 October 2016 ITV published photographs of what they claimed were British-manufactured cluster bombs. Some of the bombs photographed were taken by a Houthi fighter and were identified as British-made IBL755s.

Amnesty international researchers confirmed in the report that a separate bomb photographed in another province had been dropped recently. The US trained head of the UN funded Yemen mine-clearance group (YEMAC) believed that the use of British made cluster bombs is widespread.

A Saudi military spokesman reiterated that the weapons were from the 2009 conflict and that British supplied cluster weapons were obsolete and had been destroyed, and their Tornado aircraft were not configured to drop the weapons. He also believed that Amnesty International was reporting from a distance, despite the Amnesty researcher who compiled a report on the subject having visited Yemen.¹⁰²

The UK Government announced on 19 December 2016 that a Saudi-led investigation had concluded that UK-supplied cluster munitions were used in January 2016 in Yemen. The Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon, said:

The coalition confirmed earlier today that a limited number of BL755 cluster munitions that were exported from the UK in the 1980s were dropped in Yemen, including by a coalition aircraft in the incident alleged by Amnesty International not far from the Saudi border. The coalition, whose members are not parties to the convention, has said that the munitions were used against a

¹⁰⁰ [,Saudi Arabia-led coalition has used UK-manufactured cluster bombs in Yemen - new evidence](#), Amnesty International UK Press Release, 23 May 2016

¹⁰¹ [Human rights groups say Saudi Arabia misused U.S.-made cluster bombs](#), Los Angeles Times, 23 May 2016

¹⁰² [Saudi Arabia denies using British cluster bombs in the war in Yemen](#), ITV News, 3 November 2016

legitimate military target and did not therefore contravene international humanitarian law.¹⁰³

The Defence Secretary added he had seen no evidence of civilian casualties resulting from the use of this munition and understood that the munition had not exploded. He added that the Saudi Government had pledged not to use UK-supplied BL755 cluster munitions, offered UK assistance to destroy the BL755 munitions and asked the Saudi Government destroy any remaining cluster munitions they have. Michael Fallon added “no United Kingdom personnel have been involved in the storage, transport, maintenance or deployment of any cluster munitions in Saudi Arabia.”¹⁰⁴

7.2 Involvement of UK personnel

As well as concerns about UK-supplied weapons, there have been questions as to whether UK personnel are involved in training in their use, and in advising the Saudi military in order, the government says, to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

On 8 January 2016, a UK Ministry of Defence spokesperson made a statement on the role of UK personnel in the Yemen conflict:

UK military personnel are not directly involved in Saudi-led Coalition operations, we are offering Saudi Arabia advice and training on best practice targeting techniques to help ensure continued compliance with International Humanitarian Law. We support Saudi forces through longstanding, pre-existing arrangements and will consider any new requests.¹⁰⁵

On 12 January 2016 the Foreign Secretary gave more detail about these military personnel:

I cannot tell him whether it is six people, but we do have a military presence in Saudi Arabia, and we are working with the Saudi Arabians to ensure the following of correct procedures to avoid breaches of international humanitarian law—to ensure that target sets are correctly identified and processes correctly followed and that only legitimate military targets are struck. It is important that we ensure Saudi Arabia has that capability.

We also use the personnel who are present as a quick check—it can only be a quick first check—when we receive reports, as we have recently, of breaches of international humanitarian law that would, for example, involve the deliberate striking of civilian targets. So far, in every case, our people on the ground have reported that there is no evidence of deliberate breaches of international humanitarian law.¹⁰⁶

On 14 January 2016 the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said that US and UK officials were in the Saudi command centre: “We asked a

¹⁰³ [HC Deb 19 December 2016, c1216](#)

¹⁰⁴ [HC Deb 19 December 2016, c1215-1226](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Defence in the Media blog](#), MoD News Team, 8 January 2016

¹⁰⁶ [HC Deb 12 Jan 2016, c697](#)

number of allied countries to come and be part of the control centre. I know they are aware of the target lists.”¹⁰⁷

He said that the foreign officials were not choosing targets: “We pick the targets, they don’t. I don’t know technically exactly what part of the process they are in, but I do know they are aware of the target lists.”¹⁰⁸

On 19 January 2016 the government repeated its position that UK personnel are “not directly involved” in the Yemen conflict, and explained how they assess compliance with international humanitarian law:

Hilary Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has received any reports of any potential breaches of international humanitarian law from UK personnel working with the Saudi military.

Philip Hammond: We are aware of reports on alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Yemen by the Saudi Arabians and take these very seriously. The UK is not a partner to the Coalition and British military personnel are not directly involved in Coalition operations. The Ministry of Defence closely follows alleged IHL violations, using available information, which in turn informs our overall assessment of IHL compliance in Yemen. We consider a range of information from government sources, foreign governments, the media and international non-governmental organisations. We are also offering advice and training to Saudi Arabia to demonstrate investigations best practice and to help ensure continued compliance with IHL.¹⁰⁹

Following up earlier assurances from the government that it had no evidence of “deliberate breaches”, Hilary Benn asked about reports from UK personnel about potential inadvertent breaches of international humanitarian law by Saudi personnel.

Hilary Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2016 to Question 22031, whether he has received any reports from UK personnel working with the Saudi military of (a) negligent and (b) inadvertent potential breaks of international humanitarian law.

Mr Philip Hammond: The UK is not a member of the Saudi-led Coalition. British personnel are not involved in carrying out strikes, directing or conducting operations in Yemen or selecting targets. They are also not involved in the Saudi targeting decision-making process. British liaison officers have provided information as part of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) monitoring of incidents of alleged International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations. Looking at the information available to us, we have assessed that there has not been a breach of IHL by the coalition, but continue to monitor the situation closely, seeking further information where appropriate.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ [‘UK military ‘working alongside’ Saudi bomb targeters in Yemen war’](#), *Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 2016

¹⁰⁸ [‘British and US military ‘in command room’ for Saudi strikes on Yemen’](#), *Guardian*, 15 January 2016

¹⁰⁹ [HC Written question – 22031, 19 January 2016](#)

¹¹⁰ [HC Written question – 24769, 2 February 2016](#)

7.3 Investigations

The International Development Committee wrote to the Secretary of State for International Development on 2 February 2016 to ask why the Government had blocked attempts by the Dutch government to form an independent fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international humanitarian law, in favour of allowing the Saudis and the internationally recognised government of Yemen to undertake their own investigation. The Committee argued that the government should drop opposition to an independent investigation:

It is a longstanding principle of the rule of law that inquiries should be independent of those being investigated. Furthermore, given the severity of the allegations (that the Saudi-led coalition has targeted civilians in Yemen) it is nearly unthinkable that any investigation led by coalition actors would come to the conclusion that the allegations were accurate [...]

The Government should withdraw its opposition to calls for an independent international inquiry into alleged abuses of international humanitarian law in Yemen, and should do all it can to ensure the creation of such an inquiry. If the Government is not satisfied with existing proposals such as those put forward in the resolution tabled by the Netherlands at the UN Human Rights Council in September 2015, it should formulate its own proposals and seek international agreement on them.¹¹¹

On March 9, the then Foreign Secretary responded to the letter, denying that the Government opposes an independent investigation:

Regarding your first recommendation, the Government is not opposing calls for an independent investigation but, first and foremost, we want to see the Saudis investigate allegations of breaches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) which are attributed to them; and for their investigations to be thorough and conclusive. The Saudi authorities announced more details of how they will investigate such incidents on 31 January, including a new investigation team outside of Coalition Command to review all existing procedures, and suggest improvements. We believe we should give time for this new team to do its job before considering the issue of an independent investigation.

It is untrue that the UK was "not satisfied" with the proposals in the Human Rights Council resolution tabled by the Netherlands and sought to water them down. The two sides which tabled different resolutions at the September/October 2015 Human Rights Council reached an agreement on a single text, which was then adopted by consensus. The UK supports this outcome as it is designed to help the legitimate Government of Yemen (GoY) improve its own capacity to protect the human rights of its people.¹¹²

Amnesty International has outlined its concerns regarding the working of the Saudi-led coalition's Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) investigating alleged violations of IHL by the coalition. In a letter in January 2017 to JIAT's legal advisor, concerns were expressed regarding

¹¹¹ [Letter from the Chair of the International Development Committee to the Secretary of State](#), 2 February 2016

¹¹² [Letter from the Secretary of State Justine Greening to the Chair of the International Development Committee](#), 9 March 2016

the shortfalls of JIAT in, among other things, its mandate, authority, transparency and impartiality.¹¹³ Human Rights Watch sired similar concerns in its own letter to JIAT.¹¹⁴

The Saudis have rejected claims of war crimes by human rights organisations and the UN, claiming that investigations were carried out remotely and are guided by locals linked to the Houthis. The UN responded that the methodology that they use is used worldwide and avoids manipulation by the warring sides.¹¹⁵

In September 2016, there were reports that the UK had blocked a Dutch proposal for the establishment of a UN Human Rights Council inquiry into civilian deaths in Yemen.¹¹⁶ Boris Johnson, UK Foreign Secretary, rejected the need for the level of inquiry that NGOs were pushing for, saying that the UK Government is: “using a very, very wide variety of information sources about what is happening to acquaint ourselves with the details.”¹¹⁷ Later, other reports suggested that the Government had shifted their policy to favour the establishment of an international inquiry.

However, Amnesty International said in October 2016 that the resolution passed by the Human Rights Council failed to set up a convincing international inquiry into war crimes allegations.¹¹⁸

7.4 Child soldiers

Increasing numbers of child soldiers are being used by armed groups in Yemen; there are estimates that up to 30% of fighters in Yemen are children, largely patrolling checkpoints and inspecting vehicles. This is despite the official age for joining the army in Yemen being 18 and declarations made by the Yemeni army and Abdul Malek al-Houthi that recruiting child soldiers would stop.¹¹⁹ The UN says 72% of the verified instances of the use of child soldiers are attributable to the Houthis.

Armed groups are offering money and regular food to young recruits, and as Yemen’s economy collapses and food insecurity increases, these are compelling inducements. Families are often complicit in sending their sons away to fight, as they have no other means of support.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Response to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition’s investigations](#), 16 January 2017

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, [Letter to Saudi-Led Coalition Joint Incidents Assessment Team Regarding Yemen Investigations](#), 16 January 2017

¹¹⁵ ‘[Yemen’s guerrilla war tests military ambitions of big-spending Saudis](#)’, *Reuters*, 19 April 2016

¹¹⁶ ‘[UK accused of blocking UN inquiry into claim of war crimes in Yemen](#)’, *Guardian*, 25 September 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/24/yemen-britain-human-rights-inquiry>

¹¹⁷ ‘[Boris Johnson criticised by human rights groups after blocking inquiry into war crimes in Yemen](#)’, *Independent*, 26 September 2016

¹¹⁸ ‘[UN resolution on Yemen fails to launch international investigation into war crimes](#)’, Amnesty International press release, 2 October 2016

¹¹⁹ ‘[Yemen crisis: Meet the child soldiers who have forsaken books for Kalashnikovs](#)’, *Independent*, 19 April 2015

¹²⁰ ‘[In Yemen, children — possibly thousands of them — join fight](#)’, *Washington Post*, 11 May 2015

8. A negotiated settlement?

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that there was progress towards a solution through UN-sponsored talks before the Saudi-led operation.¹²¹ According to the former UN envoy to Yemen, a deal was close:

When this campaign started, one thing that was significant but went unnoticed is that the Yemenis were close to a deal that would institute power-sharing with all sides, including the Houthis.

The report states that most Yemeni factions agree that progress was being made but disagree on the assertion that an agreement was close.

It then suggests that the Houthis had agreed to withdraw their forces from the cities. In exchange, the Houthis accepted a role for President Hadi, who was to be a member of an executive body that would temporarily run the country.

The proposed deal included a provision that 30% of cabinet posts and parliamentary seats would be occupied by women. Likewise, the Houthis would be guaranteed a 30% representation in government. Some diplomats interviewed for the report, however, claimed that the Saudis objected because they did not want an agreed settlement:

Saudi Arabia did not want a democracy – this is what these diplomats tell me. They don't want a democracy in their backyard....They want to control the politics there and impose their terms on this country. The last thing they need is anywhere in the region a democracy, and you can see since the so-called Arab Spring of the last four or five years, what have the Saudis done?

[...]

So preservation of monarchy and their rule is of course utmost, uppermost in the minds of the Saudi rulership.¹²²

In October 2015 the Houthis reaffirmed their acceptance of the terms of UN Security Council resolution 2216 and the [7 Muscat Principles](#), including the withdrawal of Houthi forces and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh from cities, the restoration of the Hadi presidency, early Parliamentary and Presidential elections and the creation of a Houthi political party.¹²³

The prospects for peace are widely viewed as poor. What started as a conflict between the Houthi-Saleh alliance and the Saudi-backed Yemeni government now involves numerous parties with divergent goals, with no party strong enough to win the war and none with

¹²¹ ['Former U.N. Envoy Says Yemen Political Deal was Close Before Saudi Airstrikes Began'](#), *Wall Street Journal*, 26 April 2015

¹²² ['Why Saudis Derailed Imminent Yemen Deal with Airstrikes'](#), *The Real News*, 28 April 2015

¹²³ ['Houthis reaffirm acceptance of Security Council resolution aimed at ending violence in Yemen'](#), UN Press release, 7 October 2015

enough power to be able to provide the impetus necessary to reach a diplomatic solution.¹²⁴

The sacking of Khaled Baheh as Vice President and Prime Minister, was widely seen as another blow to the peace process, as he was seen as a conciliatory voice. His replacements, Major General Ali Moshen al Ahmar and Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr are hardliners, strongly opposed to the Houthis and former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.¹²⁵

In spite of increased violence since autumn 2016, many observers think the stalemate in Yemen will continue. Yemen's difficult physical and demographic terrain mean it is hard for either side to break out of areas of natural support; the chances of forces loyal to the Hadi government retaking Sana'a in the near future are slim.

UN-backed negotiations had been taking place in Kuwait since the instigation of the ceasefire in April 2016, but these produced little progress. On 6 August the Houthis/Saleh side rejected a UN peace plan and announced the appointment of a 10-member governing body to run Yemen, at which point the UN Special Envoy announced the suspension of the talks for a month. He denied that they had failed altogether, but criticised the "unilateral" move by the Houthi/Saleh side.¹²⁶ He said that the outline of a road map towards a settlement was agreed in Kuwait, and that consultations with the parties would continue. The ceasefire ended in early August.

There has been a push to revive the process, however, and on 25 August 2016, former US Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the "quad" (the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) had agreed with the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to restart talks.

The talks would aim for a Houthi/Saleh withdrawal from Sanaa, the handover of heavy weapons to a third party and the formation of a unity government.

The proposals got lukewarm support from some parties; the plan to move the Central Bank would undermine the idea of a unity government taking over functioning state institutions.

London meeting

The Foreign Ministers of the UK, the US, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE met in London on 16 October with UN Special Envoy. They discussed the Special Envoy's plan to set a programme for a negotiated settlement before the two parties as soon as possible. They condemned unilateral steps taken in Sana'a and expressed concern about the independence of the Central Bank.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Hisham Al-Omeisy, '[Yemen's ceasefire could be the first step towards peace – with international help](#)', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2016

¹²⁵ '[Yemen Conflict: Former Vice-President Baheh denounces sacking](#)', *BBC News Online*, 5 April 2016

¹²⁶ '[Yemen peace talks in Kuwait end amid fighting](#)', *Al-Jazeera*, 7 August 2016

¹²⁷ '[Joint statement on Yemen](#)', Foreign and Commonwealth Office press release, 16 October 2016

On 19 October, it was reported that the parties had agreed to resume negotiations in Geneva at the end of October. The Houthi/Saleh side had agreed to abide by [UN Security Council resolution 2216 of 2015](#), which required them to pull back from territory they had seized.¹²⁸

On 14 November 2016, the then US Secretary of State, John Kerry, announced a temporary ceasefire to take effect from 17 November, with talks to agree on a national unity government to follow.

This was immediately contradicted by the Yemeni foreign minister, Abdel-Malek al-Mekhlafi, who declared no knowledge of the agreement and that the internationally-recognized Yemeni government had no interest in a ceasefire or talks with the Houthis. He accused Kerry of 'interference'. If Saudi Arabia throws its weight behind the talks, however, the Yemeni government will have little choice but to follow, given its dependence on the kingdom.¹²⁹

Barbara Bodine, a former US ambassador to Yemen during the Clinton administration suggests that a deal was closer than was reported, speculating that President Hadi was the biggest stumbling block. Hadi may be hoping that the new US Administration will be more determined to take on Iran and will offer him a more favorable deal than the Obama Administration.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ ['Warring parties in Yemen agree to UN peace talks'](#), Deutsche Welle, 19 October 2016

¹²⁹ [Kerry announces Yemen ceasefire over objections of government](#), Reuters, 15 November 2016

¹³⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, [The Futility of Force in Yemen](#), 13 March 2017

9. Outlook for Yemen and the region

9.1 Iranian response and the outlook for the coalition

Saudi economic difficulties

The war in Yemen signalled a change in direction in Saudi foreign policy from a traditionally cautious approach to a more aggressive one, following the accession of King Salman and the appointment of his son Prince Mohammed bin Salman as defence minister. The Saudis, fearful of what they perceive as growing Iranian expansion and influence in the Arab world, set out to confront it, particularly after the Lausanne Iranian nuclear deal. The Houthis have been referred to as “Hezbollah South”¹³¹ and the prospect of a movement sympathetic to Iran being the dominant power in its southern neighbour was unlikely to go unchallenged by the Saudis and its allies in the GCC.

The war at its launch seemed to be very popular in Saudi Arabia, with an outburst of patriotic feeling within the kingdom.¹³² Now there seems to be growing criticism.¹³³

Divisions have apparently emerged within the Saudi royal family regarding the direction of Saudi foreign policy and the inexperience of Mohammed bin Salman. In September 2015, a Saudi prince published a couple of letters calling for the ousting of King Salman. The prince also claimed that a number of Saudi royals and senior tribal leaders support the move. Among the reasons cited for the removal of King Salman were his deteriorating health, the concentration of power in his son’s hands, a faltering economy with a growing deficit and the planning and execution of the Yemen war.¹³⁴

There are conflicting reports as to how much the war in Yemen is costing the coalition, where it was earlier estimated that it was costing \$200 million a day, with the kingdom bearing the brunt of the costs.¹³⁵ A new report by the Standard Chartered Bank claimed that the conflict is possibly costing Saudi Arabia \$250 million a month.¹³⁶ The Saudi economy in recent years has been affected by declining oil prices and competition from shale and fracking, leading to lower exports and revenues; a 20% fiscal deficit has been estimated for 2015.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Brian Whitaker, [‘Yemen and Saudi Arabia Royal Reshuffle’](#), *Al-Bab*, 29 April 2015

¹³² [‘Saudi Airstrikes Raise Doubts Abroad, Spark Patriotic Fervor At Home’](#), *NPR*, 20 April 2015

¹³³ Jane Kinninmont, [‘Saudi Foreign Policy Is in a State of Flux’](#), Chatham House, 17 February 2016

¹³⁴ [Senior Saudi Royal calls for coup to replace King Salman](#), *The Independent*, 28 September 2015

¹³⁵ [The Saudi Town on the Frontline of Yemen's War](#), *Bloomberg*, 21 December 2015

¹³⁶ [The IMF's stark warning on Gulf states' growth](#), *Gulf News*, 21 October 2016

¹³⁷ [‘IMF Staff Completes 2015 Article IV Mission to Saudi Arabia’](#), IMF Press Release No. 15/249, 1 June 2015

Saudi Arabia also imports all of its weapons, and increased its spending on infrastructure and social welfare in the wake of the 'Arab Spring', all of which are eating away at their reserves. It has been estimated in one report that Saudi reserves peaked in August 2014 at \$737 billion and by May 2015 had dropped to \$672 billion with its reserves falling by \$12 billion a month. By the end of March 2016, foreign reserves were down to \$593 billion.

With the lack of diversification in the Saudi economy, the country is vulnerable to a sustained fall in oil prices.¹³⁸ On 26 April, Saudi Arabia announced its 2030 economic vision, aimed at diversifying the Saudi economy away from dependence on oil.

The economic situation might affect the Kingdom domestically, as well as in its ability to pursue the Yemen conflict, as argued in the *Daily Telegraph*:

On the current course their reserves may be down to \$200bn by the end of 2018. The markets will react long before this, seeing the writing on the wall. Capital flight will accelerate.

The government can slash investment spending for a while - as it did in the mid-1980s - but in the end it must face draconian austerity. It cannot afford to prop up Egypt and maintain an exorbitant political patronage machine across the Sunni world.

Social spending is the glue that holds together a medieval Wahhabi regime at a time of fermenting unrest among the Shia minority of the Eastern Province, pin-prick terrorist attacks from ISIS, and blowback from the invasion of Yemen.¹³⁹

Prospects for the coalition

The alliance that Saudi Arabia has sought to create to combat the Houthis is not as solid as the Saudis would have liked. Major Sunni powers such as Pakistan and Turkey, while supportive initially, have not committed forces and have pressed for a diplomatic solution. Egypt, while committing its naval forces to protect the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait that leads into the Red Sea and making a limited contribution to the air campaign, has refused to commit land forces in significant numbers.

The new Saudi king may also be softening the Saudi policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which would cause a cooling of relations with Egypt.¹⁴⁰ The role of the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islah, is also a source of disagreement between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with the Saudis willing to back Islah in the fight against the Houthis. The UAE has outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood and branded them a terrorist organisation and is more willing to support southern secessionists and Salafists in Yemen.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ ['Saudi Arabia may go broke before the US oil industry buckles,'](#) *Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 2016

¹³⁹ ['Saudi Arabia may go broke before the US oil industry buckles,'](#) *Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 2016

¹⁴⁰ ['Saudi Arabia shift closer to change in policy toward Muslim Brotherhood'](#), *Middle East Eye*, 13 February 2015

¹⁴¹ Peter Salisbury, ['Yemen: Stemming the Rise of a Chaos State'](#), Chatham House, 25 May 2016, p.30

Though the Saudis and their allies have claimed that the Houthis are nothing more than Iranian proxies, many observers dispute this, particularly as the Iranians advised the Houthis against advancing in the south of the country after the fall of Sana'a. Many observers accept, though, that it is likely that the Iranians and Hizbollah provide some degree of military support and training in addition to political and moral support.

One Iranian official has argued that Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen presents a low cost opportunity for Iran to benefit in Yemen at Saudi Arabia's expense:

The reality is that Iran's influence in Yemen is minimal, and the Saudis know this. Yemen is far from our shores. We didn't need to send arms to Yemen before the war, and now it is practically impossible to do so. But from a strategic perspective, the conflict in Yemen has no cost for us and even has some benefits.¹⁴²

However, since the execution of the Saudi Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr, the Iranians have threatened to send military advisers to assist the Houthis with the possibility of Russian cooperation.¹⁴³

On 4 April the US Navy reported intercepting a weapons shipment, apparently heading for Yemen from Iran, consisting of assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades and heavy machine guns. This was the third time in two months that this has occurred.¹⁴⁴

Yemen, however, is currently awash with the types of weapons seized.¹⁴⁵ A [UN Panel of Experts](#) said it had not seen sufficient evidence to confirm any direct large-scale supply of arms from Iran.¹⁴⁶

Central Bank

On 19 September President Hadi fired the governor of Yemen's central bank and announced that he would move the bank from the Houthi/Saleh-controlled capital, Sana'a, to Aden, former capital of South Yemen and the Hadi government's current location.

The Hadi government accuses the Central Bank of funding the Houthi rebellion. Since the takeover of the capital Sana'a, the central bank has been funding the payment of the wages of government employees under Houthi/Saleh control. And it has provided lines of credit that help pay for imports of food, in a country that imports 90% of its food supplies.¹⁴⁷

Central Bank funding pays for the armed forces, and most though not all of these are fighting on the Houthis/Saleh side. The monthly payments to the defence ministry, controlled by the Houthis, have been

¹⁴² International Crisis Group: [Yemen: is Peace Possible?](#), p11-12, 9 February 2016

¹⁴³ ['Iran could send military advisers to Yemen: official suggests'](#), *Reuters*, 8 March 2016

¹⁴⁴ ['Navy: Iranian Weapons Confiscated at Sea – and it's the third time in two months'](#), *Washington Post*, 4 April 2016

¹⁴⁵ ['No, Yemen's Houthis actually aren't Iranian puppets'](#), *Washington Post*, 16 May 2016

¹⁴⁶ Please see pp.26-34 in the Panel of Experts on Yemen report of 27 January 2017 for further discussion of the probability of large-scale of weapons from the Islamic republic of Iran to Yemen

¹⁴⁷ ['Exiled Yemen government risks humanitarian catastrophe to cut off central bank'](#), *Reuters*, 24 August 2016

particularly controversial for the Hadi government and their Saudi backers, who are not happy financing the Central Bank to see the funds go to hostile armed forces.

There were already mounting difficulties paying public sector salaries, particularly in the south, before the Central Bank move. The UN Special Envoy said in his August 31 report that stopping salary payments: “risks driving many more Yemenis into destitution and vastly exacerbating the humanitarian situation.”¹⁴⁸

In a paper published by the Sana’a centre for Strategic Studies quoting the IMF mission chief in Yemen stating in June 2016 that:

The central bank is certainly serious about being neutral in a very difficult political and security setting, and it has been to a large extent successful in maintaining basic financial stability throughout the conflict.¹⁴⁹

The study, following interviews with a number of Western officials disclosed that President Hadi had committed himself to consulting with them before making a decision on the relocation of the bank but reneged on the commitment. The officials added that Western governments had wanted to condemn the decision to relocate to Aden. They refrained from doing so because they did not want to criticise a figure they had backed up to that point. The study further notes:

The lack of institutional experience and expertise at the Aden-based Central Bank of Yemen (CBY), as well as the country’s financial infrastructure being heavily concentrated in the capital city, would present daunting challenges for a successful transfer even if Yemen were a developed, stable and peaceful nation enjoying moderate economic growth. Given the reality of Yemen today, the chances are extremely small that the CBY in Aden will be able to unilaterally develop the capacity to function as a central bank in the near to medium term, regardless of the level of potential support from Yemen’s internationally recognized government, Hadi’s regional and international allies, and international financial institutions.¹⁵⁰

A former Yemeni cabinet minister said:

There is a trend ... that what could not have been achieved by military means can be achieved through the economy, through an economic war, [the Hadi strategy being to] allow the economy to fail, and that’s going to put more pressure on the Houthis.¹⁵¹

Critics say that it would be impractical to move the bank to another city, particularly since Aden is plagued by insecurity and suicide bombings. The former governor has attacked the move, saying that the Central Bank should serve all Yemenis and resist being used by one side or the other.

¹⁴⁸ Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, [Security Council Briefing on the Situation in Yemen](#), 31 August 2016

¹⁴⁹ [Yemen Without a Functioning Central Bank: The loss of basic economic stabilization and accelerating famine](#), Sana’a Centre for Strategic Studies, 3 November 2016

¹⁵⁰ [Yemen Without a Functioning Central Bank: The loss of basic economic stabilization and accelerating famine](#), Sana’a Centre for Strategic Studies, 3 November 2016

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The move could lead to a generalised collapse of the Yemeni banking system, pushing large areas towards famine. It could also further destabilise the conflict situation, encouraging the Houthi/Saleh forces to respond, perhaps with more attacks on Saudi territory.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Jean-Marie Guehenno, '[The United States Must Help Pull Yemen Back From Total Collapse](#)', *Washington Post*, 6 October 2016

10. Conclusion

Saudi-led forces have achieved air superiority in Yemen and have degraded the artillery and missile capabilities of the Houthis and the Saleh loyalists, but still cannot secure its border from attacks. After an uncertain start, the Saudis with their allies managed to force the Houthis out of Aden in July 2015, though Sana'a remains firmly in Houthi hands and the conflict is in stalemate.

In the meantime, the humanitarian situation in Yemen is critical and, with the collapse of central authority in the country, AQAP has been provided with fertile ground to expand and exploit in Yemen.¹⁵³¹⁵⁴

With his reputation at stake, there is also pressure on King Salman's son, and new Defence Minister, Mohamed bin Salman to achieve victory in Yemen:

In most other countries, a military leader or defence minister who does not achieve a clear outcome would be a political casualty. If that does not happen in Saudi Arabia, then King Salman may find himself under pressure from senior princes seeking more fundamental change.¹⁵⁵

Yemen also represents what the International Crisis Group has called a lose-lose situation for Western powers allied to Saudi Arabia: refuse support and Riyadh would interpret this as abandonment to face Iran on its own. Support Saudi Arabia and that risks increasing Iranian/Saudi tensions and prolonging the war, increasing the threat of AQAP and ISIS.¹⁵⁶

The Council for Arab British Understanding held a seminar on Yemen on April 1 2015. Abubakr al-Shamahi, a British-Yemeni journalist, envisioned three possible scenarios for the future of Yemen:¹⁵⁷

- The GCC commits to the development of Yemen by supplying aid and proposing a clear plan, to give Yemenis hope that such a project could succeed.
- A Southern Yemeni state is re-established. The secessionist movement in the South enjoys popular legitimacy, although it is also bitterly divided and would be ill-equipped to take on AQAP.
- The most "pessimistic and realistic," scenario: the collapse of Yemen, victim of a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Abubakr al-Shamahi also noted that, while Yemen has experienced many conflicts in the past, the longer lasting ones were the ones where foreign powers were involved – the case at present.

¹⁵³ ['How does al-Qaeda attract Yemenis?'](#), *BBC News Online*, 4 May 2015

¹⁵⁴ Robin Wright, ['Yemen then and now; the sad chronicle of a failed state'](#), *New Yorker*, 1 May 2015

¹⁵⁵ Simon Henderson, ['Saudi Arabia's 'Inexperienced Youngster'](#), Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 21 April 2015

¹⁵⁶ International Crisis Group op.cit p25

¹⁵⁷ [Crisis in Yemen: Any way out?](#) Caabu briefing with Abubakr Al-Shamahi and Baraa Shiban, 1 April 2015

There is a further danger in ignoring the conflict in Yemen given the possible global economic ramifications: 4% of the world's oil supply and 8% of global trade is transported through the Bab al-Mandeb, as Peter Salisbury writes for Chatham House:

It is nonetheless baffling that Yemen has been ignored as it has been by the international media – and stranger still that Western policy on the war has been so phlegmatic. It is almost as if someone had distributed a map of the country that placed Yemen on an island in the middle of an ocean rather than occupying the large chunk of geo-strategically important real estate it does

[...] Yemen is not an island. And if the ceasefire fails, the war there will only remain a forgotten one for so long.¹⁵⁸

Adam Baron of the European Council on Foreign Relations argues that Yemenis will be the victims of such a protracted war:

The truth, however, is that no one is winning this war. And while all parties involved in Yemen seem far from reaching their goals, there is one clear loser: the Yemeni people.¹⁵⁹

Leslie Vinjamuri for Chatham House warned of the dangers of “impulsive” US military action:

Iran's ambitions could be stoked rather than tamed by Trump's rhetoric. At the same time, Yemen is necessarily recalibrating its position and may further restrict America's access. And the light that has been shed on the civilian casualties associated with the raid could spill over to America's broader engagement in Yemen. In this case, Trump's impulsive decision to raid Yemen may leave him more alienated from both Iran and Saudi Arabia by default rather than as the result of a carefully crafted political strategy.¹⁶⁰

Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution called on the new Administration to review its policy and step up diplomatic efforts:

Several members of the new American administration have experience with Yemen, including the secretaries of state and defense. Now is the time for a thorough interagency policy review of Yemen. While terribly poor, Yemen is strategically important as the underbelly of Saudi Arabia and the guardian of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait through which most of the West's oil imports pass. The prime American interest is to help our oldest ally in the region, Saudi Arabia, find a way out of a conflict that is not working out in its own interests. Our other urgent interest is to stop the carnage against the Yemeni people. Diplomacy is the answer, but it will need to be American-led with conviction and consequences.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Peter Salisbury, '[In Volatile Middle East, West Must Not Forget Yemen](#)', Chatham House, 31 March 2016

¹⁵⁹ Adam Baron, '[Everyone Is Losing Yemen's War](#)', *Foreign Policy*, 28 April 2015

¹⁶⁰ Leslie Vinjamuri, '[Botched Yemen Raid Shows Risks of Trump's Approach](#)', Chatham House, 9 February 2017

¹⁶¹ '[Yemen war turns two](#)', *Al-Monitor*, 12 March 2017

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).