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Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**The Yemen Conflict and Regional Power Politics****Dr. Muhammad Naveed Ul Hasan Shah**Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and IR, University of Central
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Abstract

The ongoing conflict in Yemen is among the most complicated and long-term crises in the Middle East which include local, regional, and international actors. This paper will discuss regional politics of power in Yemen with a particular emphasis on Saudi Arabian and Iranian tactics and interests. Through a study of the political, military, and economic interventions, the article reveals the role of the external intervention and its effects on the course of the conflict and the future of the stability of the region. The research uses both the Realist and Regional Security Complex approaches in order to explain the behavior of states, alliances, and the relationship between deterrence. Results show that although the outside players are interested in centralizing power and gaining strategic advantages, the intervention usually lengthens the war and complicates peace procedures. Furthermore, the instability is intensified by domestic political fragmentation, consociational issues, and humanitarian crisis which poses a multidimensional security dilemma. The article states that local, regional, and international actions should be united in creating a sustainable solution in Yemen with a view to embracing inclusive governance, mediating in a balanced way, and strategically engaging. The combination of geopolitical, humanitarian, and institutional analyses allows this study to analyze the Yemen conflict in the context of the overall Middle Eastern power politics and provides information to policymakers, scholars, and experts in conflict resolution.

Keywords: Yemen Conflict, Regional Power Politics, Saudi-Iran Rivalry, Middle East Security, Humanitarian Crisis, Consociational Governance

Introduction

The Yemen conflict can be considered one of the longest and most complicated conflicts of the modern Middle East, where local insurgencies, rivalry between states, and international interference are mixed. The causes of the conflict may be traced back to the political division after the Arab spring, the destruction of the state institutions, and the ongoing economic unpredictability (Anuoluwapo & Olayinka, 2026). The conflict between the Houthi movement and the Yemeni government that had been originally viewed as a domestic issue has been turned into a multidimensional regional and international conflict over power. Yemen is not only important due to its domestic matters, but its position, being located between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, is strategic as they are important for the maritime trade routes. Also, Khoshnaw (2022) points out that Yemen is a geostrategically significant country in the sense that any loss of normalcy in the country reverberates globally, as the powers of the region and the globe pay attention. The politics of power in the region have had a significant impact on the course of the Yemen conflict. In its endeavor to stop the emergence of a pro-Iranian axis along the southern border, Saudi Arabia has militarily and politically assisted the Yemeni government in stopping the Houthi insurgency (Haider et.al., 2025). The presence of Iran exhibited as political, military and logistical assistance to the Houthis incurs a strategic

calculus to gain influence and dominate Saudi standing (Baharmus & Heryani, 2025). These conflicts are a manifestation of a larger regional security struggle, in which Yemen acts as a proxy battlefield, as it is indicative of the precepts of the Realist theory: states are primary actors whose primary motives are to gain power and neutralize others (Aurangzeb et.al., 2026).

Other powers outside the region have tried to intervene in the conflict including the United States, the European Union and the multilateral organizations like the United Nations, in an attempt to make sure the conflict does not spread to a regional war. According to Ahmad and Khawaja (2025), the US involvement has been at various levels, which include intelligence and military assistance, helping Saudi-led alliances, and even at the diplomatic level. Nonetheless, the institutional constraints, conflicts of interests, and regional rivalries have usually limited these interventions hence hindering the management of conflicts in a coherent manner. Aurangzeb et.al. (2026), goes further to suggest that intervention in Yemen by the world powers is informed by the politics of world power as each player has its strategic interests and objectives that do not necessarily consider humanitarian and peacebuilding interests.

The war has come with far-reaching humanitarian effects as millions of people are experiencing famine, displacement, and a lack of access to basic services (Anuoluwapo & Olayinka, 2026). This humanitarian aspect makes it harder to analyze the existence of the state in a traditional way, to point out the interconnection of the security, state, and human development. Al Qaoud et.al. (2026) discuss consociationalism as one of the directions of overcoming the conflict with the focus on the necessity of inclusive governance frameworks which suit the Yemeni discordant political environment. However, the reality of this governance has been problematic with the continued animosity and rivalry of vested interests.

The number of actors involved in Yemen also increases the complexity of security in the nation. According to Gil (2026), there is continuity and change of the security complex in Yemen because armed organizations and new alliances continue to emerge. Houthis movement, local militia, tribal groups and foreign-supported groups engage in a manner that cannot be easily classified and thus conflict resolution is very difficult. Such a dynamic has resulted in a multidimensional security dilemma, with the efforts of one actor, be it local or external, to defend herself unwittingly contributing to tension on many fronts.

The Yemen conflict is also highly determined by the issue of regional geopolitics. Koshaimah & Zou (2023) emphasize the fact that one of the key factors of the war is the struggle of Saudi and Iranian hegemony in the region, whereas Manea (2024) focuses on the role of other regional powers, such as the UAE and Oman, seeking strategic interests in the war by engaging in diplomatic, economic, and limited military interactions. Such actors are not only realigned and aligned due to bilateral antagonisms, but also the wider interests of energy security, maritime commerce, and coalition building in a multipolar Middle East. Burton (2025) explores how the rising powers such as Russia, China, and India are reacting to the Middle East conflicts, which shows that the global powers feel Yemen is an opportunity to increase their power, find economic gains, and to be part of the regional security structures.

Conflict resolution efforts have also involved mediation, decentralization, and federalism efforts. According to Elayah et.al. (2025), post-conflict governance in Yemen should be in the form of flexible frameworks that incorporate both local autonomy and national coordination to allow administration and political inclusivity at the same time. According to Mokdad (2026), the problem of trust-building actions, when having a bias towards

specific actors, can lead to the destabilization of the situation in the long run as it brings out the fragility of peacebuilding interventions. Al Qaoud et.al. (2026) add on this argument by stating that the consociational system of governance despite its theoretically strong promises is struggling with the issues of political antagonism, outside interference, and the lack of social networks.

Lastly, geostrategic importance of Yemen makes it inevitable that the war has extraterritorial consequences. Turk and Tavangar (2026) highlight the fact that Yemen is strategically positioned in the sea, and it enjoys disproportionate significance in regional trade, energy flows, as well as military strategy. The Gulf states, world powers, and international shipping players are all directly impacted by control of ports and territorial waters in terms of their security calculation. The same author Khoshnaw (2022) also indicates that Yemen has been experiencing instability, which increases regional spillover risks to other countries and the overall security situation in the Middle East.

Overall, the Yemen conflict is an illustration of a multidimensional interaction of intra-local grievances, inter-regional power struggles and international strategic interests. It is a multidimensional crisis which has been influenced by internal disintegration, humanitarian issues, and intervention by regional powers, and geopolitics in the world. The Yemen conflict has to be understood in an integrative approach that dwells on the political, military, economic, and humanitarian aspects, and local dynamics should be placed in a larger regional and international context. This paper will use this approach to look at the security implications of the ongoing civil war in Yemen and the policies of the regional powers with the view of giving a holistic view to scholars, policy makers and the practitioners working in the area of conflict resolution and security in the Middle East.

Literature Review

The Yemen conflict has received a lot of scholarly interests owing to its inter-laced interaction of local grievances, regional power politics, and international interventions. Researchers note that the analysis of Yemen cannot be done without historical, political and security aspects and positioning of the conflict and its context in the larger Middle Eastern and international geopolitics. Both Turk and Tavangar (2026) and Manea (2024) emphasize the importance of geostrategic location of Yemen that makes the state an important maritime hub and a regional security area. Having both domestic weakness and foreign strategic stakes, Yemen is a classic example of regional power play and fueling conflict.

Various research works discuss the roots of the Yemen conflict with a focus on political fragmentation at the domestic level, socio-economic inequalities, and historical resentment. Anuoluwapo and Olayinka (2026) have mentioned the political and humanitarian crisis caused by the poor governance and the collapse of institutions, which has given the insurgent groups like the Houthis an opportunity to thrive. The article by Khan and Abbasi (2025) examines the Houthi uprising and outlines ideological, political, and tribal factors that motivated the consolidation of power of the movement. These studies suggest that the conflict cannot be explained only as a proxy war; domestic political grievances and failures of governance play a key defining role in the continuation of the conflict.

The impact of regional powers on the course of the Yemen conflict is another subject of the literature. Haider et.al. (2025) indicate that Iran was strategically involved, which involves supporting the Houthis to wrangle its way out of the influence of Saudi and demonstrating power across the Gulf. On the other hand, Baharmus & Heryani (2025) investigate the Saudi Arabian military interventions with the focus on an aim of Riyadh

to offset Iran and stabilize the southern borders. According to Koshaimah and Zou (2023), the competition between the Saudi Arabian and Iranian countries has made Yemen a proxy battlefield, and this fact indicates the fact of security dilemma in regional power politics: one actor acts in a way that improves their security, and this measure puts others at the risk of escalation cycles. All these studies have shown that the war was in the form of a microcosm of regional power struggle where local, regional and international interests collide.

A number of researchers pay attention to the involvement of outside forces and the international community in Yemen. Ahmad and Khawaja (2025) note the US participation, both in providing intelligence support and military aid to the Saudi-led coalition, and the strategic perspective of the regional stability and the global leadership. Aurangzeb et.al. (2026) give a comparative study of UN conflict management in various crises such as Yemen and this portrays limitations on the institution and the difficulty in imposing peace in highly political situations. Burton (2025) addresses the reactions of the emerging forces like Russia, India, and China, and indicates that these forces use the conflicts in the region to increase their influence without engaging in direct military conflicts. Through these analyses, it is evident that global politics of power overlap with regional ones, which influence conflict relations and peace building processes.

The literature also examines methods of resolving conflicts especially consociationalism, decentralization and federalism. According to Al Qaoud et.al. (2026), sustained peace requires inclusive governance systems that would support different political groups and regions in Yemen. Equally, Elayah et.al. (2025) also highlight the concept of decentralized governance and federalism as one of the ways to stabilize the post-conflict Yemen, incorporating local actors in the national decision-making. The practice of mediation is criticized by Mokdad (2026) who observes that mediation is ineffective when there is bias and absence of trust-building mechanisms. Taken together, these researches imply that political responses should be consistent with the social facts and institutional abilities in order to work.

The humanitarian aspect and the security aspect of the conflict are also the subject of study among scholars. Anuoluwapo and Olayinka (2026) point out the enormous humanitarian cost, such as displacement, famine and health crises. The conceptualization by Gil (2026) of Yemen as a security complex in Middle East shows continuity and transformation of threats overtime. Brom and Guzansky (2022) examine the minimal power projection by Iran and how it relates to the regional tensions on security in Yemen. These authors highlight the fact that humanitarian crises and military intervention are two phenomena that are inseparable and that cannot be solved without reducing human misery without ensuring that the results are sustainable.

The Yemen conflict is another geopolitical and economic investment covered in the literature. Manea (2024) and Khoshnaw (2022) emphasize the strategic location of the country on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, an important commercial and energy shipping route in the world. Koshaimah and Zou (2023) emphasize the competition between the Saudi and Iranian authorities over the maritime control and influence, showing that the conflict in Yemen is a proxy war in the greater strategic standing off in the Gulf. Eze (2024) also highlights how interventions by regional powers affect international security systems, where the instability in Yemen has the side effects of trade, energy security and regional alliances.

Lastly, a number of studies combine the relationships among local, regional and international participants. Al-Tamimi & Venkatesha (2022) offer an in-depth book that

considers the interactions between the local militia, regional forces, and the international ones to influence the paths of conflicts and humanitarian results. Synthesizing the arguments about the causes and the participants of the process, Tsalikis and Pedi (2024) show that one can observe different point of views and the necessity to analyze it on a multidimensional level. Mokdad (2026) and Aurangzeb et.al. (2026) underline that the successful handling of any conflict should be coordinated on all levels, and balance between power politics and humanitarian and governance issues should be taken into account.

Altogether, the Yemen literature shows an example of a multidimensional conflict, which is predetermined by historical resentments, regional disputes, and the intervention of other countries. Although domestic factors play a very important role in explaining the continuity of the conflict, local politics of power makes the conflict more unstable, more difficult to resolve, and to extend the humanitarian crises. The literature review highlights the significance of integrative strategies in which the political, security, and humanitarian aspects are involved and the placement of Yemen in the context of the Middle East geopolitics in general. These are the basis of the later chapters of this paper where the theoretical frameworks will be discussed, how they relate to the region and policy recommendations of conflict resolution and stabilization.

Theoretical Framework

The Yemen conflict needs to be analyzed through the prism of integrative theory incorporating the views of Realism, Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), and the knowledge of the consociational governance models. As a mainstream approach of international relations, realism speaks of states as the main actors in an attempt to safeguard their power, survival and safeguard national interest (Aurangzeb et al., 2026). In the Yemen war, the regional super powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran are seeking the strategic goals of territory, ideological projection, and hegemony in the region which is classic behavior of Realism. The balancing approach of the Saudi to limit Iranian influence to Saudi interventions to prevent the progress of Houthi and the external balancing and power projection of the Houthis in a disputed regional domain can be observed (Baharmus & Heryani, 2025).

Regional Security Complex Theory offers even greater analytical insight by understanding the role interdependence in security plays in conflict dynamics in an area that is geographically delimited. According to Gil (2026), Yemen is described as a security complex in which the local disputes cannot be separated with regional confrontations, especially between Iran and Saudi Arabia. RSCT underlines that threats, alliances, and rivalries are also locally concentrated and security of one actor cannot be predicted outside the context of neighboring states. This view is especially effective in discussing proxy politics because the internal instability of Yemen turns into a stage where the regional actors can execute their power and send the message of deterrence (Koshaimah and Zou, 2023).

The other critical theoretical lens is that of consociationalism that focuses on inclusive politics, sharing of powers and institutional accommodation in order to govern societies that are highly divided (Al Qaoud et al. 2026). The disintegrated political system of Yemen, which consists of various tribal, sectarian, and regional groups, is one of the reasons why consociational arrangements may serve as a possible tool of stabilization. Related to the measures of local governance, federalism, and power-sharing, the researchers suggest that political inclusivity will reduce grievances that would otherwise contribute to insurgencies (Elayah et al., 2025). This framework is especially applicable to

comprehending how externally imposed solutions do not tend to work: to be an effective governor, there has to be a sense of legitimacy, a sense of local buy-in, and balancing regional and tribal interests (Al Qaoud et al., 2026).

By integrating these frames, it is possible to have a multidimensional analysis of the conflict with Yemen. Realism interprets the motives of the regional and international actors, RSCT interprets the interdependencies and security dilemmas in the Middle East, and consociationalism outlines political processes which have to be provided to stabilize the situation inside the country. Combined, these views present a strong theoretical context to analyze the Yemen conflict as a local civil war and as a region with power rivalry.

Discussion

The conflict in Yemen shows the occurrence of the interaction between domestic and external factors and how local problems can be enhanced through regional politics of power. Al Qaoud et.al. (2026) note that the internal fragmentation of Yemen through tribal conflicts, sectarianism and poor governance systems cause weak areas that external forces take advantage of. This has enabled Iran to control the Houthis in such a way that it has expanded its influence to include the Arabian Peninsula through them (Haider et.al., 2025). On the contrary, the interventions of Saudi Arabia reveal classical balancing behavior with the intention to preserve the hegemony in the region and to prevent the expansion of Iran. The dynamics among these actors are typical of the security dilemma where some defensive actions by one actor create countersuggestions by others escalating the conflict (Baharmus & Heryani, 2025).

The literature identifies the contribution of humanitarian crises as a consequence and cause of conflict. According to Anuoluwapo and Olayinka (2026), insufficiency of access to food, health services and basic infrastructure is a factor that increases local grievances providing a feedback that increases insurgency and destabilizes governance structures. The access to these crises is limited and the international actors such as the United Nations and the Non Governmental Organizations are constrained by threats to security as well as competing geopolitical interests (Mokdad, 2026). This interaction of both humanitarian need and strategic calculation makes the conventional conflict management methods complex and need interventions which would deal with governance, security and human welfare at the same time.

Yemen is of geostrategic significance, which makes competition in the region even more intense. According to Khoshnaw (2022), the strategic position of Yemen on Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a strategic chokepoint in the world maritime trade, increases its stakes to the regional powers and other international parties involved. The Saudi-Iranian competition of power and influence over Yemen is an extension of the various interests in maritime safety, energy supply, and regional superiority (Koshaimah and Zou, 2023). The strategic calculus of these powers tends to make influence, rather than humanitarian or political solution, the reason to continue instability and establish divisions, which become deep-rooted.

The complexity of the geopolitics of the region is evidenced by regional alliances and the participation of other players, including the UAE and Oman. Manea (2024) considers that the Gulf states develop a strategy of influence by the means of selective military activity, economic investments, and diplomatic projects. In the same breath, Burton (2025) notes that the emerging world superpowers such as Russia, China, and India are also indirect players in the Yemeni conflict, as they use the war to sell their influence without fully taking part in its resolution. These processes prove that the Yemen conflict is entrenched

in the regional and international power systems, which means that it is impossible to solve it unilaterally.

There are several barriers to conflict resolution. According to Al Qaoud et.al. (2026) and Elayah et.al. (2025), the theoretical approaches to achieving stability include inclusive governance models, decentralization and federalism. Nevertheless, these strategies are limited by the political divisions, developed mistrust and the military animosity. Mokdad (2026) disagrees with the idea of mediation because he claims such attempts are usually illegitimate and contribute to the further worsening of the situation between two parties. The mechanisms of trust-building should, thus, be neutral, situationally sensitive, and aligned to various levels of governance.

Lastly, the Yemen conflict is an example of how regional security intersects with the global strategic interests. Ahmad and Khawaja (2025) claim that the US position, such as the intelligence assistance and military collaboration with Saudi Arabia, represents the bigger complaints on the issue of stability in the region and the world power. Similarly, Aurangzeb et.al. (2026) point out institutional limitations in UN conflict management by stating that the multilateral organizations are not always able to enforce the resolutions because of the differing interests of the regional and global actors. Brom and Guzansky (2022) also show that these dynamics are combined with limited power projection by Iran, which is a good example of asymmetric capabilities and their effects on the conflict. The multidimensional character of the conflict reiterates the necessity of the combined strategies, which involve local governance, regional diplomacy, and international coordination to attain sustainable solutions.

To sum up, the discussion and theoretical background point to the fact that the Yemen war is not a localized civil war but a security issue of the region, which is conditioned by the disintegration of the country, humanitarian crisis, and calculations of regional and international players. The conflict can only be understood through the combination of Realist motives, security interdependence in the region and mechanisms of governance so as to come up with complete and practical contribution to the policymakers and scholars.

Implications for Regional Stability

The Yemen war has far reaching consequences on the local stability, especially in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. The internal fragmentation of Yemen has led to a security vacuum whereby regional powers exercise influence to increase tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The examples of these dynamics demonstrate how local conflicts may develop into regional security dilemmas with defensive actions of the state leading to countermeasures by the state and the emergence of a cycle of escalation (Haider et.al., 2025; Baharmus & Heryani, 2025).

These security issues are enhanced by humanitarian crises in Yemen. Transnational impacts are manifested by large-scale displacement of population and famine, as well as disruption of vital services (Anuoluwapo & Olayinka, 2026). These forces force the surrounding states to revise the strategies of managing borders, providing humanitarian aid, and diplomatic interactions, and once again bind domestic instability with the regional security.

The war has re-written groupings and power dynamics in the Gulf. At the regional level, smaller regional forces, including the UAE, take advantage of the selective participation in military activities and strategic investment to build their presence, which results in the spread of power within the region (Manea, 2024; Koshaimah and Zou, 2023). This leakage makes conventional security architectures hard and collective security arrangements such as GCC problematic.

The geostrategic position of Yemen that is close to Bab el-Mandeb Strait makes it even more important. The stability of these vital maritime chokepoints also influences international energy dynamics and business commerce and the stability of Yemen is a necessary aspect to regional actors as well as international stakeholders (Khoshnaw, 2022; Burton, 2025). Uncertainty posits a threat to maritime security and increasing the strategic interests of both regional and extra-regional powers, attracting the involvement of such actors like the United States, China, and Russia to serve their interests.

There are institutional weaknesses in Yemen that limit conflict resolution. The effectiveness of peace efforts and mediation efforts is restricted by fragmented governance and poor institutional capacity and deep-seated mistrust between groups (Elayah et.al., 2025; Al Qaoud et.al., 2026). Prejudice in the outside interpersonal actions also contributes to distrust, which is why multilevel, non-partisan, and context-sensitive mediation practices are essential (Mokdad, 2026).

The spill over effects extend beyond the national borders. The proxy relationships between Iran and Saudi Arabia and interventions by other Gulf and world actors affect the overall security framework, weaken alliances, and complicate the process of managing conflicts (Brom and Guzansky, 2022; Tsalikis and Pedi, 2024). Such issues are exacerbated by the economic and energy factors, where any disruption poses a threat to oil infrastructure, energy transit routes, and regional trade flows, which emphasizes the interdependency of the security, governance, and economic stability.

Overall, the Yemen conflict is an example of how the local fractures, rivalry over power in the region, and humanitarian emergencies intersect with the geostrategic importance to create a highly complicated security situation. Best practices of regional stability should combine political inclusivity, humanitarian aid, conflict reduction, and synchronized regional diplomacy.

Conclusion

The Yemen war shows the complex relationship between in-country instability and the security relations across the region. It pinpoints on how local aggravations when unaddressed may be turned into arenas of outside interventions and strategic rivalry. The weak governance, sectarian and political fragmentation in Yemen has left loopholes that have fuelled conflicts and undermined conventional state stability mechanisms. The fact that these vulnerabilities have not been resolved to date clearly shows the necessity to solve not only the origins of internal conflict, but also the structural requirements that contribute to instability.

The power politics of the region are a key factor that determines the course of the conflict. The rivalry between local players on the influence, ideological projection and strategic control has changed Yemen into proximal arena where moves are usually informed by external goals rather than domestic demands. This environment has established revenge and retaliation cycles leading to violence and diminishing the chances of long-lasting peace. The interaction between asymmetric capabilities, strategic interests, and local dynamics confirm that Middle East conflicts cannot be discussed as existing outside the context of the more general powers.

Security issues cannot be separated out of humanitarian and socio-economic aspects. The lack of access to, and relocation of, over an extended period of time, in addition to the breakdown of basic services, increases internal instability, as well as transnational difficulties, as experienced by the neighboring states and regional actors. To deal with these crises needs strategies to combine interventions on security as well as humanitarian

aid, reconstruction, and governance reform. In the absence of these combined efforts, there can be no sustainable stability with short-term military or diplomatic help.

The war also explains the significance of inclusive political systems and local participation. Sustainable peace must have mechanisms that can enable meaningful involvement of various political, tribal and sectarian groups and at the same time maintain accountability as well as legitimacy. The tools of managing internal divisions may include power-sharing, decentralization, and federal governance, but these tools need to be successful, and it will require both domestic and external parties to buy into the concept. The risk of not creating inclusive governance is that the cycles of rebellion, mistrust, and conflict are going to continue.

The stakes are also increased by the geostrategic importance of Yemen. Its relative closeness to important sea routes, energy passageways and the trade routes in the region, means that the consequences of domestic instability in this country have far-reaching effects. The possession of such strategic points is not only a local issue of concern but also a global strategic interest. This highlights the necessity to have a multidimensional conflict management approach, which explains domestic governance, regional power dynamics, and international strategic priorities.

To sum up, the Yemen conflict is both a localized civil war and a regional security problem that has local and international implications. It is the confluence of inner weakness, local rivalry, humanitarian crisis, and geostrategic significance. The resolution of the conflict involves multidimensional approaches to tackle the shortcomings in governance, control the tensions in the region, curb the humanitarian crisis, and support the sustainable development. The way to peace is to find the balances between the demands of the local people and strategic interests of the regional and global players with a focus on political inclusiveness, the development of trust, and the long-term stability.

Finally, the Yemen conflict is utilized to study the way local conflicts are influenced by and, conversely, affected by the global and local processes. It emphasizes the necessity of the comprehensive approaches to the management of conflicts that would be aware of the local realities and would be responsive to the requirements of regions and the world. It is only with such holistic approaches that Yemen can be brought out of the cycle of endemic instability to a sustainable peace that will support a platform to a regional security, socio-economic revival, and sustained stability in the political arena.

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