

## The Role of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the Yemeni Civil Wars<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

The Arabian Peninsula was one of the defining regions of world politics in the last century and still is today. The states of the region have always tried to extend their influence on the peninsula, which has caused conflicts in several cases. In my study, I examine the intervention of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the Yemeni civil wars of 1962 and 2015, and I also compare the two Yemeni conflicts mentioned above. I present the foreign and domestic political reasons for which Riyadh and Cairo participated in these struggles. Because of the interventions, the situation in Yemen can be interpreted not only as the internal affairs of the country, but also as one of the defining problems of the region. In my work, I review the regional power aspirations that characterized the period of the two civil wars. The following questions play an important role in my work: What are the similarities and differences between the Yemeni civil wars of 1962 and 2015? What are the local and global effects of the ongoing Yemeni armed conflict?

### Keywords:

Egypt, Near East, regional power aspirations, Saudi Arabia, Yemen civil war

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### ***The Yemeni Revolution and Civil War in 1962***

On September 19, 1962, Muhammad al-Badr took over the leadership of the country after his father, Imam Ahmed, who died a day earlier. The new ruler sensed massive discontent and made many promises to his people about modernizing the country. These included the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, the modernization of the economy, healthcare, and infrastructure. An important promise for the Yemeni society was the creation of freedoms and independent courts, as well as the release of persons previously imprisoned for political reasons. (Prantner, 2009)

However, at that time the domestic political situation was already critical. The tribes rebelled several times, and the Yemeni intellectuals, led by university students, organized demonstrations. (Benke, 1997, p. 121) Muhammad's ascension to the throne also offended Yemeni conservatives, as they believe that only the 3,000-strong community of religious leaders, the ulema, has the right to elect the imam. In addition, the royal family did not clearly support Muhammad's ascension to the throne. The situation was further complicated by the fact that among the army officers there was also an organization for the removal of the imam and the establishment of the republican system. These officers organized their own movement in 1961 as a result of the takeover of power in Egypt in 1952, which they named the Free Officers' Organization based on the Egyptian model. The Yemeni Free Officers openly followed Nasser's principles, which were based on pan-Arabism and the abolition of the monarchical system.

On September 26, 1962, military officers led by Abdullah Yahja al-Sallal and supported by Nasser overthrew the Yemeni imam Muhammad al-Badr, proclaimed the Yemen Arab Republic, and then set up the Yemeni Revolutionary Command Council (hereinafter YRCC), which functioned as the country's new government. The military officers planned to create a new state based on Nasserist foundations, and Nasser was the most committed supporter of the new Yemeni leadership. As a sign of this, Egypt was the first to recognize the new Yemeni government, even though the imam fled to the mountains, from where he started a civil war with the tribal forces loyal to him. Al-Sallal was confident of victory, so he declared in the company of the chieftains who supported the revolution that "The corrupt monarchy which ruled for a thousand years was a disgrace to the Arab nation and to all humanity. Anyone who tries to restore it is an enemy of God and man!" (Time, 1962) YRCC's foreign policy also showed many similarities with Egypt. He supported Arab nationalism and the creation of an Arab nation that would include all the free Arab states. Highlighting the importance of the Arab League and the fight against imperialism was an important element of the new Yemeni foreign policy. (Magyar Nemzet, 1962) One of the most important goals of Yemeni foreign policy after the revolution was to approach the countries of the Eastern bloc. The Yemeni Free Officers wanted to consolidate their position with Eastern support, especially by concluding arms deals, thus reducing the influence of Saudi Arabia and thus indirectly the Western powers in the region.

Al-Sallal and the Republican Party believed they enjoyed the support of majority of Yemenis, so they expected a quick victory in the civil war that broke out. However, they did not take into account the tribal and religious characteristics of the country, so when al-Badr fled to the northern highlands, the Zaidite tribes there immediately sided with him. Although Zaidism is a branch of Shiite Islam, there are many differences between the two religious trends, especially in habits, beliefs and the role of imams. The tribes of the region saw the imam as their religious leader who rules by the grace of Allah, meaning that for them anyone who fought against the imam was an enemy of Allah. (Prantner, 2009, p. 120) As the civil war escalated, both sides tried to win the loyalty and support of the tribes, who often switched sides. Already at the beginning of the civil war, it became clear that the revolutionary government led by al-Sallal did not have enough strength on its own to defeat the royalist forces supporting the Imam. At the same time, the royalists could not win a decisive victory without external help, which is why the role of Egyptian and Saudi intervention in the conflict was enormous.

### *The Egyptian and Saudi intervention*

The Yemeni revolution that broke out in 1962 significantly affected the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula. As a result of the events, the influence of the Egyptians in Yemen suddenly increased, which Saudi Arabia saw as a serious threat. For this reason, the Yemeni revolution and then the civil war appeared as a multi-level conflict from the very beginning. With the intervention of Cairo and Riyadh, the Yemeni civil war became a regional problem, and at the same time, the Soviet Union and the United States became involved in the events through the Egyptian and Saudi sides. The Arab states also expected the Arab League to solve the situation in Yemen, which is why the conflict affected the Arab community as well.

For Nasser, Yemen was an important state in several ways. From 1954, a significant political reorganization took place in the Middle East, which is also known as the Arab Cold War. The states of the region were grouped around two camps. Under the leadership of Nasser, the first camp was joined by those states where a republican form of government was established, supported Arab nationalism and pursued an openly anti-imperialist policy. The second camp included conservative, monarchical Arab countries whose existence was essentially threatened by Nasserism. In the early days of the Arab Cold War, Egypt and Iraq were the biggest rivals, however, after Iraqi military officers staged a coup against King Faisal II, Iraq was replaced by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia became the leader of that conservative, monarchist group and tried to isolate the Arabian Peninsula from what it considered dangerous external influences. As a result, the Yemeni revolution and the fate of the country became a regional issue.

After the dissolution of the United Arab Republic (hereafter UAR) in 1961, Egypt became politically isolated. The secession of Syria significantly weakened the most



important point of Nasser's policy, Arab nationalism, which is why the Egyptian president needed a serious political success. The events in Yemen provided an excellent opportunity for this, since in the event of a victory of the revolution, Nasser could argue the importance of Arab nationalism, and attribute the responsibility for the fall of the UAR to Syria. Khaled Mohieddin, an important officer of the Egyptian army, summarized Cairo's position as follows: "The war in Yemen was a response to the break with Syria...a sign that Egypt's Arab role has not yet ended [...] as Syria dealt a blow to Egypt's Arab leadership". (Orkaby, 2014, p. 45)

For the Egyptian leadership, Yemen's geographic location allowed it to pressure Saudi Arabia for economic aid, as well as support for nationalists fighting the British in the south. (Nutting, 1972, p. 351) Nasser wanted to win Yemeni public opinion for the YRCC and Cairo with the help of the fight against the British. It was also strategically important for Egypt, as the area could have been an advanced garrison of the Egyptian sphere of interest. On the other hand, it was close to the oil deposits vital to Saudi Arabia, which could be easily attacked in the event of a conflict.

As early as October 1962, Nasser sent military units to support al-Sallal, but as the civil war dragged on, the number of Egyptian troops also increased, by 1965 there were about 70,000 Egyptian soldiers stationed in Yemen. (Laron, 2017, p. 59) Due to the Soviet support, the Egyptian forces had a significant technical superiority, however, the terrain conditions in Yemen and the inexperience of the commanders made it impossible to take advantage of the favorable situation provided by the equipment. The Egyptian troops could not deliver a decisive blow to the royalists, on the other hand, their losses continued to increase, and participation in the civil war imposed a huge economic burden on Egypt. However, Nasser continued to insist on the support of the republicans and his foreign policy ambitions.

Egypt's intervention was also an excellent opportunity for the Soviet Union to gain influence in the region. Despite the fact that Soviet foreign policy was initially tied up by the Cuban missile crisis, it provided significant support to al-Sallal's government through Cairo. As part of this, numbers of military advisers arrived in the country and took part in the training of soldiers and pilots. For Moscow, the situation in Yemen made it possible to reduce the influence of the United States and Great Britain on the Arabian Peninsula, and in addition, the Soviets could control one of the most important straits of world trade, Bab el-Mandeb, through which thousands of barrels of crude oil passed daily. (Ferris, 2013) However, the Soviet Union was not entirely sure of the final victory of the revolution and therefore did not want to fully commit to Yemen. Thus, Soviet support came mostly through Egypt, but the solidarity of Moscow and the Eastern Bloc was also shown in other ways. Socialist countries, including Hungary, allowed Yemeni university students to study in that country with scholarships, and also undertook other humanitarian assistance. (Prantner, 2005)

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen have never been friendly. Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdul-Rahman Al-Saud, better known as Ibn Saud, the first king of Saudi Arabia, conquered significant territories in the early 1930s and tried to extend his authority to the entire Arabian Peninsula. However, its directions of expansion were quite limited. In the north, Iraq and Jordan, in the east, the small oil monarchies and Oman belonged to the British sphere of interest, meaning that attacking them would have drawn the wrath of the British. The only way left was Yemen in the south. Ibn Saud did not hesitate, in 1934 he started a war against his southern neighbor. Fighting with technological and numerical superiority, the Saudi soldiers easily defeated the Yemeni fighters with outdated weapons. During the war, Saudi Arabia conquered the provinces of Jizan, Najran and Asir.

In the Yemeni civil war, Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported al-Badr, the ruler of the country before the coup, while the new government was supported by Egypt, and thus indirectly by the Soviet Union. Riyadh did not send regular troops to Yemen, but sent weapons, ammunition, money, medicine, and Saudi trainers to train the royalist force. In addition, he recruited fighters for the imam from around half a million Yemeni nomads living in the areas bordering Yemen with Saudi Arabia. (HU-MNL-OL-XIX-J-11-j/1962/008062/1) In order to prevent Saudi supplies, the Egyptian forces continuously bombarded bases, airports, and caravans in the territory of the monarchy bordering Yemen. However, many civilians, including women and children, lost their lives in these bombings, as a result, Yemeni public opinion increasingly turned against the Egyptians.

Saud ibn Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud considered Nasser's radical nationalist and anti-monarchy views a serious threat. For this reason, he tried to prevent the formation of a new government under Nasser's influence in his immediate neighbor. The strained relations with Egypt had both economic and world political aspects. The Saudi king also feared that the stabilization of the new Yemeni government would allow the political, economic, and military advance of the Soviet Union on the Arabian Peninsula, which would have clearly threatened the fate of the dynasty. The Saudi monarchy was openly anti-Soviet and their biggest ally and trade partner was the United States of America, which made the eventual rise of the Soviets even more threatening due to these circumstances. (Rostoványi, 2011)

The crisis in Yemen has also affected American diplomacy. At the beginning of the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy still hoped that the USA would be able to maintain good relations with Egypt, and through that with other Third World countries. Part of this reconciliation plan was the promised American support for the construction of the Aswan Dam, which was eventually abandoned. The crisis that broke out in 1962 basically affected the region's political conditions, so the United States had to act as well. The US believed that the only way to prevent the conflict from spreading to Saudi Arabia was to recognize the new Yemeni leadership and prevent any outside interference. Accordingly, the United States officially recognized the Yemen Arab



Republic on November 12, 1962. (FRUS 1962) But because of this, the United States' relations with Saudi Arabia deteriorated, and even its allies openly criticized this move.

During the Yemen conflict, US Middle East policy was characterized by ambivalence. On the one hand, due to their economic interests, they had to protect Saudi Arabia, especially the Saud family. On the other hand, the Americans wanted to normalize their relationship with Egypt and prevent it from becoming even more committed to the Soviet Union. American diplomacy was not successful in this case, since Soviet support was already decisive in Nasser's policy, and at the same time, the Egyptian president did not trust Washington's Middle East policy. The US move ultimately harmed American-Saudi relations, which could only be remedied by new contracts beneficial to the Saudi side. (Barda, 1993)

In the Yemeni civil war, Britain also supported the Saudi policy, as the British were afraid of their interests around Aden. In the Yemen conflict, the two regional powers faced each other, with the great powers also standing behind them. As the civil war deepened, the Egyptian-Saudi diplomatic battle intensified. The Saudis accused Nasser that Egypt's politics are against Islam and that they only have Egypt's interests in mind, not the Arab states. Saudi Arabia was thinking about a separate plan including the Arab countries, the defining element of which is the Islamic religion. Nasser criticized the Saudi plan because, according to him, it was nothing more than a modified version of the Baghdad Pact, in which Saudi Arabia would have dominated the other Arab states.

### *The End of the Civil War*

The civil war was also a serious challenge for the Arab League. League members were divided by the events in Yemen. While Egypt and Syria led the government of Abdullah Yahja al-Sallal, Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported Imam al-Badr. Among the members of the League, by 1963 Cairo's influence had strengthened, as a result of this, the majority of members recognized the leadership of the new republic of Yemen as the legitimate government, with the exception of Saudi Arabia and Jordan.<sup>3</sup> In order to settle the conflict as soon as possible, the League adopted a resolution in September 1963, in which the organization called on its members to end hostilities. In addition, a resolution banned support for Imam al-Badr and ordered members to normalize relations with the Yemen Arab Republic. (Tuganova, 1969)

However, neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt complied with the resolution. Riyadh continued to support the imam and did everything to overthrow the Yemeni

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<sup>3</sup> After the 1956 Suez crisis, Nasser became extremely popular in the Arab world, from which he forged considerable political capital. Using this, he also had a strong support base within the Arab League, as many Arab states considered Nasser to be the leading figure in the fight against imperialism and the most important representative of Arab nationalism.

government led by al-Sallal. And Nasser refused to withdraw his troops fighting in Yemen. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war marked a radical turning point in the Yemeni civil war. In the Six Day War, Egypt suffered huge military losses, most of its forces were destroyed. After losing the war, Nasser had to change his previous foreign policy. Due to the economic crisis, it had a huge need for the rich oil-producing countries, but especially for Saudi Arabia. A significant milestone in Egyptian-Saudi relations was the Khartoum summit of the Arab League held in August 1967, where the participants accepted the resolution in which they consider the recovery of the territories occupied by Israel a joint task and therefore coordinate their political activities. At the meeting, President Nasser and the new Saudi King Faisal ibn Abdul-Aziz Al Saud agreed on the settlement of relations between their countries. However, one of the conditions in the agreement was that Nasser had to withdraw his troops from Yemen. For Nasser, in the post-war period, the military intervention in Yemen became unsustainable for several reasons. On the one hand, due to the economic crisis, it was unable to finance the supply of the Egyptian units stationed in Yemen. On the other hand, because of the Israeli threat, he needed all his troops, which he grouped around the Suez Canal. (Prantner, 2009)

At the meeting in Khartoum, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait undertook to provide financial support to the frontline states. The Saudis paid £50 million a year, which helped keep Egypt's economy from completely collapsing (Lugosi 2007, p. 402 – 403). King Faisal saw financial support as the most convenient way to end the crisis in Yemen. In addition, it proved to be a politically useful move, because the Saudis also used this gesture to increase their authority, saying that they were one of the biggest supporters of the Arab cause.

In accordance with the Khartoum agreement, Egypt finally withdrew its troops from Yemen, leaving Abdullah Yahja al-Sallal alone. After that, Saudi Arabia also stopped supporting the imam's party due to the divisions within the monarchist party and the exit of the Egyptian troops. After several years of civil war, the Yemeni leadership succeeded in consolidating the Yemen Arab Republic by 1970. However, the country continued to face serious economic and social challenges.

### ***The Yemeni Civil War in 2014***

The Yemeni civil war, which began in September 2014, is a multilateral civil war that became a regional conflict with the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition in 2015. In the civil war, the Shiite Houthi forces, also supported by Iran, are facing the forces of President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Saudi alliance supporting him. At the same time, taking advantage of the chaos caused by the civil war and supporting the Islamists in the country, the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) also gained considerable strength. (Magyar Nemzet, 2017)

The conflict began when the Houthis, dissatisfied with the government of President Hadi, occupied the Yemeni capital, Sanaa. In March 2015, the rebels created the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, which launched an offensive against the president who controlled the rest of the country. Due to the rapid advance of the Houthis, President Hadi fled the country, and Saudi Arabia, at the head of a self-organized coalition, launched a military operation to restore the former Yemeni government. (CBC, 2015)

For Saudi Arabia, the new civil war was important in several ways. On the one hand, Riyadh still regarded the Arabian Peninsula as its own sphere of interest, and therefore intervened strongly in all cases when Saudi hegemony over the region was threatened. Since the "Arab Spring" of 2011, the desert kingdom has pursued an increasingly active foreign policy, the basis of which was to ensure the survival of the dynasty. In practice, this meant that during the revolutionary wave after 2011, the Saudis supported movements against the existing regimes in those countries that were not part of the sphere of interests in the narrow sense, and thus were geopolitically less important for the kingdom. At the same time, Riyadh immediately intervened in matters involving the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula, such as in the case of Bahrain, where Saudi units helped suppress anti-government protests on March 14, 2011. (N. Rózsa and Szalai, 2016)

### *Reasons for the Saudi intervention*

Riyadh saw the rise of Iran's influence in the advance of the Shiite Houthis. Saudi foreign policy tried to prevent the strengthening of Iranian influence in the region, as it believed that it threatened its economy and the existence of the monarchy. For this reason, the civil war of 2014 is not only the internal affairs of Yemen, but also the proxy war of the two dominant states in the region, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi-Iranian relations are extremely complicated and strained due to religious differences, different political systems and economic interests, as well as regional power ambitions.

The desert kingdom considered that it would have had extremely negative consequences if the forces of the Houthis had won in Yemen. The basis for this is that Riyadh accused Iran of supporting the Houthis, and therefore, with their victory, Tehran would have been able to indirectly control vital crude oil delivery routes. In addition, in the event of a possible military conflict, Yemen was of strategic importance, as it directly bordered the oil-rich areas of Saudi Arabia. Because of this, they could easily have dealt a blow to the petroleum industry, which was essential to the kingdom's operation. Riyadh's fear was not unfounded, since in 2019 a rocket attack hit the oil refineries of the Saudi giant oil company ARAMCO. (The New York Times, 2019) As a result of the attack, crude oil production dropped for a short time, but more importantly, it showed how vulnerable the desert kingdom was. At the same time, the world market price of crude oil rose temporarily, which clearly showed the position of



the monarchy in the supply of crude oil to the world. Although the Yemeni rebels immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, the Saudi government, along with the United States, blamed Iran, saying the Houthis would not have been able to carry out such an attack on their own. (Magyar Nemzet, 2019) But it is important to point out that Iran consistently denies that it supports the Houthi forces.

Another reason for the Saudi intervention is the rivalry between power groups within the dynasty. Salman ibn Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, who was a direct descendant of the country's founder, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdul-Rahman Al Saud, took the Saudi throne in 2015 at the age of seventy-nine. However, due to Salman's poor health, the country was gradually taken over by his son Mohammed ibn Salman, who wanted to quickly strengthen his position within the dynasty. The basis of Mohammed's policy was to restore the broken balance of power in the Middle East and stop the growth of Iranian influence. Action against the Shia threat gave him his own domestic political legitimacy as the heir to the Saudi throne. (N. Rózsa and Szalai, 2016) For this reason, the Yemeni civil war seemed like a good opportunity for him, as he believed that a military intervention would give him a quick victory that would consolidate his domestic power position and prevent damage to Saudi hegemony in the Arabian Peninsula.

In 2015, Mohamed ibn Salman, referring to the Iranian threat to the status quo of the Arabian Peninsula, set up a coalition in which many Arab countries participated. In addition to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Jordan participated in the air campaign, while Egypt provided naval and land support and Sudan sent a ground contingent. On paper, the victory of the allied Arab countries was unquestionable, as they had absolute air superiority, and their ground forces were also much more technologically advanced than the Yemeni rebel forces. However, the coalition's intervention could not win a decisive victory, instead resulting in a conflict with huge losses that is still going on today. The ineffectiveness of the allied Arab countries has many aspects. The members of the alliance hoped for a quick victory, but when the civil war dragged on and the losses increased, both Egypt and Morocco left the coalition. The different political interests of the members of the association also caused significant tensions. (Amaraiia, 2020) Although the strengthening of the Houthi forces was considered a serious threat, they did not want to submit to Riyadh's policy. By the 2020s, the Arab coalition had practically fallen apart, only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates held their own, but both countries were looking for ways to end the conflict.

At first, Egypt did not want to participate in the Saudi coalition because it remembered the loss it suffered during the previous invasion of Yemen. However, when the Houthi forces captured Aden on March 25, 2015, Egyptian policy also changed. Cairo joined the coalition for two important reasons: first, to maintain free navigation and security in the Red Sea, and second, to support its Gulf allies against Iran's power ambitions. To this end, he launched 4 warships towards Bab al-Mandab, which helped

set up the Yemeni blockade. In addition to the navy, the Egyptian air force also actively participated in the Yemeni conflict. (Trager, 2015) Egypt's participation was announced by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh. Shoukry at the Arab Summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2015: "Egypt has declared its political and military support, its participation in a coalition with an air and sea Egyptian force, as well as ground forces if necessary, given Egypt's historic and unwavering responsibility for the Arab and Gulf towards national security". (Egypt Today staff, 2018)

### *Effects of the intervention in Yemen*

The basis of the coalition's military intervention was the use of the air force. The allied states believed that with air superiority they would be able to destroy the Houthi troops and cut off their supply lines. However, the Saudi leadership did not learn from Nasser's intervention in 1962, since the Egyptians dominated the airspace at that time but were unable to achieve a decisive victory. With the fact that Riyadh chose a military solution to the Yemeni crisis in 2015, it faced similar difficulties as the Egyptian forces during the previous conflict. Although Saudi Arabia did not participate in the 2015 operations alone, but as the most militarily significant member of the coalition, it still suffered painful losses.

Mohammed ibn Salman's intervention had the opposite effect than the heir to the throne expected. Mounting Saudi losses and attacks on oil facilities weakened his power within the kingdom and resulted in significant domestic political tension. The intervention in Yemen also had adverse effects on the Saudi hegemony over the Arabian Peninsula. On the one hand, due to the poor performance of the Saudi armed forces, especially the lack of air defense capabilities, the country's status as a regional power has weakened. On the other hand, the disintegration of the coalition affected Riyadh extremely negatively politically, as it was unable to keep together the alliance it created. Muhammad ibn Salman's political authority was significantly reduced by his differences with Qatar during the intervention in the civil war, and with Riyadh's encouragement, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Doha, which effectively resulted in the blockade of Qatar. The Saudi narrative accused Qatar of providing substantial funds to terrorist organizations and pursuing a policy too friendly to Iran. In fact, Qatar tried to distance itself from Saudi influence and did not shy away from relations with Iran. The interesting thing about the situation is that the blockade against Qatar also remained ineffective, because Doha's policy could not be changed, and even as a result of the blockade, Qatari-Iranian relations became even closer. During the blockade, Iran and Turkey airlifted food and other necessities into the country, and because of this, Riyadh's policy of starvation failed. Saudi Arabia and the states participating in the blockade saw the fall of the blockade, and therefore announced its lifting at the meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council on January 5, 2021 in the city of al-Ula. (Ramani, 2021)

### *The Road to Peace in Yemen*

After political and military setbacks, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE wanted peace, but only in a way that avoided further loss of prestige. The situation was complicated by the fact that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi envision the future fate of Yemen in different ways. At first, Saudi Arabia thought in terms of a unified Yemen under the leadership of President Hadi and with strong Saudi influence. However, this possibility has completely failed to date, as President Hadi issued a decree on March 7, 2022, in which he transferred his power to the Presidential Council, of which he himself is not a member.

The plan for a unified Yemen is also difficult to implement because the separatist groups operating in southern Yemen, who want an independent South Yemen, represent a significant force. The United Arab Emirates would support the latter solution, as it would maintain its influence in the region. It is very difficult to end the civil war in Yemen with lasting peace, because the conflict is taking place on several levels at the same time. On the one hand, it was between the north, dominated by the Houthis, and the south, dominated by separatist forces. The next level is the regional power struggle between Riyadh and Tehran, in which the civil war appears only as an afterthought. Finally, the confrontation between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates can also be observed, since both countries are pushing for a solution that suits their own interests.

Even though the Emirates and Saudi Arabia have been on the same side on some issues, such as the 2014 intervention in Yemen or opposition to the nuclear deal between Iran and the West, they are actually political rivals. In the background, the two countries are constantly trying to gain more influence within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and thus also in world politics. The main sources of conflict in the Saudi-Emirati relationship are oil policy, diversification and longer-term plans. Mohamed ibn Salman is trying to dominate the oil policy of OPEC and the GCC, thus practically putting the economic interests of the Emirate in the background. The rivalry between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi is also reflected in the vigorous modernization, the establishment of business relations with other countries and the logistical competition affecting the entire region. (Dunne, 2023) At the same time, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also making sure that the rivalry between the two does not turn into a direct armed conflict.

However, there are also signs of the end of the crisis, and these are due to the fact, that all parties are interested in resolving the conflict. It cannot be ignored that since the outbreak of the crisis in 2014, Yemen has gradually, but increasingly, sunk deeper into the humanitarian crisis, which is now threatened by mass epidemics and famine. The first step on the road to peace would be to conclude a stable ceasefire. There have already been attempts in this regard, on March 26, 2022 the 20th unilateral three-day ceasefire was announced. On March 29, the Saudi side also announced a ceasefire and announced that it would stop all military operations in Yemen. From the point of view of peace, the biggest step forward is that both sides accepted the UN ceasefire for the month of Ramadan on March 31. Although the final peace is still far

away and further long negotiations await the parties involved in the conflict, the results so far give reason for confidence.

## **Conclusion**

Since its establishment in 1934, the Saudi state has considered gaining and maintaining hegemony over the Arabian Peninsula as the basis of its own sphere of influence and security policy. With the outbreak of the Yemeni revolution in 1962, Saudi politics was forced to act, as it had to respond to Nasser's growing influence and political ambitions that also affected the monarchy. Because of this, the conflict in Yemen almost immediately became a regional power struggle, the stakes of which were to gain control over the region. Riyadh's intervention has had some successes and failures. It can be considered a Saudi success that Nasser finally withdrew his troops from Yemen, as a result of which the immediate danger to Saudi Arabia ceased. However, the withdrawal of the Egyptian military was primarily due to the disastrous consequences of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war for Egypt. However, the fact that President al-Sallal's forces managed to protect and later consolidate the republic was clearly a failure for the desert kingdom.

The crisis in Yemen that erupted in 2014 once again had a great impact on Saudi politics. In some respects, the new crisis resembled the civil war of 1962. In this case, too, a multi-level conflict was outlined, in which the Yemeni civil war, the Saudi-Iranian regional power struggle and Riyadh's conflict of interests. and Abu Dhabi are present at the same time. However, an important difference is that Saudi Arabia intervened armed in the conflict in 2015, at the head of the coalition it created. Although Mohammed ibn Salman had hoped for a quick military victory that would have strengthened his own position within the dynasty, instead a protracted conflict unfolded with significant casualties and threatened a humanitarian crisis. Due to the failure of the military action and the poorly functioning policy, Saudi Arabia lost a lot of its influence in the region, from which Iran primarily benefited. Saudi Arabia's blockade has negatively affected Qatar, as it has significantly limited Qatar's political opportunities, especially regarding The Middle East and North Africa region. Doha was surprisingly cautious about the blockade, as it wanted to avoid open confrontation with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### Notes on Contributor

Máté Percze is a PhD candidate at Eötvös Loránd University. He is writing his doctoral dissertation on the geopolitical competition between Egypt and Saudi Arabia during the Cold War. His fields of study are the history of the Middle East in the 20th century, the Arab-Israeli wars and the influence of the superpowers on the Arab countries during the Cold War.

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