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Yemen: A Crucible of Conflict and Catalyst for Regional and International Stability in the Middle East



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the Middle East**

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Abstract

This article explores Yemen's increasingly central role in shaping both regional and international stability in the Middle East. Despite being widely acknowledged as one of the most impoverished and vulnerable states in the region, Yemen has emerged as a pivotal geopolitical flashpoint, with its internal strife exerting a profound influence that extends well beyond its national boundaries. The study examines Yemen's transition from the periphery of regional politics to the centre of a complex strategic rivalry involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, and global powers. The text examines the layered dynamics of the conflict, from sectarian tensions and proxy warfare to the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The article also considers Yemen's role in international counterterrorism efforts, its indirect ties to the Israel–Palestine conflict, and the severe humanitarian and economic toll of protracted violence. In conclusion, the report offers concrete policy recommendations aimed at fostering sustainable peace, highlighting the need for inclusive governance, security sector reform, and integrated humanitarian-development approaches. The future of Yemen is of paramount importance not only for the nation itself, but also for the broader region of the Middle East, insofar as it is a pivotal element in ensuring security and resilience on the regional level.

Keywords:

Yemen, Middle East security, Bab el-Mandeb, civil war, Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry, Houthis, counterterrorism, proxy conflict, Red Sea, regional stability, global energy, humanitarian crisis, UN mediation, geopolitical strategy

Introduction

The Middle East has long been a region of strategic importance and geopolitical complexity. Among the nations that play a pivotal role in this intricate tapestry is Yemen. Despite its position as one of the poorer countries in the region, Yemen's influence on both regional security and international stability cannot be underestimated. This article explores Yemen's role in the Middle East, focusing particularly on its geopolitical significance, the ongoing civil conflict, counterterrorism and how these factors interlink with the broader dynamics of regional security and international stability.

Just 2 years ago it was believed that the center of gravity of international security threats has shifted to North-East due to the aggression against Ukraine (Petroni, 2022). Today, we face one more challenge that poses not only a threat of the WWIII, but also shifts the geopolitical security from Europe to the Near and Middle East region. This region, sometimes called the Greater Middle East, stretches from Afghanistan in the east to Morocco in the west and from Iran in the north to Yemen in the south. In terms of security, it is united by threats that are common to the countries of the region and to the entire world. Today, these are terrorism, the threat of WMD proliferation, internal and interstate conflicts.

In recent years, this region has been the site of three major international military interventions carried out under the leadership of the United States in Afghanistan and twice in Iraq (Chandra, 2012: P. 16). A new stage of the struggle for leadership is beginning in the region, this time between Iran and most Arab states. This region is the focus of friction and contradictions in relations between the world's largest powers, as well as the attention of international organizations. At the same time, the region is the main supplier of oil to the world economy, which entails a specific set of security problems on a regional and global scale (Cherp, Jewell, 2014: P. 416). Its individual areas, or subregions, are groups of countries adjacent to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea (sometimes called the Levant countries), with access to the Persian Gulf (the Persian Gulf countries), located in North Africa (the Maghreb countries), to a certain extent are unique and autonomous, but in terms of security, in addition to the above-mentioned threats and factors, they are united into a single regional whole by history, civilization, religion, economic, social and political problems common to most countries.

On the one hand, the countries of the region are the heirs of the great eastern civilizations. Most of them are Arab states linked by common ethnic and cultural ties, and the religion of Islam (Harb, 2016). At the same time, these are relatively young states, since most of them only in the last century freed themselves from the colonial rule of the Ottoman Empire, and then Great Britain and France.

On the other hand, the region is a homogeneous whole. The majority of its inhabitants, who profess Islam, adhere to the Sunni movement, and a smaller, although significant part (especially in Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain) - Shiism. In addition to the ethnic differences between Persians and Jews from Arabs, the region has a division of the Arab population into national states with clearly expressed and often conflicting national interests. Some of them are monarchies, others are predominantly authoritarian, formally parliamentary republics. Often, the contradictions between them are rooted in the rivalry of the Hashemite and Saudi monarchies, and in the more recent past - in the struggle for leadership in the Arab world between the largest of them - Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia (Al-Hajjri, 2007: P. 7). Territorial claims and the struggle for oil between Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other states of the Persian Gulf are also the reasons for violent clashes. Interstate contradictions are supplemented by a series of internal clashes on the basis of interethnic and interreligious relations, in the struggle for political power - civil wars, revolutions, coups.

In recent years, there have been significant changes in the content and priority of processes in the security sphere of this region. It has become the epicenter of transnational terrorism. In view of the Western world implementation of Iran's nuclear program has become one of the most acute global problems in the field of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Previously, when it came to the Middle East conflict, it was the problem of resolving the confrontation between Israel and the Arab states, and then with the Palestinians. Today, a set of contradictions between Iran and some Arab countries, on the one hand, and between Iran and Israel, on the other, has come to the fore. A significant reformatting of the regional security agenda occurred as a result of the American invasion of Iraq, the civil war that unfolded there, the restoration of a fragile peace and the intentions of the United States to withdraw its troops from this country. The region is affected by ongoing internal armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the prospects for which remain uncertain. There is virtually no institutional basis for strengthening security in the region.

As mentioned above, Yemen's geographical position on the Arabian Peninsula gives it a strategic advantage that has long been recognized by regional and global powers. The country sits at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Furthermore, Yemen controls the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a critical chokepoint for maritime trade connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), approximately 15% of global trade, including oil shipments, passes through this strait (Kamali, Koepke, Sozzi, Verschuur, 2024). Any disruption, whether due to conflict or piracy, could have far-reaching consequences for international trade and energy



security.

**Geopolitical Map of the Bab el-Mandeb Region*

The Internal Conflict and Its Regional Implications

Over the past 20 years, Yemen, a state on the Arabian Peninsula with an advantageous geographical location and natural resources, has been immersed in a permanent domestic political crisis, which not only does not contribute to economic prosperity, but also negatively affects the formation of foreign policy and the security architecture of all states in the region. However, despite the tensions within the country, against the backdrop of the new Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Yemen has begun to show itself as an active participant in political events in the Near and Middle East. Thus, the actions of the Houthi rebel group in Yemen have actually drawn the state into another confrontation, which could lead to an increase in recession and isolation from Western countries.

The 2011 revolution in Yemen, part of the broader wave of Arab Spring uprisings, exposed not only the fragility of the country's political legitimacy but also the deeper fissures within its elite power structure. For years, Yemen had been grappling with systemic political and economic challenges, but the revolution brought these issues to a head. The mass protests led by Yemen's youth in January 2011 were not simply about removing a corrupt regime; they were a call for the transformation of the state itself (Bonney, Poirier, 2012: P. 897). The demonstrators sought a civil state that could address the needs of a population long neglected by an entrenched elite, whose governance had become synonymous with inefficiency and graft. The ruling elite's inability to provide basic services further inflamed public discontent and catalyzed a broader societal demand for change.

This internal unrest amplified pre-existing rivalries within Yemen's ruling class, creating a dangerous political vacuum. Fearing that the growing instability could lead to civil war, international actors like the United States and Saudi Arabia sought to manage the crisis through a negotiated power transition. The resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012, after 33 years of rule, was a critical moment, but it did not address the underlying issues that had driven the revolution. The power shift was more of a tactical move to prevent immediate collapse rather than a comprehensive solution to Yemen's deep-seated governance problems.

What followed was a period of intensified fragmentation. The final years of Saleh's rule had already weakened the state's monopoly on power, as non-state actors such as the Houthi movement, southern separatists, and AQAP (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) filled the void left by a deteriorating central government (Alley, 2018: P.10-11). The rise of these groups was not simply a reaction to Saleh's misrule but a symptom of the deeper structural issues facing Yemen—chief among them, the lack of a legitimate and functional state apparatus capable of meeting the diverse needs of its people. The spread of these armed groups in Saada and the south following Saleh's fall illustrated the breakdown of state authority and the acceleration of Yemen's fragmentation.

In response, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with backing from international stakeholders, initiated the National Dialogue Conference, designed to be an inclusive platform for resolving Yemen's political conflicts. For many, especially those marginalized under Saleh's rule, this dialogue offered a historic opportunity to reshape Yemen's political landscape. The dialogue's outcomes were intended to guide the drafting of a new constitution, laying the groundwork for a more representative and functional state. However, the success of this transition hinged on the ability to reconcile the interests of various factions—particularly the central government, southern separatists, and the Houthis.

From a broader perspective, Yemen's post-revolutionary period highlights the complexity of state-building in a country with multiple, competing centers of power. The failure to address core issues—such as the balance of power between the center and the

periphery, the role of non-state actors, and the influence of external powers—suggests that any lasting solution requires more than just political concessions. It demands a rethinking of how the state interacts with its diverse population, how governance can be made more inclusive, and how the legitimacy of the state can be restored. The transition process, therefore, represents not just a series of political negotiations, but a critical juncture for determining whether Yemen can emerge from its crisis as a unified state, or whether it will continue down the path of fragmentation and conflict.

The ongoing civil war in Yemen, which began in 2014, has further complicated the regional security landscape. The conflict primarily involves the Houthi movement, a Shia group with alleged ties to Iran, and the internationally recognized Yemeni government supported by a Saudi-led coalition. This war has caused a humanitarian catastrophe and has had significant ripple effects throughout the region. The involvement of major regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen's conflict underscores the country's role as a proxy battleground in the broader Sunni-Shia divide. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia views the Houthi control of Yemen as a direct threat due to the group's links with Iran, its regional rival. Iran, on the other hand, sees an opportunity to expand its influence on the Arabian Peninsula through its support of the Houthis. This proxy dimension of the conflict highlights the deep sectarian and geopolitical divides that characterize the Middle East.

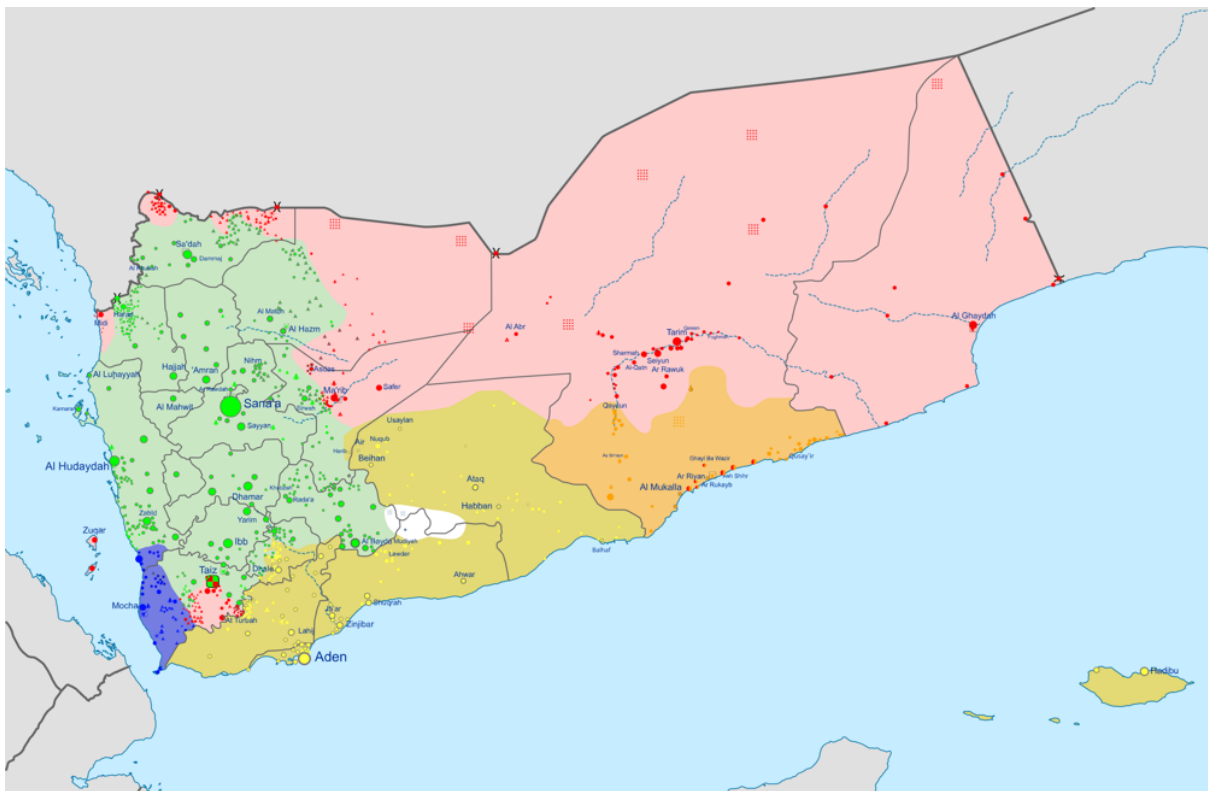
Currently, there are three main forces in the country: the Houthis, supported by Iran and Syria, the official federal government, supported mainly by Saudi Arabia and its Western partners, and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), formed in 2017 in the South as a separatist authority in the state with the direct participation of the United Arab Emirates (Yemen Conflict Observatory, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)). The territory of Yemen has actually become a zone of interest for major players in the region: The eastern region of Yemen, rich in natural resources such as oil and gas, remains a zone of strategic interest for regional actors, including Saudi Arabia. Thus, Sana'a has become a field of indirect conflict between the main regional players - Iran and Saudi Arabia - each of which is trying to change the status quo on someone else's territory.

**Map of Armed Factions and Frontlines in the Yemeni Civil War*
Government Counterterrorism Efforts

Yemen's ongoing conflict has profound implications for regional and international security, particularly in the context of counterterrorism. The war has exacerbated the rise of extremist groups, most notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS, both of which have entrenched themselves in the chaos. As a result, Yemen has remained a critical ally in global counterterrorism efforts, especially for the United States and Saudi Arabia. Reports from Chatham House highlight the strategic cooperation between Yemeni security forces and international partners (Chatham House, 2022). This cooperation includes intelligence sharing, coordinated military operations, and logistical support, all aimed at dismantling terrorist networks. Yemeni intelligence services, in particular, have played a key role in providing actionable intelligence that has facilitated successful strikes against AQAP and ISIS targets.

Despite being weakened by years of civil war, the Yemeni military has continued to conduct operations against these terrorist groups, particularly in the southern and eastern provinces, such as Abyan, Shabwah, and Hadramawt. These operations, we believe, have disrupted the operational capabilities of AQAP and ISIS, limiting their territorial control and capacity for launching major attacks. Saudi-led coalition air support has been crucial to these efforts, underscoring the collaborative approach to counterterrorism in the region.

However, Yemen's counterterrorism capabilities have been severely undermined by the country's economic collapse. According to a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate published in 2010, it has been firstly emphasized that the Yemeni government struggles to finance its security forces, maintain military equipment, and secure the loyalty of local tribes — factors that are essential in combating terrorism, particularly in rural regions (United States Senate, 2010).



However, years of civil war and state collapse since 2015 have only exacerbated these problems. Yemen's internationally recognized government is still struggling to finance its

military and police forces amid a sharp decline in state revenues, effectively unable to pay salaries or maintain military equipment without external assistance (Sana'a Center, 2023). For example, the Houthi attacks on oil infrastructure in 2022-2023 deprived the government of a major source of revenue, forcing Saudi Arabia to provide an emergency grant of \$1.2 billion to cover budget expenditures - primarily to pay salaries of public sector employees (including security forces) and maintain basic services. The resulting "security vacuum" has played into the hands of extremists: the U.S. State Department warns that the weakening of state authority allows terrorist organizations to strengthen their position in Yemen (Congressional Research Service, 2024). Taking advantage of widespread poverty and unemployment, groups such as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula are recruiting vulnerable Yemeni youth by offering them cash payments and basic services, further undermining local stability (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2025).

According to more recent reports, by 2018, the conflict in Yemen had so severely undermined the government's security capacity that it was no longer "able to effectively enforce counterterrorism measures" and the country had a "significant security vacuum" that extremist groups were taking advantage of.

The economic downturn has also opened opportunities for terrorist groups to exploit impoverished populations, offering financial incentives to bolster their ranks.

Furthermore, the fight against terrorism is not only vital for its own security but also for the broader stability of the Gulf region and the Red Sea, both of which are critical for international trade and energy supply routes. As American Enterprise Institute warns, if Yemeni government forces are unable to maintain pressure on AQAP and ISIS, these groups could expand their influence in strategic areas, posing threats to maritime security and vital infrastructure in neighboring countries (Zimmerman, 2015: P. 36). AQAP, in particular, has shown ambitions to disrupt global oil supplies, demonstrating how Yemen's instability could have far-reaching global consequences.

International powers, including the U.S., U.K., and France, have been deeply involved in Yemen's conflict, largely through arms sales and diplomatic backing of the Saudi-led coalition. These countries view Yemen as strategically crucial for securing maritime routes and suppressing terrorism. The global implications of Yemen's instability have also prompted humanitarian interventions. The United Nations, along with other organizations such as the World Bank, has been actively involved in providing aid and seeking peaceful resolutions to the conflict. However, as analysts point out, without a comprehensive peace settlement, these efforts are unlikely to bring lasting stability.

Last but not least, Yemen's role in the global counterterrorism framework is underscored by the international reach of AQAP, which has been linked to several high-profile terror plots, including the 2009 "Underwear Bomber" and the 2010 cargo plane bomb attempt (Nesser, Stenersen, 2014). According to Luca Nevola from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), joint Yemeni-led operations, frequently supported by U.S. drone strikes, have considerably weakened AQAP's ability to orchestrate large-scale attacks abroad (Nevola, 2024). Thus, we come to the conclusion that Yemen's cooperation with international forces remains a critical component of the global counterterrorism strategy. This is primarily since, the ongoing presence of terrorist groups in the country not only threatens its internal stability but also poses a significant risk to regional security. The persistent instability in Yemen could further destabilize neighboring countries, disrupt vital trade routes, and endanger global energy supplies, particularly given the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Parallel to Yemen's Struggle

While Yemen's conflict is distinct, it shares several parallels with the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. Both conflicts involve deep-seated historical grievances, territorial

disputes, and sectarian divides. They are also both arenas for proxy battles involving regional and international powers, further complicating efforts towards peace and stability. In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, Yemen's situation highlights the broader challenges facing the Middle East. Both conflicts underscore the need for comprehensive diplomatic solutions that address the root causes of instability, including political, economic, and social grievances.

It is important to emphasize that achieving stability in Yemen and the broader Middle East requires a multifaceted approach. Diplomatically, there needs to be a concerted effort to bring all parties to the negotiating table. This includes not only the warring factions within Yemen but also the regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, each of which has a strategic interest in the ongoing conflict and its outcome. The international community can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and ensuring that any peace agreements are inclusive and sustainable. On the security front, efforts must be made to curb the influence of extremist groups operating in Yemen. This involves strengthening local security forces, enhancing intelligence-sharing among regional and international partners, and addressing the socio-economic conditions that fuel extremism. Humanitarian aid is also critical. Addressing the immediate needs of the Yemeni population, such as food, healthcare, and shelter, is essential to alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

According to the International Humanitarian Law Centre Diakonia, in October 2023, mass protests in support of Palestine took place in Yemen, after which the Houthis launched ballistic missile strikes, allegedly delivered by Iran, on Israeli territory, but their main goal was to establish control over shipping in the Red Sea (Diakonia, 2024). Thus, the rebels openly declared their intention to seize all ships heading to Israel or having at least an indirect relation to it. For example, in November 2023, the cargo ship *Galaxy Leader*, owned by Israeli businessman Avraham Ungar, was seized (BBC, 2023).

Later, the United States announced the launch of Operation Prosperity Guardian in the Red Sea, the main mission of which was to prevent Houthi attacks on ships heading to the Suez Canal (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023). Of all the Arab states and movements that have spoken out in support of Palestine, only the Yemeni Houthis have announced a general mobilization to participate in the war against Israel, which, for its part, has declared its intention to strike Yemeni territory if the rebel attacks continue.

We would like to note, however, that Tel Aviv actively tried to find leverage over the Houthis through its long-standing partner, Washington, which has a large military contingent on the Arabian Peninsula, deployed more than 20 years ago to fight terrorists. Thus, in January of 2024, the United States and Great Britain launched Tomahawk cruise missile strikes on Houthi positions in Yemen (CNN, 2024). The strikes were carried out on more than 60 targets: air defense systems, radars, warehouses, and launch sites for drones and missiles. However, the Iranian-backed Houthis continue to act decisively, without deviating from their position on Israel, which increases the likelihood of a new Israeli-Yemeni conflict in the region, which, given the number of interested parties and the fierce confrontation between the two opposing camps, risks turning into a full-scale war.

In conclusion, Yemen's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly through the actions of the Houthi rebels, adds a new layer of complexity to the broader Middle Eastern landscape. The Houthis' missile strikes and threats to disrupt Red Sea shipping routes reflect their firm stance on Israel and underscore the region's entanglement in overlapping conflicts driven by historical grievances, proxy wars, and external influence. The response from the U.S. and its allies, including military strikes on Houthi positions, indicates the high stakes involved, as regional powers are drawn further into the fray. The potential for escalation into a wider conflict involving Yemen and Israel remains high, especially as diplomatic solutions seem elusive, and the conflict shows signs of broadening beyond its

current boundaries. As with many Middle Eastern conflicts, the situation in Yemen underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and inclusive diplomatic efforts to address not only the immediate threats but also the underlying causes of instability across the region.

Economic Implications

Yemen's role in Middle East security has significant economic implications, not just for the country itself but for the broader region, especially in the context of maritime trade and energy supply chains. As one of the poorest nations in the Arab world, Yemen's economy has been devastated by years of conflict, with its GDP contracting by nearly 50% since the war began in 2015, according to the World Bank's 2023 report. The conflict has led to widespread hyperinflation, food insecurity, and unemployment, making Yemen highly dependent on humanitarian aid. The UN describes Yemen's situation as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with over 80% of the population in need of humanitarian aid (OCHA, 2024). Economic collapse in such a strategic location has broader implications, as instability within Yemen fuels extremism, organized crime, and poses threats to regional and global trade.

A key factor in the economic impact of Yemen's security situation lies in its control over crucial maritime routes. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, one of the world's most vital chokepoints for oil and shipping, connects the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea, through which roughly 6.2 million barrels of oil pass daily (Energy Information Administration EIA, 2023). Yemen's instability and the ongoing conflict have made this region a flashpoint for maritime security threats. The activities of Houthi rebels, who have increasingly targeted shipping, further complicate the situation. The seizure of Israeli-linked vessels and missile attacks on U.S. naval forces demonstrate the strategic use of maritime threats to disrupt international trade and assert influence, raising the cost of shipping and insurance in the region, which is highlighting the urgent need for international intervention and a comprehensive long-term solution to ensure regional stability and the security of global trade routes.

This militarization of the Red Sea and adjacent waterways, combined with proxy conflicts involving major regional and international powers, drives up the cost of energy and transportation. As Europe grapples with an energy crisis, exacerbated by the reduction of Russian energy supplies, the risk of supply disruptions through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait is particularly acute. Yemen's conflict compounds existing vulnerabilities in global energy markets, and any significant escalation could have serious consequences for oil prices and energy security worldwide.

Moreover, the blockade imposed by the Saudi-led coalition, which has restricted the flow of essential goods into Yemen, exacerbates both the humanitarian crisis and the broader economic fallout. The United Nations has highlighted the risk of mass migration from Yemen due to famine and disease, a situation that could destabilize neighboring countries and further strain regional economies (OCHA, 2023). The international community, particularly the U.S., NATO, and regional allies, has responded by increasing naval patrols and conducting large-scale exercises to safeguard maritime routes, yet the underlying instability persists.

In summary, Yemen's role in Middle East security carries profound economic implications, affecting not only its own collapsed economy but also global shipping, energy markets, and regional trade. The militarization of key waterways and the threat to maritime security represent critical risks to international economic stability, underscoring the need for a diplomatic resolution to the Yemeni conflict and enhanced measures to ensure the safety of maritime trade.

Conclusion with recommendations

In conclusion, Yemen's role in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East has become increasingly pivotal due to its intersection with major security, economic, and ideological issues that shape the region. Its strategic maritime position along the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, makes Yemen a critical player in global trade and energy routes, particularly as these waterways are essential for the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Gulf to Europe and beyond. Any disruption in Yemen, such as from piracy or conflict, threatens global economic stability, making the country's internal dynamics a key concern for major powers and international markets alike.

Beyond its geographic importance, Yemen has emerged as a key battleground in the wider Sunni-Shiite rivalry between regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran. This proxy conflict has drawn in other regional actors and transformed Yemen into a testing ground for larger geopolitical ambitions. Iran's support of the Houthi movement, which represents the Shiite Zaidi minority, directly challenges Saudi Arabia's influence in the Arabian Peninsula, destabilizing the region and intensifying sectarian tensions. The conflict in Yemen not only fuels this broader Sunni-Shiite divide but also contributes to tensions in neighboring countries like Bahrain, Iraq, and Lebanon, where sectarianism has spurred unrest.

Yemen's instability also has profound implications for global counterterrorism efforts. The country has long been a hotspot for extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS. These organizations have exploited Yemen's prolonged conflict and fragile state to expand their influence and launch attacks both within the region and globally. As such, the fight against terrorism in Yemen has become a cornerstone of international counterterrorism strategies, with the United States, Saudi Arabia, and their Western allies involved in countering the spread of extremism. Failure to stabilize Yemen could further embolden terrorist networks, posing a significant threat to international security.

Economically, Yemen's crisis has deepened its dependence on external actors, while its economic fragility exacerbates the region's broader challenges. Years of conflict have devastated Yemen's economy, leading to widespread poverty, food insecurity, and the collapse of basic services. The humanitarian crisis has reached unprecedented levels, with millions of Yemenis facing famine-like conditions. This economic instability spills over into the region, creating refugee flows, increasing the strain on neighboring countries, and fueling black-market activities, including arms smuggling. Regional actors, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have tried to mitigate these impacts through aid, but long-term solutions require broader international involvement.

Furthermore, Yemen's role in the broader economic and security landscape of the Middle East is tightly intertwined with the energy market. As global powers, particularly the United States, seek to reduce dependence on Russian energy in light of recent geopolitical developments, there is increased pressure on Gulf states to boost oil and gas production. Yet, the reluctance of Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, to fully comply with Western demands highlights Yemen's indirect influence on energy diplomacy. The stability of the region, including Yemen, is crucial for maintaining the steady flow of resources that underpin global energy markets.

Stabilizing Yemen requires an inclusive political settlement that brings together all major stakeholders in a transitional governing framework. Peace negotiations must integrate the Houthi leadership, the internationally recognized government, southern secessionists, and representatives of civil society – including women and youth – to ensure broad-based legitimacy (Duarte & Luqman, 2024). This could involve forming a unity government or power-sharing arrangement during a transitional period, laying the groundwork for eventual elections. Strengthening local governance is equally vital: empowering local authorities to

deliver basic services and resolve community disputes will help rebuild trust in state institutions. Ongoing efforts to reinforce governance and support community-level peacebuilding have shown promise, and continued investment in inclusive, bottom-up initiatives will be essential for Yemen to progress toward lasting peace (UNDP, 2024)

International actors such as the UN should facilitate a coherent political roadmap, possibly through an expanded mandate for the UN Special Envoy to coordinate a comprehensive political transition process.

An enduring nationwide ceasefire is a prerequisite for any meaningful progress. The UN-backed truce of 2022 marked a positive step, and in late 2023 the parties again signaled commitment to a country-wide ceasefire as part of renewed talks (Duarte & Luqman, 2024). These gains must be consolidated into a formal ceasefire agreement with robust monitoring and verification mechanisms. The UN Special Envoy has emphasized that a durable ceasefire is critical to protecting Yemen's fragile mediation process – especially amid broader regional tensions (United Nations Security Council, 2024). A neutral monitoring mission (under UN auspices or a third party agreed by the combatants) could supervise front lines, investigate violations, and help de-escalate incidents. Regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, should reinforce the ceasefire by curbing arms flows and using their influence over local allies to ensure compliance. A sustained cessation of hostilities will create the breathing space needed to resume intra-Yemeni political dialogue and allow humanitarian relief to reach all regions without military interference.

Reintegrating and restructuring Yemen's fractured security forces will be essential for long-term stability. Years of war have left a patchwork of militias, army units, tribal fighters, and foreign-backed forces operating across the country. The formation of a 59-member Joint Military Committee under the Presidential Leadership Council in 2022 – tasked with unifying anti-Houthi armed forces – was a step in the right direction (Yemen Policy Center, 2024). Building on this, a post-conflict settlement should establish a national Security Sector Reform (SSR) program to create professional, unified security forces representative of Yemen's diverse communities. This process would likely entail disarming and demobilizing militia fighters or integrating them into a reformed national army and police under a single chain of command. International support will be crucial for training and oversight: past experiences show that rebuilding Yemen's domestic security sector to protect the population from internal threats requires coordinated assistance and accountability (U.S. Department of State, 2022). A clear legal framework should also define civilian control of the military, preventing spoilers from undermining the peace. Ultimately, comprehensive SSR – including vetting of personnel, rationalizing command structures, and improving pay and logistics – will help restore public confidence in the state's monopoly on force and prevent a relapse into conflict.

Mitigating Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for peace. The country's war has created one of the world's worst humanitarian crises: as of 2023 an estimated 21.6 million Yemenis – roughly two-thirds of the population – required some form of assistance, and over 4.5 million people had been uprooted from their homes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). Even with a decline in active combat, these needs will persist for years. The international response, however, remains chronically under-resourced: UN appeals have only been funded at around 40% of requirements in recent years (Congressional Research Service, 2024). Donor governments must significantly increase aid funding to Yemen, not only to avert famine and disease but also to stabilize the country for a peace settlement to take hold. Equally important is improving the coordination and effectiveness of aid delivery. All parties in Yemen should guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access – lifting bureaucratic impediments, removing blockades on food and fuel, and ensuring safety of aid workers. A stronger monitoring mechanism under UN auspices could track and address any interference with aid distribution

or diversion of relief supplies. Looking ahead, humanitarian relief should be linked with economic recovery efforts: as the UN and World Bank have advocated, a “humanitarian-development-peace nexus” approach can gradually shift from purely emergency aid to supporting livelihoods and rebuilding services, helping communities become more self-reliant (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2025). For example, programs that repair water systems, schools, and clinics not only save lives now but also lay the groundwork for development and trust in the post-conflict state. Improved collaboration between humanitarian agencies, development institutions, and Yemen’s authorities (both central and local) will be critical to make aid a foundation for lasting peace rather than a temporary palliative. In sum, a well-funded, well-coordinated humanitarian response — integrated with long-term recovery planning — will alleviate suffering, bolster the legitimacy of a new government, and reinforce the overall peace effort in Yemen.

In essence, Yemen’s significance in the Middle East extends beyond its borders, affecting regional power balances, global economic interests, and international security. The country’s strategic location, involvement in proxy wars, and vulnerability to terrorism make it a key player in the ongoing geopolitical chess game. To secure long-term stability in the region, international efforts must focus not only on conflict resolution and counterterrorism but also on addressing the underlying economic and humanitarian crises plaguing Yemen. A comprehensive approach that involves diplomatic engagement, economic investment, and humanitarian assistance is essential to restoring stability in Yemen, which, in turn, will contribute to the broader security and economic stability of the Middle East and the world.

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