

The Impact of The Coalition of Arab States Intervention on The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen Internal Conflict

Nurul Annisa^{1, *}, Agussalim Burhanuddin¹, Seniwati¹

¹ Department of International Relations, Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

* Correspondence: nurulasbil@gmail.com

Abstract: The civil war that erupted in Yemen in 2015 caused the creation of the worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen's history, and this humanitarian crisis is also categorized as the worst humanitarian crisis in the history of modern humanity. The coalition of Arab countries became one of the actors involved in Yemen's civil war after receiving a request for military intervention from President Hadi over the threat of a coup carried out by the Houthis. The coalition of Arab states then carried out a military operation into Yemeni territory aimed at eliminating the threat posed by the Houthis and restoring President Hadi's government as the official government of the Yemeni state. However, the military operation carried out by the coalition of Arab countries is considered the beginning of the worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen's history. This research then aims to analyze the impact of the involvement caused by the coalition of Arab countries on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen's civil war.

Keywords: Yemeni Civil War; Coalition of Arab States; Intervention; Humanitarian Crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the civil war erupted in 2015, Yemen has faced political devastation that has given rise to a humanitarian crisis, and the United Nations has categorized Yemen's humanitarian crisis as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Almost 80% of Yemen's population needs humanitarian assistance (Albasoos & Al Hinai, 2020). The UN notes that humanitarian aid is increasingly becoming the only life-sustaining force for millions of Yemenis. Two-thirds of Yemen's population is food insecure (Sharp, 2019). The humanitarian crisis that occurred in Yemen was nothing but the result of the civil war that took place at that time. The course of the conflict influences the development of the humanitarian crisis, so both actors and other components will also affect the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Historically, Yemen has experienced political instability even before unification took place. Since the 1960s, both South Yemen and North Yemen have not been spared from violent conflicts, coups, or civil insurrections. This occurs because of political and economic marginalization and discrimination against certain groups of people by the government in power (Feierstein, 2019). However, the civil war erupted in 2015 when the political transition after the fall of the Righteous Regime in the momentum of the Arab Spring failed (Kaptan, 2021).

When the Arab Spring swept the Middle East in 2011, President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had served as President of Yemen for more than 30 years, finally handed over his reins of power as a result of the demonstrations carried out by the Yemeni people and was replaced by his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi (Dosari & George, 2020). The Arab Spring was only a moment used by Yemenis to carry out a larger-scale uprising against the Saleh regime. However, the problems and demands for the misery felt by the Yemeni people have existed for a long time. Although former president Saleh was ousted in the wake of the Arab Spring that swept through Yemen in 2011, political divisions continue. In early 2012, demonstrations spread throughout Yemeni cities and

continued for months (Al-Eriani, 2021). The Gulf Cooperation Council then convenes and mediates a National Dialogue Conference to form a transitional government and resolve all political issues in Yemen. The conference was held from 2013 to 2014 and was attended by various Yemeni political groups (565 individual delegates). An important debate occurred at this conference when there was a proposal to form a federal state and divide Yemen into six central regions. However, the Houthi group, the Southern separatist movement, and Saleh's supporters, Yemen's main elite actors, rejected the proposal. This triggered an escalation of the military conflict that led to the formation of a new constitution and the arrangement of power sharing still unresolved (Asl et al., 2021). The Arab Spring in Yemen did not produce a success story like Tunisia. The divisions that spread in various parts of Yemen when the Arab Spring hit Yemen were one of the causes of the civil war and crisis that began in 2015.

As a result of the controversial debate on the proposal at the National Dialogue Conference, unanimity could not be achieved, and the political transition failed. The Houthis assume that the responsible political forces in the transition period are only thinking about solutions that are impossible to achieve without addressing the security, economic and humanitarian problems that prevail in Yemen. Finally, in September 2014, the Houthis, in a tactical alliance with separatists supporting Saleh, launched an armed uprising and defeated the security forces of President Hadi's government and succeeded in taking control of the capital area so that it became the de facto ruler of the capital Sana'a (Gulbe, 2022). Initially, these two separatist groups had their own goals. They fought each other until the Houthi group and the separatist group supporting Saleh finally decided to work together to become the opposition to the government. Marginalized groups will continue to strive for their rights so that divisions or disputes between marginalized people and rulers will never come to light if injustice continues to be committed.

In January 2015, the Houthi group managed to take control of the Presidential Palace in the capital Sana'a. Then, in early February 2015, the Houthis dissolved parliament and formed a Revolutionary Council to run the country. On February 21, 2015, President Hadi left the capital for Aden. A month later, President Hadi stated in his speech that he was still the legitimate president of Yemen and that Aden was the provisional capital of Yemen. However, on March 22, 2015, the Houthi group entered Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city, while other Houthi forces took control of Yemen's coast along Bab al-Mandeb and Perim Island in the middle of the strait. By the end of March, Houthi forces took control of Al-Anad Air Base, forty miles from Aden and once a U.S. Special Forces base fighting AQAP. As a result, President Hadi fled Aden and flew to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to ask for help (Riedel, 2020). The Houthis' takeover of some Yemeni territory that led to President Hadi leaving Yemen marked the failure of the political transition and the beginning of a civil war and a protracted crisis in Yemen.

After the Houthis succeeded in controlling several territories and forced President Hadi to leave Yemen, President Hadi then asked for the help of the United Nations and the Arab League through Saudi Arabia to do everything possible, including military intervention to expel the Houthis from the occupied territories and restore President Hadi's power as the legitimate government of Yemen. President Hadi's request refers to the UN Charter Article 51 and the right to self-defence (Clausen, 2022). This is then used to legitimize all military activities and interventions carried out by the party that is asked for assistance by President Hadi.

After receiving a request for military assistance from President Hadi, the Saudi Arabian government intervened militarily to support President Hadi's side in the conflict against the Houthis in Yemen until a civil war erupted in 2015. Saudi Arabia, together with its coalition, formed a military operation to eliminate the Houthis in some of the Yemeni areas they managed to control and to restore the government of President Hadi under the name of "Operation Decisive Storm". The military operation began on March 26, 2015, involving several coalition countries,

including Saudi Arabia, Qatar (exit 2017), Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco (exit 2019), and Sudan. The operation was carried out by carrying out large-scale aerial bombardment of areas indicated as Houthi defence bases and deploying armed forces into Yemeni territorial territory (Salim, 2022). This military operation officially marked Saudi Arabia's involvement with its coalition in the Yemeni conflict and caused the conflict to escalate into a Yemeni civil war.

In addition, when the Houthis seized the capital, Sana'a, they also took control of the city's missiles and other weaponry, which they then used to intensify attacks against a coalition of Arab countries siding with President Hadi, which mainly included the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia launched a series of operations to retake the capital, Sana'a, controlled by the Houthis and paralyze the Houthis so that the aggression carried out by the Houthis group could be stopped (Khan & Ullah, 2020). The takeover of some Yemeni territories by the Houthis group has not only had an impact on the division of the country but has also become a regional threat to Yemen's neighbouring countries.

On April 21, 2015, the coalition announced the end of the military operation "Operation Decisive Storm" because it is believed that the offensive of the coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia had succeeded in eliminating the threat posed by the heavy weapons of the Houthi group and launched "Operation Renewal of Hope" to shift its official focus from military operations to negotiations and political processes. Unfortunately, even after a few years of military operations, "Operation Renewal of Hope" announced that the coalition is still conducting military operations in its involvement in the Yemeni civil war (Darwich, 2020). In launching its military operations, this coalition also has the support of countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, and France (Prasetya & Yahya, 2022). This military operation has impacted various situations, including the emergence of a humanitarian crisis in Yemen. As the Saudi-led coalition began to support President Hadi's claim as the rightful ruler of Yemen and began to wage war against the Houthis, at the same time, Iran increased its support for the Houthis. As a result, President Hadi's progress with the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen's civil war has slowed down, and a deadly balance of power has emerged in this civil war (Schumann, 2020). Iran accused the military intervention carried out by Saudi Arabia and its coalition in Yemen of violating Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which restricts foreign intervention. However, this is disputed based on UN Security Council Resolution 2216 of 2015, which affirmed President Hadi's request to the Saudi-led coalition to use force to pave the way for legalizing the use of force in Yemen (Khan & Ullah, 2020). On this basis, the use of force by the Saudi-led coalition to attack the Houthis in Yemeni territory can be legalized.

The military intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia to eliminate the Houthis and restore President Hadi's government as the legitimate government of the Yemeni state, unfortunately, has led to thousands of civilian casualties and a humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Even after five years since the first military intervention was carried out in Yemen (2015-2020), fighting between the Houthis and coalition forces of Arab countries continues. This violent conflict has resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world at the time. In addition, this civil war has polarized and destroyed Yemeni politics and society. Yemen-based terrorist groups are also taking advantage of opportunities to expand and strengthen their networks amid the division and destruction of the Yemeni state due to the war. The involvement of regional actors, especially the Saudi-led coalition of Arab countries, in the conflict has exacerbated Yemen's civil war situation (Pradhan, 2020). At this point, the military intervention carried out by the Saudi-led coalition of Arab states has only caused further instability in Yemen's internal conflict. It has resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Using a descriptive type of qualitative research, the author will analyze and explain how the coalition of Arab countries is involved in the humanitarian crisis in Yemen's internal conflict. The data used is secondary data from various sources in scientific journals, articles, books, and reports from related institutions, as well as official websites and online news that are relevant to the discussion. The data collection technique used is a literature study that reviews literature from various electronic and non-electronic media. Data analysis is carried out qualitatively by describing the problem and analyzing the data obtained to produce arguments or precise analytical descriptions. The writing method used is deductive; the problem is generally described based on theory, facts, and data, which are then concluded specifically in the data analysis to explain the research results.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- **Military Operation**

On March 26, 2015, a nine-nation coalition formed under the auspices of Saudi Arabia launched a military operation in response to President Hadi's plea for a coup carried out by the Houthis in Yemen. These military operations include airstrikes against the Houthis, naval and air blockades, and the deployment of ground forces into Yemeni territory (Al-Buhar, 2021). Air strikes, naval and air blockades, and the deployment of ground troops carried out by a coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia are marked as a form of direct intervention by the coalition of Arab countries in the Yemeni civil war. The coalition of Arab states was authorized to carry out military activities on Yemeni territory based on intervention through an invitation given by President Hadi, who is internationally recognized as the legitimate government of the Yemeni state.

Countries that are members of the Saudi-led coalition participate in various military units, including the air, land, and navy forces. Within the first hour of the military operation, the coalition of Arab countries declared Yemen's airspace a no-fly zone and Saudi Arabia and its coalition launched airstrikes that hit all military defences belonging to the Yemeni government controlled by the Houthis (Mao & Gady, 2021). The countries that are members of the coalition led by Saudi Arabia each have a part in the Yemeni civil war, considering that each country that is a member participates in various military units, both air, navy, and land. This military unit was then used within Yemen, so, of course, it influenced the civil war that occurred in Yemen.

The first phase of the military intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen's civil war includes a strict air and sea blockade to prevent weapons inventories from reaching the Houthi group. The airstrikes are focused on destroying Yemen's air and coastal defences and ballistic missile capabilities controlled by the Houthis. Civilian ports and airports were also destroyed to isolate the Houthis logistically. After destroying the initial military targets, the coalition expanded its objectives by destroying civilian infrastructure (roads, provincial bridges, fuel stations, etc.) aimed at hampering the mobility of the Houthi group (Darwich, 2020). The attacks carried out by a coalition of Arab countries targeted to paralyze the Houthi group have damage that not only affects the Houthi group but is also felt by civil society, seeing that the attacks also target infrastructure, which, of course, is also used by civil society.

In May 2015, after the coalition of Arab states announced "Operation Renewal of Hope" with the aim of shifting its official focus from military operations to negotiations and political processes, the Saudi-led coalition has instead started airstrikes against civilian targets in

populated and residential areas without any military targets around the settlements and without a clear military objective, increasing civilian casualties. The coalition deliberately bombed food production and distribution sites, water supply installations, fuel stations, and hospitals to cause a total collapse of the economic, food, health, and education sectors in areas occupied by the Houthis (Mutschler & Bales, 2024). At this point, the coalition military operation of the Arab states, which initially aimed to paralyze the Houthis and protect civilians and Yemen's legitimate government, has instead become a major actor contributing to the increase in the number of civilian casualties.

– Air campaign

Although the military intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab states also includes a naval blockade and the deployment of ground troops, the coalition relies on and relies on airstrikes in its military operations against the Houthis (Al-Buhar, 2021). From March 2015 to December 2020, the Saudi-led coalition has launched more than 25,000 airstrikes in Yemen, and more than 2,000 airstrikes have targeted residential areas (ACLED, 2022). The military intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia continues even five years after the announcement of the first military operation "Operation Decisive Storm". Where this military intervention not only has an impact on the Houthi group as a target of military operations but also has an impact on civilian society. What the Saudis predicted as a short-lived campaign appears to have turned into a long-running war.

One of the deadliest airstrikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition of Arab states occurred on September 28, 2015, when 131 people were killed at a wedding party in Al Mukha. Overall, the first year of fighting between the Houthi group and a coalition of Arab states marked the highest number of civilian casualties targeted by airstrikes, estimated at 4,486 civilians. The estimate does not include the number of deaths caused by other causes. An estimated 67% of civilian deaths since 2015 due to direct targeting were caused by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes, and more than 370,000 deaths have been reported since the fighting began, including indirect causes. Therefore, the countries involved in the coalition were responsible for most of the civilian casualties during the war (Gulbe, 2022). The airstrikes carried out by a coalition of Arab countries also have implications for the emergence of other causes that increase the number of civilian casualties in Yemen.

Countries that are members of the Saudi-led coalition, such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, Sudan, and Morocco, also participated in carrying out airstrikes even though the number was not comparable to the airstrikes carried out by Saudi Arabia (Al-Salehi, 2021). In the early stages of military operations "Operation Decisive Storm", it was reported that Saudi Arabia deployed 100 warplanes, Qatar sent 10 warplanes, Bahrain and Kuwait sent 15 warplanes each, the United Arab Emirates sent 30 warplanes, and Jordan deployed six warplanes (Sunik, 2018). Morocco also sent its fighter jets as a form of participation in the coalition of Arab countries until April 2018 (Mutschler & Bales, 2024). The deployment of air forces by each country that is a member of the coalition indirectly makes the countries that send the military units also intervene in the Yemeni civil war.

– Ground Troops Deployment

Policy In addition to the air force, the deployment of ground forces to Yemeni territory is also carried out by a coalition of Arab countries. Ground forces of a coalition of Arab states landed in Aden in August 2015. They began a military operation of ground units to drive the Houthis and their allies out of most of southern Yemen (Mao & Gady, 2021). From 2015 to 2019, the United Arab Emirates ground forces, coalition members, have been quite influential in the Aden region (Asl et al., 2021). The United Arab Emirates ground forces were a decisive factor in the liberation of Aden and other southern provinces (Al-Salehi, 2021). United Arab Emirates forces managed to take over the city of Aden and its surroundings and successfully repelled the Houthis in the southern region of Yemen (Prasetya & Yahya, 2022). The deployment of ground troops is also one of the keys to the recapture of some Yemeni areas

controlled by the Houthis.

At the beginning of the military operation, the number of ground troops deployed by Saudi Arabia reached 150,000 men (Mao & Gady, 2021). Qatar reportedly deployed 1,000 ground troops before leaving the coalition in June 2017 (Sunik, 2018). Then, the United Arab Emirates deployed a ground force of 5,000 men (Cole, 2020). Sudan deployed 15,000 ground troops to Yemen in exchange for political and financial support for the regime in the country (Brehony, 2020). The deployment of Sudanese troops gradually increased to around 40,000 ground troops. However, this number decreased significantly in 2019, leaving about 5,000 active ground troops in Yemen until 2022. These troops are deployed to secure Saudi Arabia's borders, protect coalition bases, and fight alongside United Arab Emirates ground forces in the South (Mutschler & Bales, 2024). Although seven other countries joined the coalition, most made a much smaller contribution and diminished over time, except Sudan.

Coalition ground forces and Houthi groups allied with Saleh's supporters met in several balanced battles in several Yemeni cities and along the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. However, coalition ground forces of Arab countries have managed to seize several key areas in Yemen that were previously controlled by the Houthis (Prasetya & Yahya, 2022). In addition to the achievements of United Arab Emirates forces in the southern region of Yemen, Saudi Arabian ground forces have managed to take over several areas in Hadramaut and al-Mahra provinces, giving the coalition access to the Indian Ocean. The islands of Soqatra and Perim and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab are also under the control of a coalition of Arab states. Unfortunately, the coalition of Arab countries does not have stable control over the territory they control because various militias want to seize control of the local area (Riedel, 2020). Ground forces deployed into Yemen are aimed at taking over territory and preventing the Houthis and other rebels from regaining control of territory that a coalition of Arab states has successfully taken over.

– Naval Blockade

On the other hand, airstrikes are not the only way the coalition of Arab countries uses to attack the Houthi group. The deployment of the navy is also one of the military units used in this military operation. Several countries, such as Egypt, the United Kingdom, and the United States, participated in deploying their navies in this military operation. The naval briefing was not only aimed at attacking the Houthi group but was also deployed to close Yemen's sea borders and impose a blockade. (Agrawal, 2022). A coalition of Arab states began imposing a naval blockade in 2015 to stop Iran from providing supplies to the Houthis (Arshad, 2023). The coalition navy managed to intercept several ships carrying Iranian-made weapons aimed at the Houthi group (Brehony, 2020). However, not part of the coalition, Britain and the United States support military assistance to the coalition of Arab countries to maximize the blockade carried out by this coalition.

Egypt has played an important role in the coalition of Arab countries' military operations in the Yemeni Sea by actively participating in patrols in the Red Sea and also engaging in the bombing of the naval defence posts of the Houhti group (Dosari & George, 2020). Egypt sends navy ships to help blockade Yemeni ports (Prasetya & Yahya, 2022). In addition, the navies of the coalition of Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE) are also involved in controlling naval access to Houthi-controlled al-Hudayda and controlling ports along Yemen's southern coastline, namely in Hadhramawt, Shabwa, Aden, and Ta'iz, as well as in the islands of Soqatra and Perim in the Bab al-Mandab strait (Mutschler & Bales, 2024). The navy sent by the coalition member countries has a role and cooperates in military operations in Yemeni waters.

Unfortunately, the sea and air blockade carried out by the coalition of Arab countries not only has an impact on the Houthi group, but Yemeni society also suffers from this

blockade. The sea blockade severely restricts food, water, and fuel imports. In contrast, the air blockade at Sana'a airport has severely restricted the import of medical supplies and humanitarian aid needed by the Yemeni people. In addition, in 2018, coalition naval forces illegally attacked fishing vessels belonging to Yemeni civilians. It was reported that at least five attacks were carried out by coalition naval forces of Arab countries on fishing boats that killed at least 47 Yemeni fishermen, including seven children, between 2018 and 2020 (Kane, 2021). Coalition patrols of Arab countries aimed at attacking and intercepting weapons supplies aimed at the Houthis carried out indiscriminate attacks in their patrol areas. As a result, civilians must face the risk of becoming victims in fighting between coalition forces of Arab states and Houthi groups. The main goal of the coalition of Arab countries' military operation is to restore President Hadi's government as a sovereign government in Yemen and internationally recognized after the threat of a coup from the Houthis. In addition, the military operation is also aimed at eliminating the threat posed by the Houthis group after successfully controlling several areas, as well as the Yemeni state's military defence system in the Houthi-occupied area. However, unfortunately, the implementation of the military intervention plan carried out by the coalition of Arab countries has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in Yemen's history (Gesins, 2020). The military operation launched by the coalition of Arab states has increased the number of civilian casualties compared to the armed conflict between the Houthis and Yemeni government forces before the coalition of Arab countries got involved.

- **The Impact of the Coalition of Arab Countries Military Operation on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen**

The air campaign launched by the coalition of Arab countries has proven to be very detrimental to Yemeni civil society. Saudi-led coalition Arab airstrikes are responsible for nearly 67% of civilian deaths, which mainly include women and children. In contrast, the counteroffensive launched by the Houthis against the coalition of Arab states has caused only minor casualties among civilians in Saudi Arabia's border towns (Al-Enezy & Al-Duaij, 2020). Civilians have been targeted, either directly or indirectly, by the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition, so that during the war, the security of civilians has been threatened.

From March 2015 to November 2020, the number of civilian casualties due to the air campaign carried out by the coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia reached 18,554 people, with the number of civilian casualties injured as many as 9,797 and the number of victims killed as many as 8,757 people. During the first month of the military operation, more than 300 civilian casualties were reported. Of these, 115 children died, and 172 children were injured because of the coalition air campaign of the Arab states. The air campaign aimed at destroying heavy weapons controlled by the Houthis that could threaten the coalition is considered quite successful, but it also takes a lot of civilian casualties (Homan, 2022). Initially, the intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab countries aimed to restore the government of President Hadi and protect the Yemeni people from the threat of the Houthi rebel group; however, based on the number of civilian casualties due to the military operation launched by the coalition, it is reflected that their intervention has brought more disaster to civilian society than the internal conflict in Yemen itself.

Moreover, blockades have been at the heart of humanitarian issues (Arshad, 2023). Since the imposition of the operation to ban and close ports in 2015, the Yemeni government, along with the navies of the coalition of Arab countries, has deliberately prevented shipments of food, medicine and oil from reaching Houthi-held territory. Yemen relies heavily on food imports to sustain its population. No less important is the supply of

petroleum, which provides energy for running water treatment plants. Due to the fuel ban, most of Yemen's electricity and water infrastructure has become non-functional. The worst cholera outbreak in the history of the world can be directly attributed to the fact that most of Yemen's population does not have access to safe drinking water. So far, most of Yemen's population suffers from severe malnutrition caused by the closure of ports and hampered access to clean water and humanitarian aid. The impact of the cholera epidemic is getting worse (Drew, 2019). Based on this, it is evident that the military intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia had an impact on the creation of the worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen's history.

4. CONCLUSION

The intervention carried out by the coalition of Arab countries in Yemen's internal conflict was initially aimed at restoring President Hadi's power as the legitimate government in Yemen and eliminating the threats posed by the Houthis after successfully controlling some Yemeni territory. However, the implementation of the plan ended in creating one of the worst humanitarian disasters in Yemen's history. Military operations aimed at eliminating the threat posed by the Houthis have had an impact on increasing civilian casualties. The air campaign, sea and air blockade, and the deployment of ground forces as part of military operations carried out by the coalition of Arab countries have not only impacted the Houthi group but also had more impact on civilian society. Both the direct targeting and the indirect impact of military operations carried out by a coalition of Arab countries have contributed to increasing the number of civilian casualties.

5. References

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