

# US-Saudi Led Blitzkrieg against Yemen is “An Ego Boost”

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*“Slaughter Yemenis civilians, and win a free Bentley.” That pretty much sums up Saudi Arabia’s frivolous four-week military jamboree in Yemen otherwise known as Op “Decisive Storm”, if not its entire foreign (and now military) policy in the region; it may have been a “slip of the tweet” on the part of Saudi Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal, a Forbes top 100 billionaire who offered via his Twitter account to award Saudi fighter-jet pilots a fleet of 100 Bentley luxury cars, a bonus if you will, for their (bombing) services rendered; nonetheless it paints a vivid, albeit repulsive, picture of how politics are conducted in the oil-rich sheikhdoms of the Gulf: at the deviant whims of their Kings and Princes.*

No wonder the Arab World is a complete mess of constant wars and conflicts; everything is subject to the often violent impulses of the ruling monarchies in the GCC club who now seem more than intent on leading the entire region, Kamikaze style, into a sectarian abyss with no foreseeable point of return; and Op Decisive storm, a codename that was shamelessly borrowed from America’s wars on the Arab World, was just that; a violent outburst that started, ended and now has even morphed into Op “Restoring Hope” at the mere sectarian fancies of Saudi Arabia with the helpless lot of Arab governments tagging along for the now routine trip of bombing yet another Arab country back to the stone age, and when you have a seemingly bottomless well of petrodollars, wield all the clout of mainstream media and a far-reaching religious authority; then forming a military coalition, especially one that is purely based on vicious sectarian grounds, is almost as easy as picking players for a football squad.

This is, in a nutshell, how the Saudi Government managed to crowbar eight countries into a military coalition comprising a mishmash of Gulf Cooperation Council members (sans Oman), Gulf Cooperation Council rejects (Jordan and Morocco) and Gulf Cooperation Council scroungers (Egypt and Sudan) to intervene in Yemen against a local political movement that just so happens to adhere to a religious sect that is often faintly (and inaccurately) traced back to Shia Islam. You could almost instantly smell the vile stench of oil and sectarianism all over Saudi Arabia’s latest, ongoing still, disastrous endeavor in Yemen.

The Saudis’ delusional sales pitch this time was that Iran (who else?) was about to take over Yemen via local militant “Shia” proxies attempting a coup against the “legitimate” government of outgoing/incoming/fleeing president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi (still holed up in Riyadh till now); therefore a military intervention with all (Sunni) guns blazing was in urgent order to safeguard “legitimacy” and maintain “stability” in an already impoverished and war-torn Yemen, and we know just how much the GCC club adores peace and stability in the region, its horrific portfolio of destabilization handiwork in Libya, Syria and Iraq is a bloody testament to that.

Of course legitimacy in this (Saudi) context refers to a flip-flopping, weakling of an interim president who, only with the help of Saudi money and support, managed to win a presidential election where he was actually the only candidate on the ballot, a president who outstayed both his tenuous welcome and his presidential term, resigned, fled to the port city of Aden, rescinded his resignation and declared himself president again only to flee once more, chased after by his people, into the waiting arms of the Saudis (perhaps better known to everyone else as his sole meal tickets) but of course not before demanding that his oil-rich patrons bomb his own country into smithereens because evidently that's what "legitimate" presidents do, at least in the GCC's book (of horrors).

Show me one of Saudi Arabia's (many) lackeys in the region who didn't ask for foreign military intervention into his own country, and I'll show you Flying Pigs! The standard refrain of extending open invitations for foreign powers to wage devastating wars is strictly (and curiously) espoused by those whom the Saudi Kingdom considers (or designates) "legitimate representatives" of their people. From the Bahraini monarchy to the current Libyan government to the 14<sup>th</sup> of March alliance in Lebanon and the entirety of the Syrian opposition mismatched posses; not one of these handpicked Saudi puppets has missed an opportunity to ask, in fact beg, for the bombardment of his own country by a foreign government, as if it's a mandatory rite of passage for those who wish to be on the Saudi payroll/leash and get the GCC's stamp of approval. And this Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi (none) character, whose return to power in Yemen was the only stated goal behind Saudi Arabia's genocide in Yemen, is no different.

We're told that the current blitzkrieg in Yemen is all about "restoring legitimacy", but it's near-impossible to take that claim seriously without bursting into an uncontrollable wave of laughter; none of the Saudi-led coalition members are exactly known for their democratic credentials, on the contrary; If you played a word-association game, the words "dictatorship", "tyranny" and "authoritarianism" (or any random combination thereof) would elicit every single time the exact member list of the coalition currently bombing Yemen today into their warped versions of democratic rule and legitimacy.

In fact the war on Yemen is essentially nothing but an ego-boost for the Saudis in response to what's perceived by the Kingdom as Iran's growing influence in the region especially after an interim nuclear deal was signed with the west; a shot of (military) adrenaline for the oil-rich Kingdom to assert its political relevance and nothing beyond that at a time when its foreign policy is beginning to resemble a non-stop tragic-comedy of errors and blunders.

This ego-trip masquerading as a military operation has left, so far, more than a 1,000 Yemenis killed, countless others wounded and the wanton destruction of the country's infrastructure; and although we're thankfully spared the sight of Saudi-led coalition forces' spokesman waffling around, trying in vain to finagle a military feat out of indiscriminately bombing civilian areas in Yemen in his daily briefings (or awkward rendezvous with his pro-war, GCC-funded media entourage); the war still goes on, given a new lease of life under a new codename; "Restoring Hope", despite its "rosy" moniker which has tasteless PR written all over it, promises to be just as vicious and devastating as Decisive Storm if not more; now that free Bentleys are at stake here for outstanding achievements in criminality, I'm sure these hefty royal "incentives" will show in the destructive zeal the next time coalition pilots fly their sorties and drop their load of explosives on unsuspecting Yemenis.

We were told that Decisive Storm had "fulfilled its objectives", according to a statement by

Saudi Defense Ministry. What objectives? We don't know; deposed Yemenis president is still in Riyadh and the Houthis along with the Yemenis army control much of the ground in Yemen, now unless the real objective was the step-by-step reenactment of Israel's wars on the Gaza strip, in which case: mission accomplished indeed with flying colors (or overflowing blood of Yemenis!), the Saudis cannot claim any success whatsoever beyond reducing the country to debris and waste; a feat that was bizarrely celebrated in GCC-funded media as a "decisive blow" to Iranian influence in the region.

At the start of Operation Decisive Storm; then Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., current foreign minister, Adel Al-Jubeir said that the military operation was "...designed to protect the people of Yemen and its legitimate government from a takeover by a violent extremist militia"; protecting the people of Yemen... by bombing them into blind submission and a state of near-servitude, to keep the country an impoverished Saudi implantation and nothing more, I mean how dare the Yemenis even entertain the outrageous notion of self-determination when (Saudi) fate has ordained they be reduced to nothing more than an Oil-rich Kingdom's backyard for gutter politics and inglorious exploits (or Achilles heel for that matter).

And no, in his statement; Ambassador Al Jubair was not referring to Al Qaida or the Islamic State militias which have been laying all manner of terror and destructive waste to Libya, Iraq and Syria with complete financial, logistical, political and ideological cover from the legitimacy-loving GCC folk, by "violent extremist militia"; Al Jubair was referring to the Ansarullah group; an indigenous Yemenis faction accused of being a mere tail for Iran, you know unlike the very independent Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, when in fact it does enjoy considerable political sway and popularity in Yemen.

Al Jubair also said that "all of Saudi Arabia's allies were consulted before launching military operations in Yemen". I'm guessing the consultations went something like this: the Saudis telling their allies to jump and everyone replying in unison, with a-cheese-eating-grin on their faces: "how high? ... and please write those checks out to cash".

And that's the long version too.

"Coalition of the Willing.... to Get Paid from the GCC"

Only Pakistan, which the Saudis were hoping would join in the fun of leveling another impoverished Arab country into rubble; solely based on its "Sunni credentials" of course... and nuclear power, managed to bow out of this "coalition of the unwitting" escapade; thanks, ironically, to the only problem the Saudis can't just fix or deal with no matter how much money they throw at it: Democracy... or a semblance thereof; when the Pakistani Parliament unanimously voted to remain neutral in the war on Yemen (i.e.: not to be a member of the GCC's Suicide Squad parade).

There you can find a group of people with enough sense about them not to blindly follow the Saudis' caprices into the Yemenis quagmire for a handful of cash and oil barrels, and heed instead the national interests of their own country first. Sadly this was not the case with the rest of coalition members whom are mostly made up of Arab governments posing as hired yes-men for Saudi Arabia (or yes-men posing as governments for that matter).

First we have Egypt; fresh out of an economic bash in Sharm Al Sheikh, which will sure keep Egypt locked in a tight GCC financial death grip for years to come, with billions of (petro)

dollars dropping off his pockets; General Abdel Fattah al Sisi (“legitimate” President of Egypt, lest we forget, because this war is all about defending legitimacy against coup’d’etats) was the first in line to fully commit to Operation Decisive Storm, ground-troop-warts and all.

The man who sold himself to Egyptians as the Second Coming of President Jamal Abdel Nasser trampled all over Nasser’s legacy by fighting the Saudis’ dirty war in Yemen in an unholy alliance with the reactionaries of the Gulf (to paraphrase Nasser himself who’s probably rolling in his grave right about now).

Suddenly and at the flick of a (Saudi) switch; Egypt’s priorities were reshuffled beyond recognition or even the slightest bit of logic to best suit the GCC’s depraved interests in the region; the Houthis taking control of the Yemeni capital somehow became an existential threat to Cairo’s national security, trumping even threats coming from a terrorism-infested Sinai peninsula or over 1,000 km of open borders with the abyss of lawlessness and violence that is Libya today. And Bab Al Mandeb Strait in Yemen became the top priority for Sisi’s Egypt at a time when the land of the Nile faces potential drought and is threatened with the vanishing face of its landmark river, thanks to Ethiopia’s Renaissance Dam, along with another coalition member: Sudan.

Desperately wanting to prove that he too can wade in sectarian blood with the best of them; Sudanese President Omar al Bashir, probably lured by the promise of future-petrodollar-riches and the perfect opportunity to break his ICC-imposed isolation, stumbled over himself to heed Saudi Arabia’s call to (Sunni) arms and bomb some “infidel” Yemenis into god-forsaken oblivion (according to Sudanese state owned media). Never mind the embarrassing fact that the Sudanese “Air Force”, which is now dropping its load of bombs with a wanton exuberance on Yemenis civilians, stood completely idle and useless when Israel, on more than one occasion, practically used the entire country of Sudan as an open-field target practice for its fighter jets and F-16s under the pretext of targeting weapons’ depots and convoys destined for Palestinian Resistance factions in Gaza. Talk about priorities gone south.

It was only two years ago when the Saudis practically humiliated Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir when they blocked their own airspace to his plane as he was heading to... yes you guessed it, Iran to attend the inauguration of then newly elected president Rouhani, and now here is Al Bashir jumping into (criminal) action alongside the Saudis to bomb another Arab country into the throes of sectarian discord and potential partition.

Give that a moment’s thought and you might get a headache: Sudan, a country which itself is still reeling from a Western-sponsored partition scheme, is actively (and foolishly) participating in carving up yet another Arab country into two warring entities. There’s an almost Alice-in-Wonderland feel to it.

GCC hopefuls Jordan and Morocco of course happily tagged-along with the Saudis into yet another sectarian misadventure in what’s starting to look like a long drawn out series of auditions to join the GCC club which entail the two tiny monarchies to get down and dirty in the destruction of other Arab countries for the benefit (and amusement) of the Saudis; starting with Libya and Syria, and God knows where it’s going to go after Yemen; but you can be sure it’ll be under the spurious pretext of the “Shiite threat”,

And then you have the Arab League whose complete transformation from a schlocky,

ineffectual entity into the proverbial make a wish foundation for the imperial West was epitomized in full shameless splendor in the unfortunate case of Yemen.

Gone are the days when the Arab League would grovel at the feet of NATO governments to intervene militarily somewhere in the Arab world or co-conspire with the West for yet another foreign invasion of one of its member states, now the Arab League, essentially nothing more than a mere echo chamber for the mercurial whims of the GCC nowadays, is finally taking matters into its own unreliable hands and summoning its American-made military might.

No time for niceties of the UNSC resolutions under the seventh chapter sort à la Libya or good-ol' fashioned UN sanctions; Nah, the Arab League will no longer stoop to such pedestrian and banal methods, in the latest Arab League summit in Sharm Al Shaikh, the one which hastily rubberstamped the Saudi war on Yemen, Arab leaders decided to resurrect a 65-year old near-dead defense pact and form a joint military force, which was about as thoughtful and welcome a notion as a fourth Netanyahu term, to counter... the Shiite threat in Yemen; kind of makes you yearn for the not-so-distant days when Arab Summits were all about vacuous, fig-leaf statements and "strong-worded" condemnations at best and public bickering and laughable finger-pointing at worst.

To put things into proper, albeit depressing perspective; neither Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine nor America's criminal invasion of Iraq has ever prompted Arab governments to even get near that defense pact; the GCC's unhealthy obsession with Iran, bordering on hysteria, did.

Sectarianism is the New Black

"The Israel occupation of Palestine does not exist; it is a figment of our collective imagination. Iran is the enemy and Netanyahu and co. are allies." that's the only way we can reconcile ourselves with the bleak reality of the Arab world today which can be summed up in one word: Iranophobia... on Wahhabi steroids.

It's quite telling when Netanyahu's latest address to the Congress and the entirety of the last Arab league summit seem blurred into one big anti-Iran screed; Netanyahu could've made the same exact firebrand speech in Sharm Al Shaikh, steeped in anti-Iran buffoonery and short on intelligence, and it wouldn't have seemed out of place or different... except for the number of standing ovations which I suspect would have been significantly higher than what he received from the jump-and-applaud-every-other-line U.S. Congress back in March.

So Iran... or Shiism (two interchangeable terms in GCC political discourse) is the enemy, evidently the alleged threat posed by Iran (and represented through the mere "presence" of Shiite indigenous communities in some Arab countries) supersedes the real existential threat posed by the Israeli expansionist project in Palestine (does anybody remember Palestine these days?) and beyond, notions like "Arab unity" and "Arab joint military pact", which were constantly mocked by the monarchies of the Gulf as "wooden language" whenever they're used in the context of the Palestine/Israel conflict, are now being used (and abused with a xenophobic fervor) by the GCC-camp only in relation to Iran.

So the GCC is perfectly fine with droves of illegal European settlers migrating all the way to Palestine, expelling Palestinians from their lands and squatting comfortably in their midst, but when it comes to indigenous Yemenis for instance, god forbid they "march towards the



city of Aden”.

Pan-Arabism is for suckers; sectarianism is the new black in the Arab world... in the literal and most depressing sense of the word. The map of the Arab world has been reconfigured into areas of contending Saudi and (alleged) Iranian influence, and feuding mini-statelets laden with sectarian discord and internal bloodletting thanks only to Saudi Arabia's growing and self-inflected paranoia against the “Shiite threat”.

Nothing makes sense in the Arab world unless put in a sectarian bracket; this is what more than ten years' worth of a constant barrage of fear-mongering against Shiites and has yielded so far; a trail of failed Arab states and conflict-ridden regions.

The Saudis (controlling the majority of media outlets in the Arab World along with the rest of the GCC) have managed to turn a minority religious sect, approximately one-fifth of the world's Muslims if not less, into the new big bad boogeyman for the remaining majority of Muslims, and what started as laughable, clumsy attempts courtesy of the GCC at provoking friction among Muslims in the wake of Bush's invasion of Iraq; is now but a no-holds-barred sectarian confrontation engulfing the Arab world where everything from suicide bombings all the way up to F-16s goes, with Israel comfortably cheering from the sidelines, unencumbered in its occupation of Palestine, as both sides of the Sunni-Shiite divide tear each other to shreds.

### Dangerous Parallels

Speaking of Israel; “the coalition of willing... to get paid from the GCC” is taking entire pages right out of the Israeli military's own scorched-earth playbook by carpet-bombing civilian areas, vital infrastructure, schools, hospitals, factories, dairy plants, airports, one football stadium and, on at least two occasions, refugee camps, all the while imposing a no-fly-zone (we all know how the GCC is fond of those) coupled with a draconian siege reminiscent of that forgotten Israeli blockade on Gaza, which by the way, went totally unmentioned in the final statement of the latest gung-ho Arab Summit. Collective punishment is the name of the military campaign here, a strict “disciplinary” treatment delivered via extensive aerial bombardment to keep the Yemeni population in check and obediently toeing the Saudi line. I wonder where we have seen all of this before.

The parallels between Operation Decisive Storm/Restoring Hope and Israel's own criminal wars on Gaza are ominously striking and equally horrid; the guilty-by-nonexistent-association doctrine, pioneered and espoused by Israel to justify its deliberate targeting of civilians by deeming all Palestinians in Gaza, including newborns and children, to be members of Hamas, was adopted with a demented zeal by the GCC in their own military misadventure in Yemen.

Thus all these ashen-faced victims of the coalition's bombing campaign are militant “Shia Houthis”, and every charred skeleton, burned beyond recognition and crumbling in the arms of a shrieking loved one, is that of an Iranian agent's, or so it's reported in the callous sectarian coverage of Gulf-funded media which seem to fetishize the murder of Yemenis and the destruction of the country's infrastructure with frenzied abandon, even the “courtesy” of at least shoving some of the nameless casualties of the air strikes under the euphemism of “Collateral Damage” is not extended to the Yemenis; just like it wasn't extended to the Libyans when the city of Sirte was virtually flattened to the ground during Operation “Odyssey Dawn for Benghazi/Living Hell for the rest of the country”, these weren't

residential areas and universities that NATO was bombing back then we were told, but Gaddafi's military command and control centers. In Yemen it's Houthis' training camps or "concentration centers", whatever that means.

The deliberate de-Yemenization and even dehumanization of the victims of Operation Decisive Storm/Restoring Hope is practiced on a daily basis on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya channels. Constantly referring to the victims of the bombing campaigns strictly as "Houthis", prompting the viewer to think they're an invasive alien breed and not indigenous people comprising almost 40% of the Yemenis population, while true Yeminiis, according to the GCC, are those Hadi-supporters pathetically paraded all over Gulf-funded networks rallying in support of the Saudi airstrikes on their country.

Aljazeera Arabic TV talk-show host Faisal Al Qasem (known for his vulgar and trashy persona which makes Jerry Springer look like the paragon of classy journalism) summed up the entire sordid coverage of GCC funded media of the war on Yemen when he screamed at one of his guests; "look at the Houthis, just look at their faces... they don't even look like us Arabs".

Remember those leaflets with badly translated, "pseudo-apologetic" Arabic messages that the Israeli Army used to dump on Gazans before bombing the living daylight out of them with all manner of cluster ammunition and dime bombs? Well the same leaflets with the same exact clumsy messages are being dropped on Yemenis courtesy of the GCC's coalition of the unwitting in another disgusting display of kinship verging on pathological idol-worship towards the IOF's criminal tactics. Thus claims by Houthi rebels that the coalition is using White Phosphorous (Israel's favorite weapon of choice) may not be that farfetched; the harrowing images trickling out of Yemen and shown on (few) Media outlets are proof positive that Yemen is being used as a test ground for GCC's multi-billion dollar, American-made arsenal of death and destruction, including the use of internationally banned weapons.

The complete lack of subtlety in borrowing from the Israeli military's book (of terrorism) and openly recycling its brand of criminality up to the smallest details against the Yemenis leaves no doubt that the alliance between the GCC and the Zionist entity has taken another gigantic leap forward into an all-hands-on-deck political, military and diplomatic integration.

The war on Yemen, like all wars waged on defenseless populations including Israel's mass murdering sprees against Palestinians, is nothing but an ego boost, Decisive Storm/Restoring Hope was probably prompted by the Interim nuclear agreement Iran managed to strike with the West last month; I don't even want to imagine how will the Saudis react if and when a full comprehensive deal is reached come June 30.

*Ahmad Barqawi, independent writer*

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