

Yemen Is Now Saudi Arabia's "Vietnam War"

By [Paul Antonopoulos](#)

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Something does not appear right in Saudi Arabia. Although the Wahhabi Kingdom has a technological, demographical and economical advantage over Yemen, it has completely failed to break the Yemeni resistance, headed by the Houthi-led Ansarullah Movement. The Ansarullah Movement has not just been on the defensive against Saudi Arabia's advancements, but has also taken the fight directly to them despite the Kingdom controlling the seas and the high skies.

On September 14, the Yemeni Resistance attacked a Saudi Aramco oil facility, causing billions of dollars in damage that will take months to completely fix. However, it is the capture of thousands of Saudi soldiers, including high-ranking officers, and mercenaries that has consolidated the idea that Saudi Arabia is experiencing its own so-called "Vietnam War."

Although Saudi Arabia has the fifth biggest military budget in the world, ahead of even Russia, France and the United Kingdom, it has not been able to dislodge the Ansarullah Movement from power. With Saudi Arabia dropping bombs indiscriminately in Yemen, including on mosques, markets, schools, hospitals, wedding parties and funeral processions, the country has become the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. Even Ansarullah leader Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi has visibly lost a significant amount of weight over the course of the war as over 10 million Yemenis [are starving](#) or on the verge of starvation.

Saudi Arabia's state budget is fuelled by oil and the Aramco company is in the six largest corporations globally, with annual revenue of around \$350 billion recently, about the GDP of Denmark. Yemen is far off from Saudi Arabia in every developmental metric, but yet, they have not been able to dislodge the Ansarullah Movement from the Yemeni capital of Sana'a.

Saudi Arabia has mobilized about 150,000 of its soldiers and mostly Sudanese mercenaries, and has used hundreds of jets with U.S.-provided weapons to attack Yemen and its infrastructure because of their defiance in not being subjugated to Riyadh's demands. Saudi officials also went on a diplomatic mission to include Morocco, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sudan in their war against Yemen. This was all in an effort to remove what Riyadh believes to be an Iranian proxy on its border, an allegation both the Ansarullah Movement and Tehran deny.

Ansarullah have not just remained passive as the Saudi-led coalition began its aggression, and utilized rockets and drones to attack directly into Saudi Arabia's southern regions, despite the Kingdom possessing the U.S.-made Patriot Missile Defense System. Although Saudi Arabia has air and naval superiority, it cannot convert this control into successes on the ground, and rather has relied on mercenaries, to fight its war against the Ansarullah Movement.

One is not motivated to unnecessarily die for the sake of money, but are willing to take the risk of dying, two very different things. It is for this reason, on Saturday, the Ansarullah Movement captured [over a thousand soldiers](#) from the Saudi Coalition, mostly low-ranking soldiers and Sudanese mercenaries, but also some high-ranking officers, when they were surrounded and ambushed. The mercenaries are willing to fight for money, but not die in vain, which is why they surrendered en masse when flanked by the Ansarullah fighters.

Well, comparisons with Vietnam can certainly begin to be drawn now. It is much deeper than the analogy of David and Goliath, as by all means, the odds should be further into Riyadh's favor rather than Goliath's was against David.

Saudi Arabia has used all their political leverage in the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, invested billions into a costly war that it had no reason to intervene in and suffered a dramatic defeat. How could the Ansarullah Movement with limited resources and on the verge of starvation do this? It was concluded by Riyadh that the only explanation for this embarrassment is that Iran orchestrated the attack against Aramco and captured the thousands of soldiers. This bares resemblance to when the U.S. refused that the Vietnamese were defeating them, and credited the Vietnamese victory directly to the Soviet Union and China, rather than the Vietnamese people.

Riyadh diverting attention away from the Ansarullah movement helps them save face as they can accredit the victories to a rival anti-U.S. and anti-Israel regional power, Iran. Therefore, this can help legitimize a U.S. intervention in Yemen as Saudi-Iranian relations are traditionally poor over theocratical, geopolitical and economic reasons.

More importantly, it could bait Washington to justify military aggression against Iran. However, for the U.S. and Israel, the possibility of waging a "proxy conflict" between Saudi Arabia and Iran would be preferable with their limited intervention. This is a risky gambit as Saudi Arabia produces about 15% of crude oil globally, and can significantly influence the world economy.

Although it would be in Saudi Arabia's interest to avoid being bogged down in an endless war that drains its resources and manpower, as the U.S. had experienced in their invasion of Vietnam, there is little suggestion that it will disengage from what is the Arab world's poorest country.

Simply comparing the military budgets of Saudi Arabia and/or the U.S.' with Yemen or Iran, is not enough to predict a final outcome of this conflict, as Saudi Arabia is learning the hard way with the continued setbacks. With over a thousand soldiers and mercenaries captured, it shows Riyadh has a fighting force lacking motivation and willingness. This is completely opposite to the Ansarullah Movement that believes its engaged in an anti-imperialist struggle.

If Saudi Arabia is to avoid further economic risk and military embarrassments, it would be in the primary interest of Saudi Arabia to disengage in Yemen and accept its losses on this front in the wider Saudi-Iranian geopolitical rivalry. Just as the U.S. finally found the sense to withdraw from Vietnam after a long 18 year involvement that resulted in nearly 60,000 American deaths, Riyadh now must find its sense, much quicker than Washington's policy towards Vietnam, and accept the situation in Yemen is untenable and unwinnable.

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Paul Antonopoulos is director of the Multipolarity research centre.

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