

**Article Type: Research paper**

Geopolitical interests of regional actors in the Yemen crisis

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Article Info.

Received: 03/02/2022**Accepted:** 17/07/2023**Available Online:** 11/09/2023

Abstract

Due to its unique geopolitical and geostrategic position, Yemen has always been subject to interference from regional and extraregional powers. The Arab uprisings and subsequent involvement of regional and international powers have exacerbated the crisis in Yemen, turning it into a domestic and foreign battleground. This article aims to answer the question of what geopolitical interests four significant regional actors - the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Zionist regime - pursue in relation to the Yemen crisis. The research findings indicate that despite each actor's political and ideological motivations, the majority of their objectives in this crisis revolve around securing geopolitical and geostrategic advantages in Yemen.

Due to its unique geopolitical and geostrategic position, Yemen is significant for regional and trans-regional actors. Therefore, each of the regional powers, especially

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How to Site:

Moghavemi, Amirreza, Firouzkohi, Zoghi Barani, Kazem, Mehdi, Hassania, Mohammad Ali. (1402 Geopolitical interests of regional actors in the Yemen crisis. *Fundamental and applied studies of the Islamic world*, 5(2), pp. 29-31.

the four main influential actors in the Yemen crisis, namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Zionist regime, considers its own interests in this country. Despite the political, economic, ideological, and military interests, the biggest factor that has drawn these actors towards the Yemen crisis is the geopolitical and geostrategic advantages of this country, which include political, economic, and other advantages.

In addition to political and ideological interests, the Yemen crisis and the rise of Ansarullah from a sub-national to a national and even regional power have provided geopolitical benefits for Tehran.

Despite not having very peaceful relations with Iran during the era of Ali Abdullah Saleh and Mansour Hadi, Yemen, with the outbreak of its crisis and the presence of Ansarullah in this country, has been added to the circle of Iranian friends in the region. This has expanded Iran's strategic depth to the Red Sea and the strategic strait of Bab al-Mandab.

With such an opportunity, in addition to prompting the geopolitical weight of the axis of resistance and itself, Iran can increase its deterrence power against its most important regional enemy, the Zionist regime, and its most important regional rivals, Saudi Arabia. Iran can also prevent political, military, and economic strategies of the West, especially the United States, to isolate Iran and exclude it from the transit corridor. The result of such developments can be an enhancement of Iran's national security.

The second and probably the most important foreign actor involved in the Yemen crisis is Saudi Arabia. The Yemen crisis, in general, imposed many political, economic, military, and geopolitical costs on Saudi Arabia because with the rise of Islamic awakening and the emergence of actors such as Ansarullah, Riyadh's influence in Sana'a was reduced, and Saudi Arabia faced many challenges. However, Saudi Arabia's geopolitical interests, such as reducing the geopolitical risk of Yemen for Riyadh, connecting with the high seas through the control of Yemen's strategic ports, as well as ensuring stability in the Arabian Peninsula to continue its ambitious approaches at the regional and international levels, led Riyadh to maximize its presence in the Yemen crisis.

The third regional actor involved in the Yemen crisis is the United Arab Emirates, whose interests in Yemen can be considered completely geopolitical. With its maritime and strait diplomacy, the UAE seeks to dominate the international waterways, ports, and strategic islands of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Yemen crisis has allowed the UAE to actualize this strategy. During the last decade, the UAE has been able to make capital investments in many ports and islands in the south of Yemen and establish a significant military presence in

the region.

Therefore, the interests of the UAE, unlike Saudi Arabia, lie in the division of Yemen and the support of the Southern Transitional Council. This is done to guarantee its decisive influence in the south of Yemen and the geostrategic regions of the country, and to achieve its ambitious goals of becoming the economic and tourism hub of the Middle East.

The fourth influential but shadowy regional actor in the Yemen crisis is the Zionist regime. The regime, which experienced the loss of access to the Red Sea in the 1973 war (Yom Kippur), knows that the loss of the Red Sea could endanger its foundation.

Therefore, the development of all countries along the Red Sea, particularly Yemen, which not only owns the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb but is also located in the Red Sea, is significant for the Zionist regime.

The Yemen crisis is important for the Zionist regime because it has been able to bring together reactionary Arab countries and the Jewish state, further advancing the balkanization of the Middle East.

But the most significant benefit of the Zionist regime from the crisis in Yemen can be seen in its connection with the Southern Transitional Council and its hidden presence in the south of Yemen and the strategic islands of this country, creating many opportunities.

However, the emergence of Ansarullah is the most important challenge for the Zionist regime in the Yemen crisis. It can not only neutralize all these political and geopolitical opportunities resulting from the crisis but also create numerous threats to the regime in the Red Sea.

Key words: Israel, UAE, Iran, the Yemen crisis, Saudi Arabia, and geopolitical interests.