

Yemen and the New Regional Order

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Abstract

This article intends to shed light on the political and security developments in Yemen that ultimately resulted in the Saudi-led military operation in this country. It discusses the political background behind the Yemeni revolution of 2011, its positive outcome in the shape of the results of the National Dialogue Conference and the reasons for the collapse of the efforts to stabilize Yemen.

Keywords: Yemen, Arab Spring, GCC, National Dialogue Conference, Al-Houthi, Saudi Arabian military operations

The unrest and turmoil in Yemen began in a similar manner as in other Arab states that were affected by the so-called Arab Spring. Yemenis, like Tunisians and Egyptians, although geographically distant from their North African counterparts, took to the streets with the same social and political demand under the pan-Arab claim “the people want the downfall of the system” (Arabic: *Al-shaab yurid isqat al-nizam*). The similarities continued into the next phase of the revolution which can be described as the leader’s (Arabic: *za’im*) pertinacity to remain in power as president and the certitude that these demands of the people can be dealt with in soft and shallow measures. However, at this point the parallels between the situations in the aforementioned countries come to an end. The events in Yemen between 2011 and 2013 were dramatic and yet promising. Dramatic – because the then president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, confronted the mostly-peaceful demonstrations throughout Yemen with brutal measures that resulted in more than two thousand casualties in 2011 among both civilians and the military as well as the defection of security officers from forces loyal to the president. The epitome of Saleh’s readiness to use violent repression were illustrated by the events of March 18, also known as Friday of Dignity, when security forces killed 57 protesters. It also marked the first major secessions in Saleh’s ranks, as many influential politicians and army personnel joined the protesters. The most symbolic and important defection was that of General Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar who was Saleh’s strong man in the military. What made the events even more tragic is that Ali Saleh was determined to use every possible means to remain in office, refusing to accept any solution to the crisis or even mediation. His determination to continue his rule reached a certain level of absurdity when he formulated ideas that the United States and the GCC were plotting against Yemen’s security and integrity.

The period between January and November 2011 was witness to numerous armed confrontations between forces loyal to Saleh and his opponents. These hostilities and Saleh’s absolute rejection of stepping down brought the country to the brink of civil war. It must be underlined that the international community and regional partners exercised political pressure on Saleh. Granting the Nobel Peace Prize to Tawakkul Karman in October 2011 was among the best examples of steps to weaken Saleh’s position. The GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) from the very beginning was engaged in efforts to work out a deal between the warring sides. A final accord, rejected three times before by Saleh, was finally reached on November 23, 2011. Although it had obvious weaknesses the accord could be considered a success. The arrangement made it possible for Saleh to step down from office but it never really managed to remove him from political activity. It also did not succeed in diminishing his, his family or closest allies’ influence in the political, military and economic spheres. The November agreement, being an important moment in the then Yemeni transition, was seen as too complacent with Saleh as it guaranteed him and his family judicial immunity. Such a step was indeed unique among

the states affected by the Arab Spring, especially when taking under consideration the violent repression of protesters. The GCC at this stage might have been acting in good faith hoping that Saleh will actually leave the Yemeni political scene and allow for a transition.

The Success of Dialogue

The concept of the National Dialogue Conference¹ was admittedly the most significant part of the GCC peace initiative. Moreover, it can still be considered a major success in Yemen's tumultuous transition. Its main intention was to gather all Yemeni political parties, youth movements and other social activists under one umbrella with the goal of developing a new road map for the country. This plan must be looked upon from a wider perspective as its purpose was the proposal for an innovative social contract for Yemen. Such a statement seems to be genuine as Yemen was and still is in need of such an agreement after more than 30 years of Saleh's rule. The National Dialogue Conference was certainly more than just internal peace talks. It should be seen rather as a reconciliation process aspiring to be the decisive factor behind the attempt to politically, militarily and socially redefine Yemen. It is worth underlining that the concept of creating equal representation of the Northerners and Southerners within the Conference working groups illustrated that there was an understanding among the parties for the necessity of conducting talks on the basis of partnership.

The ambitious goals of the conference were to a large extent achieved. The most significant of them was the ability to persuade all the political forces, regardless of the animosities between them, to hold direct talks which involved the Al-Houthi organization and the Salafi Al-Rashad party. The 10-month long meetings brought about substantial recommendations. Among the most important were (1) the arrangement that the zone of Saada, the stronghold of the Al-Houthi family and political movement, would receive some religious freedom, and (2) that issues which led to the beginning of military hostilities between the Al-Houthi movement and the Yemeni government would be addressed. Another issue that was officially proposed was the redrawing of Yemen's administrative system in order to build a bridge between the North and the South. Finally, the Conference did put forward a draft of a new constitution that was supposed to be accepted in a nationwide referendum. The Saada issue and the regional hostilities remain the foundations of the ongoing Yemen crisis, as they embody a threat to Yemen's territorial integrity.

¹ The Conference was held in Sanaa between March 18, 2013 to January 24, 2014. Originally the Conference was to conclude its work by September 2015.

The near year-long talks were conducted in a very difficult political and environment because of the security issues. The negotiations were accompanied by a whole series of political murders meant to eliminate politicians and activists from both sides to render dialogue impossible.

What Went Wrong

With President Ali Saleh stepping down and the international community endorsing the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference, it seemed reasonable to see Yemen successfully implementing its transition and building its future. There were significant gestures from the then transitional authorities that might be seen as acts of goodwill, and understanding the necessity for national reconciliation. These steps were both of a political and symbolic nature which is of great importance in the Arab world. The example of the first being the Qatari donation of 350m USD to the Southern Yemen Fund whose aim was to compensate the Southerners for their discrimination under the former regime. The return of the remains of Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, the founder of the movement who was killed in the first so-called Saada war in September 2004, to the family in 2013 is the best illustration of the symbolic aspect of this national reconciliation. However, what happened in Yemen during 2014 and later proved that the country was not on the path to peace. Two factors in particular may explain the failure of the reconciliation process. The first being the political and social weakness of President Hadi and the underestimating of the real influence and determination of President Ali Saleh to cling to power. The epitome of the President's Hadi's feebleness was his inability to enforce reshuffles in the army and security apparatus and his incapability of amending the economic condition of the state and society as a whole. Although Yemen had governmental institutions throughout the transitional period they were not only unable to control the whole territory of the state but seemed powerless to stop clashes between Al-Houthi fighters and tribal structures loyal to the Islah party and AQAP structures. Without doubt, the Al-Houthi movement benefitted from the state apparatus' weakness to continue their takeover of provinces in Yemen. This military success would not have been possible without the close cooperation of Ali Saleh and the military structures loyal to him. There is not a particular moment that could be regarded as the beginning of this collaboration. The fact that the former president managed to conclude this long-lasting informal cooperation with the Al-Houthi movement is a peculiar phenomenon. Ali Saleh as Yemen's president is directly responsible for killing the founder of the Al-Houthi movement in 2004 and for conducting six brutal wars against it between 2004 and 2010. If a moment illustrates the cooperation between the two sides it would probably have to be the Al-Houthi takeover of

Sanaa in September 2014 (al-Ahmadi 41–43). From this moment it became obvious that the rebels were not willing to enter any kind of conciliatory policy with the government but were determined for a confrontational strategy as by that time the insurgents had ruled out the possibility of any other state military intervention in Yemen. What is striking in the Al-Houthi's decision to seize Sanaa is not only the fact that it could not be of any political benefit to the movement. It was also, from the very beginning, another destabilizing feature in an already difficult political landscape. It was not possible for the Al-Houthi movement to impose their authority and create a government as their legitimacy and popularity within society was immensely weak. The National Peace and Partnership Agreement² can rather be considered as the final phase of demolishing the previous transition efforts as it was an attempt to legitimize the coup. The words of Sheikh Mohamed bin Naser al-Hazmi, a prominent member of the Al-Islah party, "Al-Houthi is a creature that swallowed a prey bigger than itself and if it does not give it back it will be the cause of its death" (al-Subahi 52) seem to be the exact description of the movement's position today and its fate in the future.

Saudi Arabia Takes the Leadership

There were several political steps and regional developments that led to the military intervention in Yemen which can be considered as a major break-through in Saudi and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) politics. Saudi Arabia under the rule of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz (2005–2015) became a state with global aspirations and displaying a willingness to redefine its role as a prominent leader of the Arab and Muslim world. The late Saudi king succeeded in internationalizing his state, the immediate result of which was the gradual emergence of new political partners for the Kingdom.³ It seems that the decision to launch an operation in Yemen came as result of earlier political and military initiatives taken by the Al Saud ruling family. The first major example of Riyadh's leadership was the readiness to act independently together with other GCC states to militarily defend the regional order against attempts to destabilize it. The best illustration of such a policy was the decision to send National Guard troops to Bahrain in order to defend the legitimate authorities in the Kingdom in 2011.⁴ The strongest display of Saudi determination

² The agreement was signed in Sanaa on September 21, 2014 in the presence of the UN envoy to Yemen, J. Benomar (*Yemeni parties and Houthi rebels sign deal to end fighting, form new government*).

³ The most significant example of such a situation is the status of bilateral Saudi-French relations with Paris which in the last three years has become one of the five most important partners of Riyadh (Barthe).

⁴ March 14 marked the beginning of the military operation in Bahrain (Henderson).

to build global alliances to counter regional security threats was the successful efforts to form the anti-Islamic State (IS) coalition.⁵ In this case, like the events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia also decided to participate in an active manner by engaging its air force in strikes against IS militants in Iraq. This military combat participation was to a large extent an unexpected decision from the Saudi authorities and as such was a major surprise to the international community. It symbolically showed the military and political readiness of Saudi Arabia and that of the GCC to directly take responsibility for the developments in the region.

Saudi Arabia's military actions in Bahrain and Iraq, due to its engagement in strikes on Islamist positions and likewise the operation in Yemen, must however also be seen from an Iranian perspective. Such an approach is natural, as Iran is seen as the biggest threat to the stability of the Sunni Gulf monarchies because of its history of interference in the region.⁶ The Iranian issue only enhanced its importance and became even more urgent when the framework agreement for the Iranian nuclear program was concluded between Tehran and the P5+1 group.⁷ The fact that the negotiating parties endorsed this arrangement remains a major source of a serious political distress for Saudi Arabia as well as for its allies in the GCC, although some countries from the council have adopted a different approach to this matter.⁸ It must be underlined that for Riyadh and the Gulf capitals any kind of deal which brings Iran closer to becoming a full member of the international community and creates the opportunity of normalizing relations between Tehran and the rest of the world would be seen as a defeat for the West. Defeat because the Gulf states regard the optimism related to the framework agreement as premature and overstated. Such a statement does not imply that Saudi Arabia, or the region as a whole, objects to the agreement with Iran. However, these countries do express scepticism of Tehran's true intentions as to abandoning its nuclear ambitions and discontinuing its intrusive policy in the region. In this context it is worth recalling Steve Coll's commentary: "The Saudis regard themselves as a vital counter to Iran, on behalf of Sunni states and guerrillas, such as those fighting in Iraq and Syria. The royals see the US deal with Tehran as, in the words of Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi intelligence chief, a historic "pivot to Iran." Obama argues that a deal would not jeopardize Saudi Arabia and could help stabilize the region by preventing a nuclear-arms race" (Coll 23).

5 Saudi Arabia organized an international conference in Jeddah on September 11, 2014 which was dedicated to fighting ISIS (*US, Gulf and Arab allies agree strategy to counter ISIS*).

6 The evident examples of Iranian intrusion are: the ongoing conflict with the UAE concerning the territorial attachment of three islands in the Gulf, the support of the Al-Houthi movement in Yemen and the backing of Shia political groups in Bahrain.

7 The deal was signed in Lausanne on April 2, 2015. The P5+1 group contains: the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China.

8 Oman is an example of a GCC country maintaining good relations with Iran and developing bilateral contacts (Ulrichsen).

The decision to militarily intervene in Yemen can also be considered as an unexpected move by the Kingdom. The political foundations of the intervention were based on the articles of the Arab Defence Treaty of 1950 and the Charter of the Arab League. In these circumstances it is important to underline that Riyadh is promoting the concept of creating an Arab Common Defence Force, involving as many Arab states as possible, with Egypt as one of the crucial states in the initiative. The initiative itself was adopted at the Arab League Summit in Charm el-Cheikh in April 2015 when the operation in Yemen was already in its initial phase. This allows for the claim that Saudi authorities, when preparing its political coalition for Yemen, perhaps laid the foundation for the creation of an Arab NATO-style organization (See more: Gaub). There seems to be a political determination to work on the project as army chiefs of staff of Arab countries have prepared protocols on what the joint Arab force should look like (*Protocol drafted for a new joint Arab force*). The result of Saudi diplomatic efforts was the creation of a ten-state coalition combining Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan and Pakistan under the command of Saudi Arabia (Al-Shadadi). It is worth emphasizing that Oman, although a member of the GCC, decided to decline military participation in the coalition forces; nevertheless, Muscat gave its full political support for the decision to intervene. This position of the Sultanate does not mark any rift in the GCC's unanimous position on Yemen, but it rather confirms the Omani strategy of not participating in the global policies of other Gulf states and to maintain a relatively low profile within the GCC.

Operation “Decisive Storm” and “Restoring Hope”

Riyadh stressed that its military intervention came in reply to the request of Yemen's President Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi who sought help from the Saudi authorities in rescuing the Yemeni people from the Al-Houthi militias. It also appears that the direct reason for the military intervention rests in the fact that two Saudi unofficial red lines were crossed by the Al-Houthi and Ali Saleh insurgents. The first one being the military advance on Aden with the clear intention to capture the city. The second – the rejection of the proposal for negotiations offered by the Saudi authorities in Riyadh. However, it is the former that can be considered the essential reason air strikes were begun against the rebels in Yemen. The fall of Aden, Yemen's second biggest city and a crucial gateway to the Gulf and Bab al-Mandab Strait would have been seen as the complete control that the Al-Houthi rebels would have had over Yemen. It should be underlined that President Hadi's escape to Saudi Arabia at the end of March 2015 marked the end of his political and military capabilities to defend Aden. Nevertheless, there were attempts by Hadi to create a stronghold in this southern city. Proclaiming Aden the provisional capital of Yemen can be

interpreted as an example of such a strategy. The manoeuvre to seek refuge there by the legitimate president might also be considered as an effort to defend the city. Undoubtedly Hadi, being a Southerner, had some political and tribal structures loyal to him in this part of Yemen. Saudi Arabia indulged in a military operation stressing that its intention is to restore the legitimate authorities in Yemen and to push back any threats from its borders, which in turn, would safeguard the security of other Gulf states.

March, 25 2015 saw the beginning of air strikes from the Saudi-led coalition on targets linked to Al-Houthi and armed groups loyal to former President A. Saleh. The majority of the assaults were aimed at the destruction of arms depots, military installations and other vital army and communication infrastructure related to or under the direct control of the rebels. Almost two hundred fighter jets participated in the operation, which lasted until April, 21 2015, with more than 2400 military air operations carried out across Yemeni territory.⁹ The coalition forces under the leadership of Saudi Arabia kept the operation as transparent and accessible as possible to court public opinion. Daily press conferences and updates were held in Riyadh. Adopting such an approach to a delicate matter as a military operation in a neighbouring country was almost unheard of in the Arab world. It became obvious that the Saudi authorities wanted to minimize any concerns the public had to its military activity in Yemen. The military operation also combined the use of naval forces from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan. The navy, apart from actively taking part in the shelling of al-Houthi and Saleh positions in and around Aden, also imposed a blockade of Yemen ports and guaranteed the protection of shipping routes in this vital strait of the Red Sea. The active role of Egypt in the Saudi-led campaign is something which is worth underlining. Egypt's President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi even declared his army's readiness to participate in a ground operation in Yemen if it was judged necessary by the coalition. Such a position also undercut any speculation about the more delicate nature of Saudi-Egyptian relations after the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

In this context it should be emphasized that Saudi authorities also carefully chose the name for its military operation. "Decisive Storm" is symbolically linked to the words of the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz Al Saud: "Decisiveness is the father of firm will, the father of triumph and neglect is the father of absence and the father of sorrow."¹⁰ These words have become even more symbolic if we remember that King Salman bin Abdulaziz refers to the words of his father who is seen as the unifying force and the founder of modern Saudi Arabia. The authorities of Saudi Arabia, when preparing for the operation but also

⁹ More on the military aspects of the Operation available in bin Muhsin al-Subshi.

¹⁰ The text in Arabic reads as follows: *al-hazm abu al-azm wa abu al-zafarat, wa al-tarak abu al-farak abu al-hasarat*. Source: <http://twasul.info/148481/> (accessed 10 May 2015). The English version is the author's own translation.

during the campaign, spared no effort to bolster its legitimacy from an Islamic point of view both from a political and religious aspect. Riyadh was conscious of the fact that a spiritual legitimacy would not only be helpful but be welcomed by other Islamic countries.¹¹ The beginning of such a campaign was marked by the pronouncement by the Council of Senior Scholars, widely known as the Senior Council of Ulema that Al-Houthi was a terrorist organization (al-Szadadi). Such a verdict is legitimate and the moment of its approval cannot be judged as too hasty or rash and it is in line with the GCC anti-terrorist policy. The only problematic issue with such a decision is that it basically “closes the door” to any future dialogue between the Saudi, GCC authorities and the insurgents in Yemen.

Operation “Decisive Storm” ended on April, 21 2015 in the same way as it began, upon the request of Yemen’s president. The coalition forces immediately stated that the cessation of military activity was possible as the almost month-long campaign had successfully eliminated the threat to the security of the Kingdom and of other GCC states (*Operation Decisive Storm / Determined Storm*). “Decisive Storm” was instantly followed by the second phase of the coalition intervention in Yemen, “Restoring Hope.” Although the new operation was announced as a humanitarian mission, the coalition from the very beginning underlined that it reserved the right to pursue military strikes on insurgent positions if they continued hostile activities. From the start, “Restoring Hope” was and remains mainly a military operation although the air operations are in response to concrete aggressive actions from insurgents. The difference between the two operations is that Decisive Storm was purely a military procedure with strategic targets on the ground while Restoring Hope has a strong political dynamic. It can be defined as the determination to convince Al-Houthi and Saleh troops to surrender and to respect international legislation in relation to the situation in Yemen. This can be rather considered as political naivety because Saudi Arabia and the insurgents do not share the same point of view towards developments in Yemen. The rebels drawn from Al-Houthi and Saleh forces do not intend to accept any defeat, lay down their arms or seem willing to conduct any peace talks with Riyadh under any circumstances. For the time being it seems to be the exact opposite. The rebels have decided to intensify the conflict by conducting cross-border raids on Saudi cities which can be considered as a declaration of war against the Kingdom.¹² A clear example of this hostile policy towards Riyadh was the ballistic missile that was fired from northern Yemen and intercepted over Saudi territory by a Patriot missile battery (*Tehran Arming Houthis; Al-difa al-jawi yaataridh sarukh scud*).

¹¹ More on the Islamic aspect of the operation in al-Sudais.

¹² The attacks were concentrated on the town of Najran and smaller cities in the province of Jazan. Casualties among civilians were reported in both locations. The first attacks occurred in mid-April 2015 and assaults are still occurring.

Questions remain as to whether Saudi Arabia and the coalition won the war against Al-Houthi and Saleh forces. Surely both military campaigns managed to largely curtail the military infrastructure and combat potential of the rebels but this is not synonymous with having won the war. Indeed the insurgents after more than two months of airstrikes were still able to conduct a missile attack on Saudi Arabia which clearly meant that they still possessed the ability to strike back. Despite the airstrikes, Al-Houthi and Saleh troops maintain their main strongholds of Saada, Aden and Sanaa and refuse any form of surrender. It is appropriate to underline that Riyadh has been politically successful with regards the operations in Yemen. Achievements such as the passing of the Security Council resolution 2216, the nomination of Ismail Cheikh Ahmed as UN envoy to Yemen and the international support for the Kingdom, are proof that Saudi Arabia has managed to convince its global partners that Yemen is in these circumstances a country under its influence. Yet the ongoing strikes are reducing the coalition forces' "victory dividend" in this crisis. Additionally, Saudi Arabia's prolonging of the military operation in Yemen will attract criticism as inevitably the humanitarian situation in Yemen will deteriorate which will reduce the initial support it had from Yemenis at the beginning of operation "Decisive Storm." Furthermore, continuation of military operations will undoubtedly lead to more questions as civilian casualties and property destruction not related to the operation continue to increase. The illustration of such a development is the, most probably erroneous, strike that hit the old town of Sanaa which resulted in criticism from international organizations (*Air strike devastates UNESCO heritage site in Sanaa*). There are also international voices emphasizing the fact that the Saudi-led campaign is "violating the rules of war" and even those describing its actions as "war crimes."¹³ Moreover, for the time being, the ambitious goal set by the coalition to restore the legitimate authorities in Yemen by overthrowing the Al-Houthi and Saleh "coalition" forces, seem to be becoming more difficult to achieve. However, the fact that President A. Hadi and the Yemeni government have been in exile in Riyadh since the end of March 2015, was and maybe to a degree still is a strong political message to the rebels that the legal government is still operational and has international support. Yet at the same time its remaining outside Yemen remains proof that there are neither the political and security conditions for its returning to Sanaa nor the tools to implement such a move. The continuation of the authorities in exile will result in the decline of its popularity and will eventually lead to it becoming a political irrelevance.

¹³ Source: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/yemen> (accessed 29 May 2016); <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/25/civilian-casualties-war-crimes-saudi-arabia-yemen-war/> (accessed 1 April 2016).

Outlooks for Yemen

In political terms there seem to be more than enough solid fundamentals to implement a transition scenario. The most important of these being the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, UN Security Council resolution 2216 and the Riyadh Conference on Yemen that adopted an 11-point plan for the reconstruction of Yemen.¹⁴ The Al-Houthi and Saleh front is for the time being the most serious obstacle to any further talks on the country's future but it is not the only one. The most significant issue that the Yemenis must themselves face is how they will deal with their past in order to think of a stable future. Reconciliation based on the principle of not excluding any sections of the Yemeni internal political scene seems to be the only solution. This philosophy was the basis for the concept introduced at the National Dialogue Conference. This reconciliation would require political concessions from both internal and international actors. The first being Ali Saleh to admit that he cannot be part of a solution to Yemen's transition but to also give his party, the GPC (General People's Congress), the right to participate in the reconstruction of the country. Saudi Arabia would have to accept the political existence of a political movement representing the Zaydi-Shia society of northern Yemen and its role in Yemeni politics. This would require some goodwill from Tehran, meaning it would have to refrain from interfering in Yemeni internal affairs. At the moment this seems highly unlikely. In fact, the Al-Houthi delegation announced that their delegation to peace talks under UN auspices in Geneva, planned for June, 15 2015 would include Iranian political and legal advisors. This could only be seen as a provocative move against Saudi Arabia and a clear attempt to receive international recognition for themselves (Al-Haqbani).

The southern issue is another complex problem that needs urgent attention as it still remains a threat to Yemen's territorial integrity. All three possibilities for the South are under discussion (1) the secession and creation of a separate state (2) a federation with the North and (3) the continuity of the unity of the country. This allows for a conclusion that an internal-South dialogue is necessary in order to continue with national reconciliation.

A relatively reassuring phenomenon for Yemen's transition is the low probability of a sectarian conflict. This is because the lines of divisions were not and are not along Sunni-Shia lines but rather along tribal loyalties and affiliations. However, regular violent confrontations between Al-Houthi insurgents and AQAP structures have the potential to trigger a sectarian conflict. Another danger to Yemen's stability is the possible advance of ISIL (Daesh) in some territories of the country as one of its pillars is to cause incitement against Shiites in Arab states.

¹⁴ The conference was held in Riyadh between May 17-19, 2015. More available at: *Faysal al-Awwadhi, Mohamed al-Sunaid, Ikhtitam aamal muatamar al-riyadh li-inqadh al-yaman.*

The military intervention led by Saudi Arabia and the coalition was a tragic choice for the Kingdom but in the then conditions it might have been necessary to take such a decision. The operation in Yemen was and to a large degree still is not about winning the conflict in terms of warfare but averting the annexation of Yemen by insurgents which could have unforeseeable consequences. Saudi Arabia has proved its political and military capability to play a regional leader role in challenging moments but what is becoming more necessary now is to work out an urgent political, economic, humanitarian and military plan for Yemen that could be realistically accepted by the Yemenis and have the chance to be implemented.

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