## Houthi Victory DA

### 1NC — Houthi Victory DA

#### First/next off is the Houthi Victory DA.

#### The Saudi coalition is on track to defeat the Houthi rebels.

Knights 18 — Michael Knights, Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, holds a D.Phil. from the Department of War Studies at King's College London (UK), 2018 (“Is the Yemen War Really Deadlocked? Think Again.,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September, Available Online at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/is-the-yemen-war-really-deadlocked-think-again>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

It has become a cliche to say that the war in Yemen has reached a point of military deadlock. Rebel forces led by the Houthi clan control the capital Sanaa and the country’s largest port Hodeidah, and they have a proven track record of slowing down the advances of the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition.

That being said, the Houthis have lost a lot of ground since the apex of their territorial control in the spring of 2015, when they also controlled Aden and Taizz, the second and third largest cities in Yemen, the legendary Marib Dam, and Yemen’s entire Red Sea coast. In the last three years, the Yemeni military and the coalition liberated Aden, Marib Dam, much of Taizz, the Bab el-Mandab Strait and half of Yemen’s 420 kilometer Red Sea coast, in addition to driving Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) out of Mukalla city, nearby ports and Yemen’s key energy export pipeline corridors.

The next coalition gain is likely to be the ports of Hodeidah and Saleef, plus the remainder of the Red Sea coastal plain. The fight will be tough, because the Houthis know that the loss of the coast will leave them landlocked for the first time since they seized control of the Red Sea port of Midi in 2011. Having an opening to the sea allowed the Houthi militia Ansar Allah to acquire modern armaments and training from Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, including Iranian-manufactured Qiam 1 medium-range ballistic missiles capable of striking Riyadh.

While the Houthi defense will be strong, their forces in Hodeidah are heavily outnumbered by advancing Yemeni and coalition troops, and locally-recruited Houthi allies are likely to flip sides as the Houthis lose terrain. Already, UAE-backed Yemeni brigades are wrapping around the northeastern quarter of Hodeidah city, placing them within striking distance of the port and the last road through which the Houthis can draw reinforcements or escape.

#### The plan causes Houthi victory in Yemen — without U.S. involvement, they’ll stop negotiating and defeat the coalition.

Knights et al. 19 — Michael Knights, Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, holds a D.Phil. from the Department of War Studies at King's College London (UK), et al., with Kenneth M. Pollack, Resident Scholar in Middle East Political-Military Affairs and U.S.-Middle East Security and Foreign Policies at the American Enterprise Institute, former Senior Fellow and Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, former Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs and Director for Persian Gulf Affairs at the U.S. National Security Council, former Persian Gulf Military Analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Barbara F. Walter, Professor of Political Science at the School of Global Policy and Strategy at the University of California-San Diego, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago, 2019 (“A Real Plan to End the War in Yemen,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 2nd, Available Online at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/yemen/2019-05-02/real-plan-end-war-yemen>, Accessed 06-14-2019)

How It Ends

Historically, civil wars like Yemen’s end either when one side wins a decisive military victory or a third party negotiates a settlement among the warring factions.

In the Middle East, the former option—letting the fighting run its course—often means accepting horrific bloodshed and ethnic cleansing. Examples abound: the leveling of Hama, Syria’s onetime opposition stronghold, in 1982, or Saddam Hussein’s systematic mass murder of Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s, or his violent suppression of a nationwide rebellion in 1991. Those “victories” ended the conflicts swiftly and surely, but at the cost of tens or hundreds of thousands of lives.

A negotiated settlement can end a war earlier and thus with less bloodshed. But combatants generally don’t agree to such settlements until they have reached a military stalemate such that all sides are convinced they cannot win a military victory. Even then, the warring parties need to know that they can disarm without being slaughtered—a condition that can sometimes be met only with an outside peacekeeping commitment for a decade or more. And once the parties have come to the table, any successful negotiated settlement will have to include a power-sharing arrangement that grants all factions political power and economic benefits roughly commensurate with their demographic weight (adjusted for military realities).

In the case of Yemen, withdrawing U.S. support—which has largely consisted of intelligence and logistical assistance—from the Saudis will hinder the coalition’s war effort and embolden the Houthis and their Iranian supporters, making them much less likely to accept a nationwide cease-fire and a power-sharing agreement.

In fact, U.S. congressional criticism of the Saudis has already encouraged the Houthis who, far from giving up, appear determined to fight on. Since the UN brokered a cease-fire for the strategically important, Houthi-held port of Hodeidah in December, the Houthis have energetically fortified their positions in the city, in direct violation of the agreement’s terms. In fact, the Houthis have defaulted on one withdrawal deadline after another—first in early January, then in mid-February, thereby reneging on explicit commitments to the UN.

UN negotiators are now trying to implement a third plan to move Houthi forces out of Hodeidah and other Red Sea ports, and for both sides to then pull back from the frontlines in Hodeidah city. But unless the Houthis are given a powerful incentive to step back, there is little reason to expect they will do so.

Rather than produce a stalemate, cutting U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition might enable the Houthis to win a military victory, much like the one the Assad regime, Iran, and Russia are slowly achieving in Syria. This outcome is hardly desirable. The Houthis are anti-American, anti-Semitic, and increasingly anti-Sunni. In fact, Houthis, who are of Zaydi Shiite faith, are just one clan of hundreds in the country. There is no historical or popular basis for the Houthis to rule the capital, Sanaa, or the ports. As a result, a post-conflict Yemen under Houthi rule would likely require considerable repression to hold it in place.

U.S. members of Congress may not like the civil war or the Saudi intervention, and critics rightly blame that intervention for increasing the Houthis’ dependence on Iran, thus strengthening Tehran’s influence in the country. But that influence is now a reality. The Houthis have already fired Iranian missiles at Riyadh and at ships (including U.S. military vessels) in the Bab el-Mandeb, the vital shipping lane connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. A bloody end to the civil war that leaves the Houthis victorious and beholden to Iran would only further undermine the United States’ interests and terrify its allies in the region.

#### Houthi victory gives Iran control of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. That causes major spikes in global oil prices.

Dahl 19 — Tera Dahl, Senior Fellow in the Mediterranean Basin, Middle East, and Gulf Initiatives at the Transatlantic Leadership Network, former Deputy Chief of Staff on the U.S. National Security Council, former National Security Fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, holds an M.A. from the Robertson School of Government at Regent University, 2019 (“Congress should think twice before pulling US support from Yemen,” *Fox News*, May 2nd, Available Online at <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tera-dahl-congress-senate-yemen-saudi-arabia-iran>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

The Senate will vote Thursday to override President Trump’s veto of a resolution pulling American support from Yemen. Congress has used America's relationship with Saudi Arabia as a reason for the resolution, but the Yemen issue is much broader. The outcome of the Yemen war has national security and economic implications for the United States, Europe and the world because of the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is a major oil chokepoint and a strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Any disruption to the security and control of the strait could lead to major global shifts in oil prices.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that in 2016, 4.8 million barrels of crude and petroleum products flowed through the strait each day, with about 2.8 million going north to Europe, and another two million moving in the opposite direction.

If the U.S. pulls support for the Gulf powers in the Yemen conflict, the Iran-backed Houthi Shiite rebels could gain control of one of the world’s busiest shipping routes. According to the EIA, closing the Bab el-Mandeb Strait could keep tankers in the Persian Gulf from reaching the Suez Canal and the SUMED Pipeline, diverting them around the southern tip of Africa, adding transit time and cost. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is only 18 miles at its narrowest point. Tankers passing through must use two two-mile-wide shipping channels, leaving it extremely vulnerable to disruption.

As the relationship between the U.S. and Iran grows increasingly tense, Iran’s control over global waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz, becomes more important. Iran is using, and will use, any and all leverage it has over the United States, so it is vital not to hand over any additional advantages.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned over the weekend of possible consequences for the U.S. administration’s decision to stop issuing waivers to countries for Iranian oil imports. The Strait of Hormuz is the world’s primary oil chokepoint with an estimated record of 18.5 million barrels per day of oil passing through it in 2016. According to the EIA, the Strait of Hormuz accounted for 30 percent of all sea-borne-traded crude oil and other liquids in 2015.

The danger posed by Iranian expansion and overall malign actions in the region is the greater problem. They want to gain access to the Red Sea and control vital economic waterways. Why give Iran the opportunity to provide missiles and other armaments to the Houthis to control yet another primary oil chokepoint in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait?

As Iran moves closer to securing the port of Latakia in Syria (gaining direct access to the Mediterranean Sea and to the Israeli border), the conflict in Yemen becomes of even greater importance to the U.S. and Europe. President Trump’s recent veto of the Yemen War resolution passed by Congress was the right decision. It was a necessary step toward countering Iran’s hegemonic ambitions in the region.

#### That quickly causes a global recession.

Toprani 19 — Anand Toprani, Associate Professor in the Strategy and Policy Department at the U.S. Naval War College, Term Member at the Council on Foreign Relations, former Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy in the International Security Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, holds a Ph.D. in History from Georgetown University, 2019 (“A Primer on the Geopolitics of Oil,” *War on the Rocks*, January 17th, Available Online at <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/a-primer-on-the-geopolitics-of-oil/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

At a time like this, it is tempting to think that oil will finally become just another commodity rather than one of the most important factors in global geopolitics. The experience of the past century would suggest that some caution is in order before strategists denigrate oil’s future significance. Oil will remain the world’s single largest source of energy for the foreseeable future, and the balance between global supply and demand remains perilously narrow. A major disruption in just a single major oil producer could send prices skyrocketing again and quickly push the world into a recession. U.S. production growth in the short run appears limited, especially as higher interest rates may starve small U.S. firms of the cheap capital they require to finance their operations. Despite their success in boosting U.S. oil production, most shale oil firms are notoriously unprofitable. Investors are tiring of the companies’ flawed assumptions and questionable business practices and are urging them to focus less on production and more on profitability, which could mean lower output until prices recover. If U.S. production growth fails to keep pace with global demand growth, the relative power advantage over pricing would again shift back to OPEC, which, along with Russia, controls over 55 percent of global oil production and 80 percent of proven reserves. Finally, the collapse in Venezuelan output has removed an important source of non-Middle Eastern oil from world markets. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon U.S. national security professionals to understand how the oil industry functions and keep the stability of global oil production high on their list of priorities.

#### In the current global context, that risks World War Three.

Liu 18 — Qian Liu, Managing Director for Greater China at The Economist Intelligence Unit—the research arm of The Economist Group, holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Uppsala University (Sweden), 2018 (“The next economic crisis could cause a global conflict. Here's why,” *Project Syndicate*, November 8th, Available Online at <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/economic-crisis-military-conflict-or-structural-reform-by-qian-liu-2018-11>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

The next economic crisis is closer than you think. But what you should really worry about is what comes after: in the current social, political, and technological landscape, a prolonged economic crisis, combined with rising income inequality, could well escalate into a major global military conflict.

The 2008-09 global financial crisis almost bankrupted governments and caused systemic collapse. Policymakers managed to pull the global economy back from the brink, using massive monetary stimulus, including quantitative easing and near-zero (or even negative) interest rates.

But monetary stimulus is like an adrenaline shot to jump-start an arrested heart; it can revive the patient, but it does nothing to cure the disease. Treating a sick economy requires structural reforms, which can cover everything from financial and labor markets to tax systems, fertility patterns, and education policies.

Policymakers have utterly failed to pursue such reforms, despite promising to do so. Instead, they have remained preoccupied with politics. From Italy to Germany, forming and sustaining governments now seems to take more time than actual governing. And Greece, for example, has relied on money from international creditors to keep its head (barely) above water, rather than genuinely reforming its pension system or improving its business environment.

The lack of structural reform has meant that the unprecedented excess liquidity that central banks injected into their economies was not allocated to its most efficient uses. Instead, it raised global asset prices to levels even higher than those prevailing before 2008.

In the United States, housing prices are now 8% higher than they were at the peak of the property bubble in 2006, according to the property website Zillow. The price-to-earnings (CAPE) ratio, which measures whether stock-market prices are within a reasonable range, is now higher than it was both in 2008 and at the start of the Great Depression in 1929.

As monetary tightening reveals the vulnerabilities in the real economy, the collapse of asset-price bubbles will trigger another economic crisis – one that could be even more severe than the last, because we have built up a tolerance to our strongest macroeconomic medications. A decade of regular adrenaline shots, in the form of ultra-low interest rates and unconventional monetary policies, has severely depleted their power to stabilize and stimulate the economy.

If history is any guide, the consequences of this mistake could extend far beyond the economy. According to Harvard’s Benjamin Friedman, prolonged periods of economic distress have been characterized also by public antipathy toward minority groups or foreign countries – attitudes that can help to fuel unrest, terrorism, or even war.

For example, during the Great Depression, US President Herbert Hoover signed the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, intended to protect American workers and farmers from foreign competition. In the subsequent five years, global trade shrank by two-thirds. Within a decade, World War II had begun.

To be sure, WWII, like World War I, was caused by a multitude of factors; there is no standard path to war. But there is reason to believe that high levels of inequality can play a significant role in stoking conflict.

According to research by the economist Thomas Piketty, a spike in income inequality is often followed by a great crisis. Income inequality then declines for a while, before rising again, until a new peak – and a new disaster. Though causality has yet to be proven, given the limited number of data points, this correlation should not be taken lightly, especially with wealth and income inequality at historically high levels.

This is all the more worrying in view of the numerous other factors stoking social unrest and diplomatic tension, including technological disruption, a record-breaking migration crisis, anxiety over globalization, political polarization, and rising nationalism. All are symptoms of failed policies that could turn out to be trigger points for a future crisis.

Voters have good reason to be frustrated, but the emotionally appealing populists to whom they are increasingly giving their support are offering ill-advised solutions that will only make matters worse. For example, despite the world’s unprecedented interconnectedness, multilateralism is increasingly being eschewed, as countries – most notably, Donald Trump’s US – pursue unilateral, isolationist policies. Meanwhile, proxy wars are raging in Syria and Yemen.

Against this background, we must take seriously the possibility that the next economic crisis could lead to a large-scale military confrontation. By the logic of the political scientist Samuel Huntington , considering such a scenario could help us avoid it, because it would force us to take action. In this case, the key will be for policymakers to pursue the structural reforms that they have long promised, while replacing finger-pointing and antagonism with a sensible and respectful global dialogue. The alternative may well be global conflagration.

### They Say: “Plan Decreases Iranian Influence”

#### Even though the war has increased Iranian influence, the plan increases it even more — Iraq proves.

Hannah 18 — John Hannah, Senior Counselor at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, former National Security Advisory to Vice President Cheney, former Senior Advisor to Secretary of State Christopher, former Deputy Director and Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018 (“Neither Side Gets the Khashoggi Debate Right,” *Foreign Policy*, December 13th, Available Online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/13/neither-side-gets-the-khashoggi-debate-right/>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

There really is an Iranian threat in Yemen. Again, let’s go ahead and stipulate: The war in Yemen is awful and should be brought to an end as soon as possible. The Saudi military campaign has largely been a disaster, mired in bloody stalemate with no end in sight while heavily contributing to what is now a humanitarian tragedy of epic proportions. But simply hammering the Saudis to end the war unilaterally at any cost makes no sense for U.S. interests. The fact is that Houthi rebels backed by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Hezbollah did illegally unseat Yemen’s internationally recognized government in 2015 while attempting to conquer the rest of the country by force—including control of access to key shipping lanes in and around the Red Sea that are vital to the global economy and for the United States. Houthi rebels, in emulation of their Iranian patrons, do chant death to America, Israel, and the Jews at public gatherings. The U.S. Navy does worry intensely about the IRGC gaining the ability to threaten freedom of shipping through the strategically critical Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The Houthis have acquired from Iran a significant arsenal of missiles and rockets with which to attack population centers and critical infrastructure not only in Saudi Arabia, but other important U.S. partners in the Gulf. All that simply can’t be ignored or wished away out of legitimate disgust with the Saudis.

Yet I’ve lost count of how many articles have appeared demanding that the Trump administration compel the Saudis to stop fighting in Yemen without even a mention of the Houthis or their Iranian and Hezbollah patrons. It’s as if they didn’t exist at all. Trump’s critics ought to at least feel required to wrestle with the potential implications of their recommended course of action for the very real Iranian threat that now exists on the Arabian Peninsula. Even if you grant that the war has enabled the IRGC to deepen its influence over the Houthis and expand its ability to destabilize Saudi Arabia, it doesn’t necessarily now follow that forcing the kingdom to abandon the fight unilaterally will make the situation better. On the contrary, there’s at least a significant risk that it could make it worse, even much worse. Remember Iraq: The United States’ 2003 takedown of Saddam Hussein and the blunders that followed created unprecedented opportunities for Iranian meddling and influence. But the unilateral decision to withdraw U.S. troops in 2011 unintentionally ended up increasing the power of not only Iran, but what would go on to become the Islamic State as well.

#### Defeating the Houthis is vital to prevent Iranian control of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait — they’ll threaten to shut it down.

Hanson 18 — Jim Hanson, President of the Strategic Studies Group, Executive Vice President of the Center for Security Policy, former Weapons Sergeant in the 1st Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army, 2018 (“The Real Stakes in Yemen,” Security Studies Group, September 21st, Available Online at <https://securitystudies.org/the-real-stakes-in-yemen/>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

There is much discussion about the current war in Yemen which pits Iran-backed Houthis against US allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. There is a vital US interest at stake here: ensuring the free flow of shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Iran already sits astride the Straits of Hormuz and has claimed recently they control traffic through it. Iranian proxy forces firing Iranian missiles are seeking to control this second vital piece of terrain on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Such control could give Iran the ability to use anti-ship missiles to threaten or shut down both major routes for oil to leave the region.

That is an intolerable prospect for the United States and our allies and the reason we are supporting Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in their effort to defeat the Houthis in Yemen. Additionally the Saudis share a border with Yemen and the Houthis have been shooting missiles they have been given by Iran into civilian areas including the international airport in Riyadh. The need to ensure Iran doesn’t complete this expansion by proxy is an important one and justifies US support for the efforts by our allies to stop them.

#### Houthi victory expands Iranian influence over vital shipping lanes.

Alasrar 18 — Fatima Alasrar, Senior Analyst at the Arabia Foundation, former Research Associate at the Arab Gulf States Institute, former Mason Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, holds an M.A. in Public Administration from Harvard University and an M.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University, 2018 (“Yemen Is Bad but It Would Be Worse Without U.S. Involvement,” *The National Interest*, July 25th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/middle-east-watch/yemen-bad-it-would-be-worse-without-us-involvement-26801>, Accessed 06-14-2019)

Furthermore, vital U.S. interests are at stake. The Houthis have repeatedly threatened to disrupt international shipping. Earlier this year, they made good on this promise by firing on a Saudi oil tanker and a Turkish freighter carrying wheat. The Houthi militias are a sworn enemy of the United States and a tool for expanding Tehran’s destabilizing influence throughout the Middle East. The Iranians have supplied ballistic missiles to the Houthis that have been launched against America’s Saudi, Emirati, and Yemeni allies. For the United States to withdraw its support now would be tantamount to conceding Yemen to Iran, which would deal a serious blow to Washington’s regional credibility.

#### Houthi victory lets Iran expand its empire.

May 18 — Clifford D. May, Founder and President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, former Commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, former Advisor to the Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton Commission) of the United States Institute of Peace, former Member of the U.S. Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion, holds an M.A. in International Affairs and an M.A. in Journalism from Columbia University, 2018 (“Punishing the Saudi prince,” *The Washington Times*, December 12th, Available Online at <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2018/12/12/punishing-the-saudi-prince/>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Consult a map of the Middle East. Locate the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow sea passage separating the Arabian Peninsula from Iran, and connecting the Gulf — whether you call it the Persian Gulf or the Arabian Gulf is a thorny question — to the open oceans beyond.

The Strait of Hormuz is among the world’s most strategic waterways, essential to the health of the global economy. More than a third of seaborne oil shipments and 20 percent of the oil traded internationally pass through it.

The U.S. Navy – specifically the Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet – keeps this sea lane open, frustrating Iran’s rulers who claim it as their private lap pool. They menace American vessels there – though less frequently since Donald Trump replaced Barak Obama in the White House.

Look at the map again. Locate the Bab-el-Mandeb, another strategic strait. It separates Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula from Africa, and guards the entrance to the Red Sea at the northern end of which is the Suez Canal, also a vital chokepoint. Iran’s rulers covet the Bab-el-Mandeb as well.

Their maritime goals support their hegemonic ambitions. The last thing American leaders should do is help them. Yet a bipartisan majority of senators is working on a resolution that would do exactly that by withdrawing U.S. military assistance to the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

How did this come about? On Oct.2, Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident who for two years had been contributing opinion columns to the Washington Post, was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The Saudi government has charged 11 individuals in connection with the killing. The Trump administration has sanctioned 17 persons thought to be implicated.

Many members of Congress regard that as woefully insufficient. They believe, as does the CIA, that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler, ordered the hit – or at least that the buck stops on his desk, or throne or yacht or wherever.

Fair enough but let me state what ought to be obvious: To punish Saudi royals by rewarding Iranian ayatollahs makes no sense.

It is not in the U.S. national interest for the Houthis to prevail in Yemen, thereby allowing Iran’s rulers to expand their empire, threaten Saudi Arabia’s southern underbelly (from which the Houthis already fire missiles at Riyadh), and station forces adjacent to the Bab-el-Mandeb.

### They Say: “Plan Key To Peace”

#### U.S. military support is the only way to create sufficient pressure to end the war — scaling back arms sales prolongs the fighting by eliminating leverage.

bin Mubarak 19 — Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, Ambassador of Yemen to the United States, 2019 (“Congress: Please consider the consequences of your resolutions on Yemen,” *The Hill*, February 6th, Available Online at <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/428602-congress-please-consider-the-consequences-of-your>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Only a peaceful, political resolution can bring an end to the war in Yemen and especially one that respects the GCC Initiative, the National Dialogue Conference Outcomes and UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (i.e., the Three References). But as far back as 2013, there have been a number of serious attempts to work with the Houthis to create a framework for peace. Yet each time we were close to an agreement, the Houthis reneged and ultimately walked away from negotiations, preferring to continue their military assault on the capital and other territories. Faced with this history, it is clear that unless the Houthis are met with combined political and military pressures and denying them sources of support from Iran, such as fuel, hard currency and weapons being illegally smuggled to them by land or sea, they will wage war indefinitely. Our hope is to reach a negotiated peace, but we will not be able to reach that objective without the continued support of the Arab coalition and the support of the United States.

The world, except for Iran and Houthis, wants the same thing – a peaceful resolution in Yemen. We have found a path to peace and it is working. We should not undermine the progress we are making now and instead of pulling back, the U.S. needs to support us through the combination of negotiation and pressure. If our allies withdraw, then we fear that the crisis we want to solve will only intensify, leading to more destruction and the loss of more innocent lives, not less.

#### The plan makes the coalition too weak to negotiate a settlement, so they’ll keep fighting indefinitely — turns the case.

Posey and Phillips 18 — Madyson Hutchinson Posey, Research and Administrative Assistant for Foreign Policy and National Security at The Heritage Foundation, and James Phillips, Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at The Heritage Foundation, former Research Fellow at the Congressional Research Service, holds an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University, 2018 (“Ending U.S. Military Support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen Would Trigger Dangerous Consequences,” Heritage Foundation Commentary, December 6th, Available Online at <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/ending-us-military-support-saudi-arabia-yemen-would-trigger-dangerous>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Never mind that Saudi Arabia is supporting the internationally recognized government of Yemen in this effort. Never mind that leaving Ansar Allah to run amuck will not bring an end to the humanitarian suffering, but only prolong it.

The U.S. currently extends only limited support to Saudi Arabia in Yemen centered on intelligence and information sharing. There are no U.S. troops involved in combat operations, except for occasional commando raids and air strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a Sunni terrorist group that continues to target the U.S. homeland, as well as Saudi Arabia, France, and other countries.

The Trump administration already has stopped the aerial refueling of Saudi warplanes involved in the Yemen conflict and called for a negotiated settlement. But the United States cannot afford to abandon its allies and hope for the best. Undermining the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition would make an acceptable political settlement impossible.

The Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia will continue to fight this war with or without U.S. support. Those who would connect two unrelated issues, condemn Saudi involvement, and ignore Iran’s hostile role inside Yemen will only do more harm to innocent Yemeni civilians and empower Iran and its Yemeni proxies.

#### The plan makes it less likely that the Houthis will negotiate.

May 18 — Clifford D. May, Founder and President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, former Commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, former Advisor to the Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton Commission) of the United States Institute of Peace, former Member of the U.S. Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion, holds an M.A. in International Affairs and an M.A. in Journalism from Columbia University, 2018 (“Punishing the Saudi prince,” *The Washington Times*, December 12th, Available Online at <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2018/12/12/punishing-the-saudi-prince/>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

The conflict in Yemen has been devastating for the civilian population. A negotiated solution would be welcome. But the Houthis chant, “Death to America, Death to Israel, a Curse Upon the Jews, Victory to Islam,” and according to an Associated Press investigation practice “extreme torture” — including hanging victims “from chains by their wrists or genitals for weeks at a time.”

We may safely conclude that these are not exactly let’s-make-a-deal kind of guys. Can anyone seriously believe that they will be more amenable to compromise if the military pressure on them is eased?

#### This turns the case.

Alasrar 18 — Fatima Alasrar, Senior Analyst at the Arabia Foundation, former Research Associate at the Arab Gulf States Institute, former Mason Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, holds an M.A. in Public Administration from Harvard University and an M.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University, 2018 (“Yemen Is Bad but It Would Be Worse Without U.S. Involvement,” *The National Interest*, July 25th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/middle-east-watch/yemen-bad-it-would-be-worse-without-us-involvement-26801>, Accessed 06-14-2019)

America should continue to support United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths’ in his attempt to broker a lasting political resolution. But the Houthis will have little incentive to negotiate in good faith absent continuing military pressure. Withdrawing U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition and for Yemen’s internationally recognized government will ease this pressure without doing anything to end Yemen’s war. It also will not help—and may even exacerbate—the country’s humanitarian crisis while dealing a blow to America’s regional prestige and its short and long-term strategic interests. Lawmakers would do well to consider these costs as they seek to reclaim war-making powers from the executive branch.

### They Say: “Coalition Withdrawal Solves”

#### Houthi victory gives Iran control of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and encourages more Houthi attacks.

Hanson 18 — Jim Hanson, President of the Strategic Studies Group, Executive Vice President of the Center for Security Policy, former Weapons Sergeant in the 1st Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army, 2018 (“The US-Saudi relationship must be preserved – our national interest demands it,” *Fox News*, October 16th, Available Online at https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-us-saudi-relationship-must-be-preserved-our-national-interest-demands-it, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Apart from the death of Khashoggi, a major complaint by many against the Saudis is their ongoing fight against the Iranian proxy fighters in Yemen – a group called the Houthis. But the Saudi fight against the Houthis is vital to prevent Iran from shutting down both major sea lanes for the export of oil from the region.

The Iranians already sit perched on the Straits of Hormuz and threaten regularly to stop oil traffic there. If the Iranians can consolidate their position in Yemen via the Houthis, they will then have the Bab al Mandeb Strait in their sights as well. The Iranians have already attacked Saudi vessels and that will happen more often if the Houthis are allowed to win the civil war in Yemen.

#### Houthi victory cements Iranian control of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and allows them to hold global commerce hostage.

Hurd 18 — Will Hurd, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives (R-TX), former Officer at the Central Intelligence Agency where he serves as an undercover agent in Yemen after the bombing of the USS Cole, 2019 (“Congress Emboldens Iran in the Name of Peace in Yemen,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 25th, Available Online at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/congress-emboldens-iran-in-the-name-of-peace-in-yemen-11561503382,> Accessed 06-25-2019)

If the Houthis win the civil war and consolidate control over all or part of Yemen, Iran would gain a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula. From Saudi Arabia’s doorstep Iranian proxies would be able to threaten the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a strategic choke point connecting the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. With control of the strait, Iran could block shipping access to the Suez Canal and hold global commerce hostage. This must never be allowed to happen.

#### Houthi victory increases the existing threat.

Posey and Phillips 18 — Madyson Hutchinson Posey, Research and Administrative Assistant for Foreign Policy and National Security at The Heritage Foundation, and James Phillips, Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at The Heritage Foundation, former Research Fellow at the Congressional Research Service, holds an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University, 2018 (“Ending U.S. Military Support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen Would Trigger Dangerous Consequences,” Heritage Foundation Commentary, December 6th, Available Online at <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/ending-us-military-support-saudi-arabia-yemen-would-trigger-dangerous>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Ansar Allah also has targeted U.S. Navy vessels, those of allied nations, and civilian shipping in the Red Sea with Iranian-supplied missiles, gunboat attacks, and boat bombs. Undermining the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen risks exacerbating this threat to international shipping and giving Iran the opportunity to threaten oil shipments through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, just as it has threatened to do in the Strait of Hormuz.

#### The Houthis have already attacked on a small scale.

Hutchison 19 — Harold Hutchison, Contributor to *The Washington Examiner*, Writer at *We Are The Mighty*—a military breaking news site, holds a B.A. in Politics from Cornell College, 2019 (“Arms sales to Saudi Arabia is the least bad option for the US,” *The Washington Examiner*, June 24th, Available Online at <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-is-the-least-bad-option-for-the-us>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Yemen sits on the Bab el Mandeb, a maritime choke point that is the southern entrance to the Red Sea. It is, essentially, Israel’s maritime back door. Aden, in the south, is also a major port, used by the United Kingdom as a military base until 1967. If the Houthis take control and drive out the government, it means that the Iranian-sponsored rebels will have the ability to contest passage through the Bab el Mandeb. They have already fired on an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer on multiple occasions and attacked a vessel that delivered humanitarian aid.

#### The Houthis will attack tankers — empirically proven.

Mahdi 18 — Wael Mahdi, Energy Correspondent at Bloomberg, former Foreign Correspondent at Abu Dhabi Media (UAE), former Head of the Economy Section at *Alwatan Newspaper* (Saudi Arabia), former Reporter at *Arabian Business* and the *Arab News*, holds a B.A. in Political Economy from The American University in Cairo (Egypt), 2018 (“Why protecting Bab Al-Mandeb is a global responsibility,” *Arab News*, July 26th, Available Online at <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1346101>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

First, it was pirates; now it is Houthis.

Almost 10 years ago, the oil market was shocked by the news that a Saudi oil tanker, Sirius Star, was hijacked by Somali pirates.

The very large crude carrier, which was carrying its full load of 2 million barrels at the time of the incident, was hijacked in November about 830 kilometers southeast of Kenya as it was sailing to the US. The tanker was eventually released in January 2009.

That incident brought the attention of the world to the issue of piracy. In the interconnected world of today, some things that happen far away can affect consumers everywhere.

Yesterday, another attack on a Saudi ship took place in the strait of Bab Al-Mandeb, and this time it was by perpetrated by Houthi rebels in Yemen, according to a statement from the Saudi energy ministry.

A decision was taken quickly to halt all oil and product shipments in the Red Sea that go through the narrow channel.

Although Saudi Arabia exports most of its crude through the Strait of Hormuz, the militia attack is significant because it adds to the risks of using this key artery. It is important for oil and products tankers that go from and to Europe. Countries such as Kuwait, the UAE, Iraq, and Iran all use it to reach Europe and vice-versa.

The waterway allows for exports into the European market via either the Suez Canal or the Sumed pipeline that links the Red Sea with the Mediterranean through Egypt.

Saudi Arabia is already shipping oil and products from Yanbu port on the Red Sea to Europe via the Suez Canal. It still can use its East-West mega-pipeline to ship crude from its oil fields in the Arabian Gulf into Yanbu, bypassing the strait and keeping the European market within regular reach. The East-West pipeline has a carrying capacity of about 5 million barrels a day.

The impact of the Saudi move on the oil market and prices is limited for now since only a small fraction of Saudi oil and products goes through Bab Al-Mandeb.

Brent crude rose as much as 1.1 percent in London on Thursday not only on the news of the Saudi halt but also because of the fall in US weekly crude inventories.

The real impact would be felt if other countries followed suit and halted shipments.

A full closure of Bab Al-Mandeb, which at its narrowest point is just 18 miles (29 kilometers) wide, would force tankers sailing from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and the UAE “around the southern tip of Africa, which would add to transit time and cost,” according to the US Energy Information Administration.

The EIA estimates that in 2016 — the last year with reliable data — 4.8 million barrels a day of crude and petroleum products flowed through the strait, with about 2.8 million going northbound toward Europe, and another 2 million sailing from Europe into the Middle East and Asia. The strait is an important route for European refined oil products to reach global markets.

By comparison, the Strait of Hormuz had significantly higher flows — 18.5 million barrels a day — in 2016, according to the EIA. Iran’s revolutionary guard has threatened to halt shipments via Hormuz in response to US sanctions.

So until the full closure of the strait, things appear under control for the market. However, how can the world’s oil community be sure that the waterway is safe?

Iran, like many others, uses the strait and the Houthis are allies of Iran — which may offer some solace.

The real problem arises when Iran stops exporting to Europe as a result of the sanctions. Will Iran make sure that the waterway is safe from Houthi attacks?

The world reacted to the pirate attack on Sirius Star by increasing patrols in the area by NATO and Indian warships. This time the issue may affect the Europeans more than the Americans.

Another concern is that countries might react too late. It took one large Saudi oil tanker to disappear in order for countries to react to other attacks on vessels from Somalis. Will the world’s powers wait longer this time before they ensure the safety of this vital waterway?

Ensuring the movement of oil is important for all consumers and producers, including the Americans. Oil prices are already high and it is not in the interests of the US to see them go any higher.

As for the Gulf states, they have discussed contingency plans previously in 2012 and 2013 in the event of a Strait of Hormuz closure. Since Iran or Iran-backed militias are now posing a threat on both waterways, it may be time to update those plans.

### They Say: “No Strait Closure Impact”

#### Even a temporary disruption would significantly spike global prices.

Salameh 18 — Mamdouh G. Salameh, Visiting Professor of Energy Economics at the ESCP Europe Business School, Consultant to The World Bank, Technical Expert of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Director of the Oil Market Consultancy Service (UK), Member of the Institute for Strategic Studies and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Member of the Energy Institute (UK), holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Pacific Western University, 2018 (“How Vulnerable are the World’s Key Oil Chokepoints,” *RCEM: Views on Energy News*, August 13th, Available Online at <https://www.rcem.eu/views-on-energy-news/chokepoints/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

Could These Chokepoints be Bypassed?

By and large, the alternative routes to these major chokepoints are only partial solutions, if at all. The oil trade is still highly dependent on these key chokepoints, and thus, highly vulnerable to any lengthy outage.

An outage at any of these locations, even for a brief period of time, has the potential to force steep oil price increases with the effects magnified by the size and duration of the outage. Even the whiff of a potential outage, particularly when the oil market is tight, can add a few dollars per barrel as a risk premium.

Still, a closure of any of the four chokepoints for a lengthy period of time could send oil prices far above $150 a barrel.

Iran has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz if it was prevented from exporting its crude oil as a result of US sanctions. Iran’s threat should be taken seriously.

The Strait at its narrowest point is 21 mile wide so it is impossible militarily to close it completely. What Iran can do is mining it stealthily with the expectation of a mine hitting an oil tanker and sinking it. Such an accident in itself would deter tankers from crossing the Strait thus causing a disruption in oil supplies until the mines are cleared.

Alternatively, Iran could threaten sinking tankers crossing the Strait even if escorted by the US Fifth Navy in the Gulf. This threat might deter tanker owners around the world from sending their tankers across the Strait under pressure from global insurance companies until tension has subsided. In this way, Iran would have achieved its goal of disrupting oil supplies peacefully.

#### Even temporary disruptions will spike global prices — unlike before, there’s no spare capacity to cushion the blow.

Johnson 18 — Keith Johnson, Global Geoeconomics Correspondent at *Foreign Policy*, 2018 (“Iran’s Yemeni Proxies Put Oil Shipments in Crosshairs,” *Foreign Policy*, July 26th, Available Online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/26/irans-yemeni-proxies-put-oil-shipments-in-crosshairs-saudi-bab-el-mandeb-hormuz-houthi/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

This month, Tehran renewed its perennial threat to close Hormuz if its own oil exports are affected by U.S. sanctions. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani reiterated that threat over the weekend, saying: “Do not play with the lion’s tail. You will regret it forever.”

Rouhani’s bellicose rhetoric extended to other straits besides Hormuz. While Iran does not border Bab al-Mandeb, its Houthi proxies do, and their ability to interfere with oil shipments through the narrows has been a concern since the war in Yemen started in 2015.

“Hard-liners are calling Rouhani the ‘Lord of the Straits’ these days, not just the ‘Lord of Hormuz,’” said Matthew Reed, the vice president of the energy consultancy Foreign Reports. Those threats have since been endorsed by other elements of the Iranian leadership, including clerics and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which specifically threatened the Red Sea on Thursday.

“The Iranians are responding to [U.S. President Donald] Trump’s maximum pressure campaign with a maximum threat campaign,” Reed said.

Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz are nothing new. In the 1980s, Iran and Iraq engaged in a “tanker war” in the Persian Gulf that dragged in the U.S. Navy. More recently, at times of tension with Washington, Tehran has periodically vowed to block oil tankers from exiting the narrow strait, whether by mining the channel or attacking tankers with speedboats or land-based missiles.

But actually blocking Hormuz would require a huge effort from the Iranian navy and the IRGC and would invite a swift and overwhelming response from U.S. naval forces.

Bab al-Mandeb offers a lower-risk alternative to push back against international pressure—and, potentially, spike oil prices. Iranian leaders might be calculating that higher oil prices would increase political pressure on Trump and reduce the country’s pain from lowering its volumes of oil exports.

“What makes this attack special is the timing and rhetoric from Tehran,” Reed said. “The Red Sea, where they can pretend a proxy force is freelancing, is somewhere the Iranians think they can maintain plausible deniability, unlike Hormuz.”

Saudi Arabia, for reasons of its own, seems happy to play along. The coalition says the attack was thwarted and only one tanker suffered minor damage. Riyadh has also faced much graver threats to oil shipments in the past. Yet this time, it halted exports through the strait—essentially pulling a Neymar (to borrow a soccer analogy) to call international attention to Iran’s role in the Yemen war.

“There’s no sign that the Houthis are trying to shut down all traffic in the strait or that they even have the wherewithal,” said Richard Mallinson of Energy Aspects, a consultancy in London. “I think much more the Saudis are trying to internationalize the threat. The more they can portray the Houthis as Iranian puppets, that’s a powerful narrative.”

The attack hasn’t yet spooked oil markets; crude prices rose a bit in New York and London but could rise further if continued disruptions in the strait lead to longer shipment times or higher insurance premiums, Reed said.

More importantly, the renewed tensions in critical choke points such as Bab al-Mandeb and Hormuz are a timely reminder that the oil market cannot ignore geopolitical problems forever. In recent years, the oil market has shrugged off nasty events that would have sent crude prices spiking in the past. Oil prices actually fell after the Islamic State took over big chunks of Iraq, while the Syrian war spiraled out of control, while Libya fell apart, while Venezuela imploded, and while the Iranian-Saudi rivalry reached fever pitch.

But these days, big oil producers have little spare capacity to add to the market in case of a big geopolitical shock. Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States are pumping at near-record levels, and oil still hovers around $70 a barrel.

Mallinson expects that those tight conditions in the oil market will make it ripe for higher prices as soon as something goes wrong. The last time the world had this little spare oil production capacity was a decade ago, he notes, when crude hit all-time record highs of almost $150 a barrel.

“This is not the highest that prices are going to go, and that will be driven by geopolitical concerns. There won’t be any spare capacity to cushion your Venezuelas, your Libyas, and the like,” he said.

#### The Iranian capability itself spikes global oil prices even if they never follow through on their threats.

Alyahya 18 — Mohammed Khalid Alyahya, Senior Research Fellow at the Gulf Research Center (UAE), Editor in Chief of Al Arabiya News Channel (UAE), former Non-Resident Fellow at the Atlantic Council, former Associate Fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Saudi Arabia), holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania, 2018 (“What’s at stake in Yemen affects us all,” *The Hill*, December 10th, Available Online at <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/420375-whats-at-stake-in-yemen-affects-us-all>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Having an Iranian satellite armed with Iranian ballistic missiles on the Saudi doorstep would pose an intolerable threat to the kingdom, comparable to having the Soviet Union seize control of Mexico during the Cold War. But the stakes in Yemen involve more than just Saudi Arabia’s national security or the peace and prosperity of the Yemeni people. An abrupt termination of the war would leave Iran in control of Yemen would deal a serious blow to the global economy. Iran would have the ability to obstruct trade and oil flows from both the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, the latter of which has been tormented by Somali piracy for the decades.

Iran would wield far greater influence than Somali pirates if it were allowed to threaten Bab-el-Mandeb. About 24 percent of the world’s petroleum and petroleum products supply passes through these two waterways, and Iran already has the capability to disrupt oil flows from Hormuz and has threatened to do so this year. Should Iran acquire that capability in Bab-el-Mandeb, by establishing a foothold in the Gulf of Aden, even if it chose not to utilize this capability, oil prices and insurance costs would surge.

Allowing the IRGC to control two of the most strategic choke points for the global energy market is simply not an option for the international community. There is every reason to believe that Iran would launch attacks on maritime traffic. The Houthis have mounted multiple attacks on commercial and military vessels over the past several years, and Iran has supplied its Yemen proxy with drone boats, conventional aerial drones and ballistic missiles.

Iran’s threats to disrupt international waterways should not be taken lightly. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) targeted Gulf oil tankers in the mid-1980s, prompting the U.S. Navy to launch Operation Earnest Will to protect the flow of oil. IRGC speedboats were deployed from Iran’s Farsi Island to launch rockets at oil tankers in the dead of night. An underwater mine placed by the IRGC struck U.S.-flagged oil tanker MV Bridgeton.

There is plenty of reasonable criticism of the war effort in Yemen. The conflict has exacerbated a terrible humanitarian crisis and claimed the lives of thousands of civilians. But any resolution to this war that leaves the Houthis with control over the Yemeni people, or allows Iran to exert its influence over one of the world’s most strategic waterways, would be a humanitarian and security disaster.

#### Iranian shipping restrictions will be economically devastating even if they never follow through with a complete blockade.

Ritter 19 — Scott Ritter, Contributing Writer at *The American Conservative*, former United Nations Weapon Inspector in Iraq, former Intelligence Officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, 2019 (“What if Iran Retaliates and Shuts Down the Strait of Hormuz?,” *The American Conservative*, May 1st, Available Online at <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/what-if-iran-retaliates-and-shuts-the-strait-of-hormuz/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

Because any effort to restrict or deny transit through the Strait of Hormuz would be rightfully seen as a provocative act worthy of military intervention, it is highly unlikely that Iran would take any precipitous action in that regard. Instead, Iran would most likely seek a gradual escalation of restrictions grounded in its legal interpretation of the 1982 United Nations’ Convention on the Law of the Sea, which grants Iran control over “territorial waters” extending to a maximum of 12 nautical miles beyond its coastline. Any ships using the northern and eastern routes through the Strait of Hormuz to gain access to the Persian Gulf would have to transit through Iranian waters.

Under the convention, Iran is permitted to deny free transit passage to nations, like the United States, which have not ratified the agreement. If the United States interdicts Iranian shipping involved in the transit of oil, then it is most likely Iran will close the Strait of Hormuz to U.S. shipping, citing the 1982 convention as its justification. The United States would either be compelled to back down (unlikely), or resort to military force, certifying it as the aggressor in the eyes of international law.

The military debate over Iran’s ability to close the Strait of Hormuz, and the U.S. ability to respond to such a threat, is moot—no insurance company will cover any oil tanker seeking to transit contested waters. The economic impact of any closure will be immediate, catastrophic and sustained. Even if the United States prevailed in a military conflict over the Strait of Hormuz (and it is not certain it would do so), any victory would be pyrrhic in nature, with the United States sacrificing its national economic health, and that of the rest of the world, on an alter of hubris that fails to advance the national interest in any meaningful fashion.

#### Control of the Bab-el Mandeb lets Iran devastate the global economy.

Starr 18 — Michael Starr, M.A. Candidate in Government, Counter-Terrorism, and National Security at Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Israel), 2018 (“Trump’s Sanctions and Iran’s Other Nuclear Option,” *The Times of Israel*, November 4th, Available Online at <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/trumps-sanctions-and-irans-other-nuclear-option/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

On November 5th, a series of US sanctions are set to resume against Iran, but the Iranian government may have a recourse in kind up its sleeve. While the sanctions were conceived mostly to prevent Iranian nuclear aspirations, they are not the only strategic capabilities that the US and Israel should be concerned about. Iran has the breakout potential to not only blockade maritime trade in the strait of Hormuz, but increasingly in Bab-el Mandeb as well. The utilization of this double blockade strategy could result in mutually assured economic destruction. It’s essential that American and Israeli leaders in the business, political and military spheres understand Iran’s economic redlines, the importance and vulnerability of Bab-el Mandeb and the Hormuz, as well as Iran’s past and current military capabilities. Understanding these, hopefully they will be better equipped to counter this Iranian strategic option.

Earlier in his presidency, Donald Trump canceled the controversial “Iran Deal”, which sought to limit the Iranian nuclear program. Instead of the multilateral pact, the US sought a strategy of economic pressure to push Tehran to submit to its denuclearization prescriptions. Since the restoration of sanctions, Iran has suffered economic difficulties, resulting in open protests across the country against the regime. Recently President Trump announced, with a Twitter Game of Thrones meme, the coming full reimplementation of sanctions against Iran. The Rial has already suffered in the weeks prior, and will likely continue to do so. While the strategy pursued by the US is non-violent, like President Erdogan of Turkey, the Mullahs may see it as “economic war”. The sanctions campaign may soon affect Iranian oil exports, a well established Iranian red line. Energy products are a large part of the Iranian economy. Several months ago, in response to the threat of the hindrance of Persian oil movement, President Hassan Rouhani and an Iranian military commander threatened to use military assets to blockade all oil traffic through the strait of Hormuz. This is consistent with past policy, as in 2011 then Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi issued an identical threat in response to the same red line. What has changed since 2011 is Iran’s access to a whole other strait.

Bab el-Mandeb is a narrow strait connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, and further the Indian Ocean. It separates the Arabian Peninsula and Africa, on the coasts of Yemen, and Eritrea and Djibouti. It’s a high traffic and important shipping choke point. 3.3 million barrels of oil and petroleum, much from Saudi Arabia, ship through every day, in addition to bulk and container shipping. The Somali pirate problem that plagued the strait and area cost the global economy billions of dollars each year. The cost that Iran could extract by blocking both this route and the Hormuz would be far greater.

Iranian officials have bragged how Iran controls four Arab capitals; Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus, and Sana’a. Iran has proxy forces, influence, or direct control over these political centers. The last of these cities, Sana’a, is the capital of Yemen. There Iran arms, funds and influences the militant forces of the Houthi, Yemeni Shiites that are at war with southern Yemen and Saudi Arabia’s coalition. It’s their coastal proximity to Bab el-Mandeb that is of greater global concern. The pirates caused financial damages with small fleets of trawlers and skiffs, and manpower using old Kalashnikovs and RPG-7s. The Houthis are greater in number and organization. They are better armed, not just with Iranian small arms, but with anti-tank missiles, mortars and ballistic rockets. If the Houthi turned these arms towards the strait, they would cause more damage than the Somalis, with less physical presence. However, considering Iranian history in the strait of Hormuz, speed boats and naval mines in the strait are not out of the question.

In the Iran-Iraq war, Iran used speed boats and mines to engage Iraqi supply lines. In 1988, it also participated in a short battle against the US after Iran mined a US frigate. Iran has grown more militarily capable since then. Its naval doctrine calls not only for guerilla warfare in Hormuz using fast craft, commandos and mines, but occupation of key islands. With these elements, Iran could close or disrupt Hormuz traffic, which is greater than Bab el-Mandeb, host to more than 17 million barrels of oil each day. This is 35-40% of the maritime oil trade. Using the Houthi and its own naval forces, Iran could cut Saudi and Gulf Arab maritime trade down to a trickle, and force global shippers to make expensive reroutes. Even a Nasser-like false claim of mining the straits would force ships to reroute. Each vessel, besides its cargo, is worth millions, far too dear for shipping companies to risk.

A reduction in traffic in the Red Sea would greatly affect southern maritime trade into Israel. Though not Israel’s chief port, Eilat still sees millions of tons of cargo pass through it each year. A partial blockade of this port would not only halt this traffic, but harm the development investments that the state of Israel has been fostering. On the American end, even increased energy independence would not prevent oil prices from rising due to reduced Gulf oil activity. Higher energy prices would hurt Americans in the wallet, and act as a revenge for the sanctions restored by the Trump administration. Sunni-Arab states that export oil would have their economic mainstays non-transportable. With no oil or container trade in the Red Sea, Egypt would see the Suez empty.

Considering its past military policy and current capabilities, Iran possess the option of blockading major trade routes and severely damaging the world’s economy. The straits remain vulnerable targets, and Iran might be inclined to lash out at them for vengeance. Both the US and Israel need to be wary of this strategic option. The US Navy already has vessels patrolling the high traffic zone through Bab el-Mandeb to protect ships from pirates. They may need to realign their threat horizons. Israel in turn may need to consider how it can help the US and the gulf states prepare for the Iranian maritime threat. Otherwise, despite any attempts to avoid open conflict, sanctions will not be a prelude to “economic war”, but an unforeseen military conflagration.

### They Say: “No Oil Shock Impact”

#### In this context, energy independence is a myth. A Bab el-Mandeb supply disruption will wreck Asian trading partners and the overall global economy.

Cordesman 19 — Anthony H. Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, former National Security Assistant on the Senate Armed Services Committee to Senator John McCain, former Director of Intelligence Assessment in the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, former Adjunct Professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University, Recipient of the Department of Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Award, holds a Ph.D. from the University of London, 2019 (“The Strategic Threat from Iranian Hybrid Warfare in the Gulf,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 13th, Available Online at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/strategic-threat-iranian-hybrid-warfare-gulf>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

The civil war in Yemen has given Iran considerable influence over the Houthi, and a growing potential to uses missiles, mines, or unattributable smaller boasts and ships to attack targets going south out of the Red Sea through the Bab el-Mandeb or North through the Suez Canal or Sumed Pipeline.

Here, the EIA reports that,

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is a chokepoint between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East and is a strategic link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Located between Yemen , Djibouti, and Eritrea, it connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. Most exports from the Persian Gulf that transit the Suez Canal and the SUMED Pipeline also pass through Bab el-Mandeb.

An estimated 4.8 million b/d of crude oil and refined petroleum products flowed through this waterway in 2016 toward Europe, the United States, and Asia, an increase from 3.3 million b/d in 2011. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is 18 miles wide at its narrowest point, limiting tanker traffic to two 2-mile-wide channels for inbound and outbound shipments. Closure of the Bab el-Mandeb could keep tankers originating in the Persian Gulf from reaching the Suez Canal or the SUMED Pipeline.

The Suez Canal and the SUMED Pipeline are strategic routes for Persian Gulf oil and natural gas shipments to Europe and North America. Located in Egypt , the Suez Canal connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez with the Mediterranean Sea. In 2016, 3.9 million b/d of crude oil and refined products transited the Suez Canal in both directions, according to data published by the Suez Canal Authority. Northbound flows rose by about 300,000 b/d in 2016, largely because of increased crude oil exports from Iraq and Saudi Arabia to Europe. Southbound shipments decreased for the first time since at least 2009, largely because of lower exports of petroleum products from Russia to Asia.

The 200-mile long SUMED Pipeline transports crude oil through Egypt from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Crude oil flows through two parallel 42-inch pipelines that have a total capacity of 2.34 million b/d. The SUMED Pipeline is the only alternate route to transport crude oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea if ships cannot navigate through the Suez Canal.

Closure of the Suez Canal and the SUMED Pipeline would require oil tankers to divert around the Cape of Good Hope near the southern tip of Africa, which would add approximately 2,700 miles to the transit from Saudi Arabia to the United States. In 2016, 1.6 million b/d of crude oil was transported through the SUMED Pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea and then loaded onto tankers for seaborne trade.

The Threat to the U.S. Economy; Why "Petroleum Independence" Is a Myth

The U.S. has recently been a net importer of well under than two million barrels a day (MMBD) of petroleum, and less than 20% of its total imports have come from the Gulf. However, the U.S. pays global price for petroleum, and any crisis in supply increases U.S. prices just as much as in any other country in the world.

What is more important to the global and U.S. economy as a whole, however, is that Gulf petroleum exports move by sea to other critical developed and industrial economies – especially in Asia. These importing states include key "top 15" exporters to the U.S. like China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. Their exports to the U.S. now affect a much larger part of the U.S. economy than was the case with petroleum imports even when the U.S. was most dependent on direct U.S. petroleum imports.

The latest CIA and US Census Bureau date indicate that that Asian countries alone normally provide some 28% to 30% of current U.S. imports – largely in the form of manufactured goods – and that they have a value that amounts to some 4-5% of the U.S. GDP. Seen from this perspective, U.S. energy "independence" is little more than an economic myth.

#### In a globalized market, supply disruptions definitely spike prices — *even though* the U.S. is a major producer.

Bordoff 18 — Jason Bordoff, Professor of Professional Practice in International and Public Affairs and Founder and Director of the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Energy and Climate Change on the National Security Council at the White House, former Senior Advisor for Energy and Environmental Policy at the National Economic Council, former Associate Director for Energy and Climate Change at the Council on Environmental Quality, former Policy Director of the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution, holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School, 2018 (“Khashoggi affair exposes myth of US energy dominance,” *The Hill*, October 29th, Available Online at <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/413598-khashoggi-affair-exposes-myth-of-us-energy-dominance>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

The widely condemned killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi has escalated tensions in the Middle East and strained the U.S.-Saudi relationship to a degree seldom seen since Ibn Saud and Franklin Roosevelt first cemented the “oil-for security relationship” in 1945.

By resurrecting the specter of the oil weapon, the crisis also exposes the myth of the Trump administration’s agenda of American “energy dominance.”

The shale revolution has more than doubled U.S. oil production over the last decade, slashing U.S. net import dependence. But in a globally integrated market, our vulnerability to gasoline price shocks comes not from how much we produce, but how much we consume.

The Trump administration’s concept of energy dominance was articulated in a June 2017 op-ed by Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Environmental Protection Administrator Scott Pruitt:

“An energy-dominant America means a self-reliant and secure nation, free from the geopolitical turmoil of other nations that seek to use energy as an economic weapon.”

President Trump’s National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow echoed this view when he dismissed concerns about possible Saudi retaliation should the U.S. impose punishments for Khashoggi’s death by saying, “The U.S. is the dominant energy player. So, we are in pretty good shape in my opinion with our energy boom to cover any shortfalls.”

In reality, the fallout from the Khashoggi affairs belies the rhetoric of dominance. In the days following the journalist’s disappearance, Saudi Arabia responded to the threat of possible U.S. sanctions by reminding the U.S. that it has leverage to harm the U.S., too, with a senior official saying, “The kingdom’s economy has an influential and vital role in the global economy.”

This veiled threat was widely seen as referring to its oil supplies, and oil prices rose accordingly. The fears were exacerbated when the head of the Arabiya news network wrote a piece explicitly threatening to use oil as a weapon.

Saudi officials, including Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih, were quick to tame the market’s fears. The Kingdom understands well that any disruption in oil supply would do far more lasting harm to itself than to the U.S., as it would not only undermine the reputation Saudi Arabia has developed for 45 years as a reliable supplier, it would also spur the transition to alternative fuels, trigger a release of strategic oil stocks and complicate Trump’s efforts to reduce Iran’s oil exports.

While a disruption in Saudi oil supplies is unlikely, the threat was a stark reminder that no matter how much oil the U.S. produces or how little we import, prices at the pump will still spike if there is a disruption in any global oil supply, whether the U.S. imports from that country or not.

Today’s oil market bears little resemblance to the one that existed during the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973, when most internationally traded oil was sold under long-term contracts.

Today, the oil market is the largest and most liquid commodity market in the world. As a result, supply disruptions today lead not to lasting physical shortfalls but rather to price spikes.

In a global market, increased U.S. oil supply does not insulate drivers from higher pump prices because a supply disruption anywhere leads to a price increase everywhere — regardless of whether the U.S. imports oil or not.

### They Say: “Case Outweighs”

#### Houthi victory makes the humanitarian crisis worse.

Hanson 18 — Jim Hanson, President of the Strategic Studies Group, Executive Vice President of the Center for Security Policy, former Weapons Sergeant in the 1st Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army, 2018 (“The US-Saudi relationship must be preserved – our national interest demands it,” *Fox News*, October 16th, Available Online at https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-us-saudi-relationship-must-be-preserved-our-national-interest-demands-it, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Iran fostered the Yemen civil war and should bear the blame for any humanitarian crisis happening there. The Iranians are supplying arms – including missiles – to the Houthis and have joined the Houthis in firing those missiles into Saudi Arabia.

The famine and other shortages in Yemen can be ended as soon as Iran wishes. Saudi Arabia has been the largest supplier of food to Yemen for the past 30 years and will continue to do so. But we cannot stop the fight against Iranian proxies who can kill massive numbers of people in the region and threaten vital U.S. interests, including the free flow of shipping.

I can already hear critics of my view saying the Saudis are paying me or the think tank I head, the Security Studies Group, to support their government. But in fact, the Security Studies Group has never taken a dime of foreign money and the Saudis are not paying me either.

We as a group support the opportunity a modern Saudi Arabia presents to its people, the Middle East and to the United States. I personally have not seen a better chance to change the dynamic in the region during my lifetime.

The Trump administration and Congress should resist calls to stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia and even worse to stop supporting the crown prince – calls like those made by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on “Fox & Friends” Monday.

Destroying our relationship with the Saudis would result in far more deaths and suffering in the region than keeping our relationship strong. And such a move would be a great gift to the mullahs who rule Iran and lead their people in chants of “Death to America” and boast of their plans to wipe Israel off the map.

#### U.S. withdrawal causes Houthi crackdowns that worsen the humanitarian crisis — Sanaa, Taiz, and Syria prove.

Alyahya 18 — Mohammed Khalid Alyahya, Senior Research Fellow at the Gulf Research Center (UAE), Editor in Chief of Al Arabiya News Channel (UAE), former Non-Resident Fellow at the Atlantic Council, former Associate Fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Saudi Arabia), holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania, 2018 (“What’s at stake in Yemen affects us all,” *The Hill*, December 10th, Available Online at <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/420375-whats-at-stake-in-yemen-affects-us-all>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Unfortunately, calls to “stop the Yemen war,” though morally satisfying, are fundamentally misguided. They ignore what is at stake in the Yemen conflict and the true identity of the warring parties. A precipitous disengagement by the Saudi-led coalition from militarily backing the UN-backed government of Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi in the Yemeni civil war would have calamitous consequences for Yemen, the Middle East and the world at large.

The urgency to end the war reduces that conflict, and its drivers, to a morality play, with the coalition of Arab states cast as the bloodthirsty villain killing and starving Yemeni civilians. The assumption seems to be that if the coalition’s military operations are brought to a halt, all will be well in Yemen.

Everybody seems to have forgotten that the conflict was triggered in late 2014 when the Houthis, backed by Iran, toppled the Yemeni government and took over large areas of the country, including strategic positions on the Red Sea. In seizing power, the Houthis inflicted massive civilian casualties and crippling damage to Yemen’s rudimentary infrastructure. Presented with a strategic threat at its doorstep, posed by an Iranian proxy and a humanitarian crisis, Saudi Arabia, responding to a request by Yemen’s legitimate government and backed by U.N. Resolution 2216, militarily intervened in the Yemen conflict seeking to restore Yemen’s legitimate government.

As has been the case with the Afghan and Iraq wars, prosecuted by U.S.-led coalitions, the counterinsurgency campaign in Yemen has been a difficult enterprise. Because the Houthis have been fighting in a way that deliberately places civilians at risk, Yemen has experienced dire security and humanitarian circumstances.

To curtail the influx of Iranian arms, the Saudi-led coalition periodically has restricted access to the port of Hodeidah, one of six main ports in Yemen, and a vital transit area for both humanitarian supplies and Iranian weapons transfers. The Houthis have exploited both of these for their war efforts and to consolidate their tactical gains on the ground, and so, abandoning the coalition efforts would leave Yemen in the rebels’ hands.

We have seen this in Syria. Over the past several years, U.S. policymakers have called for “de-escalating” the Syrian war. On paper, the policy sounded prudent and moral. In practice, however, as the United States froze its assistance to the Syrian opposition, Russia, Iran and the regime of Bashar al-Assad took advantage of the de-escalation process. Towns and villages were besieged and forced to surrender to Assad. In many of those towns, the government exacted revenge by arresting or killing people. It also forcibly conscripted civilians into the army or loyalist militias. Even as the U.S. administration lauded “de-escalation” in its rhetoric, Syria and its Russian and Iranian patrons simply consolidated their position and continued their military campaign.

A similar scenario will unfold in Yemen if the Saudi-led coalition were to cease operations. Iran’s long arm, the Houthis, would march on coalition-liberated areas and exact a bloody toll on the populations of cities such as Aden and Marib with the same ruthlessness to which they subjected Sanaa and Taiz during the past three years. The rebels have ruled Sanaa, kidnapping, executing, disappearing, systematically torturing, and assassinating detractors. In Taiz, they fire mortars indiscriminately at the civilian population and snipers shoot at children to force residents into submission.

#### Houthi victory worsens conditions for Yemeni civilians.

Nazer 18 — Fahad Nazer, Fellow at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Columnist for Arab News—a daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia, Political Consultant to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, former Non-Resident Fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute, 2018 (“What Is at Stake in Yemen,” The Hoover Institution, December 20th, Available Online at <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/nazer_whatisatstakeinyemen_webreadypdf.pdf>, Accessed 06-24-2019, p. 2)

Stopping Support to the Saudi Led Coalition Will Not End the Conflict

Contrary to the critics’ assumptions, stopping support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen will not end the violence, nor will it alleviate the humanitarian crisis. It is a call to leave the internationally recognized government of Yemen and Yemen’s 28 million people at the mercy of several ruthless, militant nonstate actors. That includes the Iranian-supported Houthi militia that began this conflict and whose intransigence is preventing it from being resolved. In addition, there are two other even more brutal terrorist groups—al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the so-called Islamic State—that would relish the opportunity to operate in a security and political vacuum. It is also a call to abandon Saudi Arabia, a reliable partner that has fought side by side with the United States against communist expansionism, Saddam Hussein’s invading forces in Kuwait in 1990, and, more recently, ISIS in Syria. Just as important, it would be tantamount to carte blanche for Iran, which appears intent on creating yet another proxy force that would do its bidding, much as it has done with the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon.4 As the conflict continues, evidence has been uncovered by the Yemeni government, the Saudi-led coalition, and the US government that strongly suggests that Iran’s military and technological support to the Houthis has increased considerably over the course of the conflict.5 That has enabled the Houthis to continue fighting and to continue to threaten the security of Saudi Arabia by employing ever more sophisticated military tactics, including the use of increasingly longer-range ballistic missiles as well as unmanned drones and speedboats.6

Calls to cut and run from Yemen are a recipe for increased instability and violence, not the opposite. The fact that these advocates rarely provide concrete recommendations as to how to bring the conflict to an end, alleviate the humanitarian situation, and assist Yemen on the road to recovery is also telling.

**—— Footnotes ——**

4. Daniel L. Byman, “Proxy Power: Understanding Iran’s Use of Terrorism,” Brookings Institution, July 26, 2006, accessed December 6, 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/proxy-power-understanding-irans-use-of-terrorism.

5. Ryan Browne, “US Displays Weapons It Says Iran Provided to Militants,” CNN, November 29, 2018, accessed December 6, 2018, https:// www . cnn . com / 2018 / 11 / 29 / politics / us-iran-weapons / index . html.

6. Farzin Nadimi and Michael Knights, “Iran’s Support to Houthi Air Defenses in Yemen,” Washington Institute, April 4, 2018, accessed December 6, 2018, https://www .washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-support-to-houthi-air-defenses-in-yemen.

#### The Houthis are responsible for most of the collateral damage.

Nazer 18 — Fahad Nazer, Fellow at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Columnist for *Arab News*—a daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia, Political Consultant to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, former Non-Resident Fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute, 2018 (“What Is at Stake in Yemen,” The Hoover Institution, December 20th, Available Online at <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/nazer_whatisatstakeinyemen_webreadypdf.pdf>, Accessed 06-24-2019, p. 4)

A Closer Look at Civilian Casualties

And while the violence has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population in Yemen, one could make a compelling argument that it is the military tactics of the Houthi rebels that are largely to blame for the collateral damage. Not only have the Houthis attacked civilian centers repeatedly during the course of the war—including southern cities and regions in Saudi Arabia—but their policy of using civilian centers and institutions (including schools, mosques, and hospitals) to hide military equipment and personnel has vastly increased the chances of civilians being harmed by the coalition’s airstrikes.9

Nevertheless, the Saudi-led coalition’s spokespeople have acknowledged that mistakes have been made and that the coalition will hold those responsible for errant airstrikes.10 The coalition’s Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) has investigated airstrikes in which civilians might have been harmed, according to human rights organizations. And while critics have questioned the objectivity of the JIAT process, there appears to be no Houthi equivalent to investigate civilian casualties due to their attacks and no indication of a Houthi official issuing any apology. That suggests that Houthi attacks are not mistakes, but rather a deliberate policy.

**—— Footnotes ——**

10. Stephanie Nebehay, “Saudi Arabia Admits Coalition Mistakes in Targeting in Yemen,” Reuters, October 1, 2008, accessed December 6, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-saudi-children/saudi-arabia- admits-coalition-mistakes-in-targeting-in-yemen-idUSKCN1MB3O4.

#### Cutting off U.S. support for the coalition will make this even worse.

Posey and Phillips 18 — Madyson Hutchinson Posey, Research and Administrative Assistant for Foreign Policy and National Security at The Heritage Foundation, and James Phillips, Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs at The Heritage Foundation, former Research Fellow at the Congressional Research Service, holds an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University, 2018 (“Ending U.S. Military Support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen Would Trigger Dangerous Consequences,” Heritage Foundation Commentary, December 6th, Available Online at <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/ending-us-military-support-saudi-arabia-yemen-would-trigger-dangerous>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

The killing of Khashoggi was certainly abhorrent, but ending U.S. support for the multinational coalition in Yemen is not the proper solution. It risks dangerously conflating two separate issues and would inevitably trigger unintended consequences that would undermine U.S. national security interests in the region.

Senators must remember that Saudi Arabia is not the only belligerent in Yemen. A cutoff of U.S. support would also hurt the elected and internationally recognized government of Yemen, which was ousted by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in 2015 in a bloody coup that violated a U.N.-brokered ceasefire.

Withdrawing U.S. support would also harm the interests of other U.S. allies fighting in Yemen, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The war in Yemen is complex. Those who rush to blame Saudi Arabia entirely for the suffering of the Yemeni people ignore the war crimes and heavy-handed treatment meted out by the Houthis to their opponents and the ruthless role that Iran plays in supporting the Houthi Ansar Allah (“Supporters of Allah”) movement, a Shia Islamist extremist group.

The Saudis are rightly criticized for not doing more to prevent civilian casualties as they target Ansar Allah positions. But the Houthis should not be given a free pass for deliberately targeting civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with increasingly sophisticated Iranian ballistic missiles.

Ansar Allah also deserves criticism for its violent role in destabilizing Yemen and creating the conditions that led to the current humanitarian disaster. Ansar Allah regularly attacks the Saudi border, launches missiles strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and diverts international medical and food aid to favor its own supporters and sell on the black market.

#### Until the Houthis are defeated, it’s impossible to stop the humanitarian crisis.

Hanson 18 — Jim Hanson, President of the Strategic Studies Group, Executive Vice President of the Center for Security Policy, former Weapons Sergeant in the 1st Special Forces Group of the U.S. Army, 2018 (“The Real Stakes in Yemen,” Security Studies Group, September 21st, Available Online at <https://securitystudies.org/the-real-stakes-in-yemen/>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

The US is concerned about innocent lives being at risk in this conflict, and involved in continual efforts to ensure the war in Yemen is prosecuted according the laws of land warfare and that civilian casualties are minimized. But the Houthis bear responsibility for this as well since they regularly commit war crimes by conducting military operations from within civilian zones. For example, if they fire missiles from areas populated by civilians they are responsible if an air strike to destroy the launcher happens to cause collateral damage.

There has also been concern about the humanitarian effects of the war on the civilian population. There is no question that much suffering is happening and we must be part of making sure that is dealt with. It is worth noting the Saudis have been the main supplier of food and other aid to the Yemenis for the past thirty years. This was interrupted when Iran helped start a civil war there by supplying the Houthis with major military hardware. The Houthis have disrupted aid efforts and regularly conduct atrocities against civilians. Their defeat would be a powerful step toward stopping the humanitarian crisis and in the meantime the US and the Saudis are working to get food and other aid to the people.

### They Say: “No Economic Decline Impact”

#### Even if economic downturns don’t usually cause war, the current global context makes it extremely likely.

Singh and Sharma 18 — Atul Singh, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Fair Observer*—a non-profit media organization, Lecturer on Political Economy at the University of California-Berkeley, Visiting Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Member of the Advisory Board for Global and International Studies at Universidad de Salamanca (Spain), holds an MBA from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from the University of Oxford (UK), and Manu Sharma, Political Analyst, holds an MPA in Governance and Policy from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore), 2018 (“Buy Defense Stocks: World War III Might Be Nigh,” *Fair Observer*, November 15th, Available Online at <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/north_america/world-war-iii-could-happen-global-international-security-world-war-news-headlines-32920/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

The Pressure Cooker Is Heating Up

Less than a hundred years ago, the beggar-thy-neighbor of the 1930s ended in World War II. A hundred years after the ceasefire that ended World War I, Chinese economist Qian Liu has queried whether economic crisis could lead to World War III.

These authors agree with Qian’s assessment of the global economy. By flooding global markets with dollars, euros and other currencies, central bankers might have staved off another global depression, but they did not solve any underlying problem. Qian likens this policy to “an adrenaline shot to jump-start an arrested heart; it can revive the patient, but it does nothing to cure the disease.” As Qian rightly points out, thanks to central bankers, global asset prices are higher than those prevailing before 2008 and housing prices in the US are now 8% higher than they were at the peak of the property bubble in 2006. Furthermore, global debt has hit a record high of $247 trillion with little chance of much of it being repaid.

In such a setting, Trump’s economic war with China could have far-reaching consequences. The Middle Kingdom’s export-oriented model and its $34 trillion debt bomb are under severe threat. China’s quarterly growth rate has plunged to a nine-year low of 6.5%, prompting Vice-Premier Liu He to publicly appeal for patience. Chinese stocks have plunged over 30% in 2018 and there are fears of further meltdown. The Middle Kingdom feels besieged by Uncle Sam and has responded by challenging the US Navy in the South China Sea.

India, China’s giant neighbor, is not doing much better. It is facing a massive financial crisis, employment stagnation and a steep decline in private sector investment. A sense of stasis, has overwhelmed the country. Institutions have collapsed in the country, with bitter feuds in its security agencies and various factions of its corrupt and dysfunctional bureaucracy. As China has made inroads in Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, India has behaved like a cat on a hot tin roof and hugged the US closer.

Even as India feels threatened by China, Pakistan is paranoiac about India. Islamabad is knocking on doors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an ominous 13th time. The country is an economic basket case. Socially, religious radicalism is on the rise. Politically, its elite is parasitic and Imran Khan, the charismatic former playboy-turned-anti-corruption crusader, is green behind the ears. The new prime minister has just returned to Islamabad after begging in Beijing, Pakistan’s new patron as Washington’s ardor for its former Cold War ally wanes inexorably. With plenty of weapons and some nuclear weapons floating around, Pakistan could implode or explode in the near future, triggering a regional or even a global war.

Russia, the successor state to Soviet Union, is in disarray. While sanctions have yet to effect macroeconomic stability, its long-term prospects are bleak. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s former adviser, envisages Russia “experiencing the latest convulsive phase of its imperial devolution.” Naturally, Vladimir Putin wants to fight this trend and preserve Russia as a great power. He has struck back at the US in Georgia, Crimea and Syria. Now, he is intervening in the internal matters of western nations. Arguably, Putin’s greatest success has been manipulation of the 2016 American elections.

As one of the authors argued in 2015, the Middle East is experiencing its version of the Thirty Years’ War. Turkey has memories of the Ottoman Empire and aims to emerge as a modern, populist leader of the Muslim world. With its recent revolutionary tradition and military experience, Shia Iran is the most cohesive power in the region. Bush’s Iraq War has allowed Iran to expand the arc of its influence to Iraq even as Iranian influence in places like Lebanon, Syria and Yemen continues to grow. Saudi Arabia neither has the imperial memory nor the military tradition of Turkey or Iran, but the kingdom has plenty of oil money and, in the words of Fair Observer contributor Ian McCredie, a master plan to bring the Middle East under Saudi control. Along with the numerous simmering conflicts in the region, the prospects of an explosive ménage à trois are not exactly remote.

Not only regional powers, but also global powers such as the US, France and Russia are now involved in conflicts or proxy conflicts in places like Libya, Syria and Afghanistan. A back of the envelope calculation reveals that governments representing 25% of the world population are fighting in the Middle East. If we include Afghanistan, this number rises to a worrying 50%. Remember, this figure does not take into account civil wars in Africa, insurgencies in places like the Caucasus or Kashmir, and ridiculous levels of criminal violence in Latin America. It is hardly surprising that there are now 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the highest number since World War II.

If an alien was visiting earth, it would find the world already at war. If that alien wanted to make money, it would buy defense stocks. Demand for guns, bullets, tanks, fighter jets, warships and other matériel will inevitably increase. Like classical economics, the mutually assured destruction doctrine assumes human beings are fundamentally rational and the existence of nuclear weapons will make leaders shy away from World War III. Yet one rogue military commander could fire off chemical or even nuclear weapons, triggering such a war.

In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “Madness is something rare in individuals — but in groups, parties, peoples, and ages, it is the rule.” And we are now living in a big, bad and mad world.

### Saudi Oil Weapon Impact

#### Independently, Saudi Arabia will respond to the plan by cutting oil production.

Ayoob 18 — Mohammed Ayoob, University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations and Coordinator of the Muslim Studies Program at Michigan State University, Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Policy, 2018 (“America and Saudi Arabia in the Wake of the Khashoggi Affair,” *The National Interest*, October 15th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-and-saudi-arabia-wake-khashoggi-affair-33531>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

As a consequence, Riyadh has threatened to retaliate against any punitive measures imposed on it. A statement issued by the Saudi Foreign Ministry on October 14 declared that “The kingdom emphasizes that it will respond to any measure against it with an even stronger measure…The kingdom’s economy has an influential and vital role in the global economy.” While the statement avoided any direct reference to the “oil weapon,” it is clear that that was the subtext of the tough message sent out by the Saudi regime. With oil prices above $80 per barrel and the United States determined to impose severe sanctions on importers of Iranian oil beginning early November, a Saudi decision to cut oil production even by as little as ten percent could send international energy markets into turmoil with oil prices rising well above $100 immediately.

This is a threat that the United States and other industrialized countries, as well as major oil importers such as China and India, must take seriously because given the impetuous nature of the Saudi Crown Prince such a prospect cannot be dismissed easily. It would have sounded incredible a few days ago that a journalist’s disappearance and possible murder in a Turkish city could end up having a major impact both on U.S.-Saudi relations and on the international economy. Ironically, Iran, Saudi Arabia’s and America’s major nemesis, could turn out to be the primary beneficiary of the Khashoggi affair and the consequent downturn in U.S.-Saudi relations and the resultant rise in oil prices.

#### That would destroy the global economy — and MBS isn’t afraid to do it.

Chudley 18 — Jody Chudley, Contributing Analyst to *Lifetime Income Report* and *Contract Income Alert*, holds a degree in finance from Brandon University (Canada), 2018 (“$400 Oil… Is Not That Far-Fetched,” *St. Paul Research*, October 18th, Available Online at <https://stpaulresearch.com/2018/10/18/400-oil-is-not-that-far-fetched/>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

For half a century it has been an act considered completely off limits…

A taboo subject…

Too dangerous to even mention.

Leave it to the world’s most dangerous man to change all of that.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. His father is the actual king, but he is in poor health and everyone knows that the Crown Prince is running the show.

For months now we have been keeping tabs on MBS… Warning you that he is a risk to global stability.

But the reality of how dangerous this man is has never been more apparent than right now.

This past weekend, on Sunday, October 14, 2018, to be exact, the Crown Prince went where his predecessors wouldn’t dare go…

Where the whole world would advise against going…

Through a very thinly veiled threat, MBS told the world that he was willing to use the Kingdom’s ultimate weapon — cutting off access to the vast Saudi oil reserves upon which economies across the planet rely on.

Make no mistake, this weapon is very real. Saudi Arabia is still by a wide margin the largest oil exporter on the planet.1 Yes, we produce a lot of oil in the United States, but we consume all of it and then some.

If Saudi Arabia were to restrict the supply of oil to importing nations, the entire planet would be destabilized.

Don’t think that MBS would ever actually use this weapon?

Then you haven’t been watching the actions of the young prince.

An Impressive List of Misdeeds for Someone So Young

MBS is 33 years old.

With his position at the top of Saudi Arabia, this young man has as much power and wealth as almost anyone on the planet.

But his use of that power and wealth to date does not inspire much confidence in his actions going forward.

The prince came to power promising a new modern age for Saudi Arabia…

An age where human rights were finally respected in Saudi Arabia and barbaric ancient traditions finally left behind…

An age where Saudi corruption would be cleaned up and the oil wealth of the nation used to the benefit of all Saudi people instead of just a royal few.

Those were his words. Though his actions have been much different.

Instead of cleaning up corruption, the prince went on a personal shopping spree. In fact, it may have been the most epic personal shopping spree in the history of mankind.

Using the Saudi oil wealth, the Crown prince purchased for himself:

The world’s most expensive home, paying $300 million for the 54,000 foot Chateau Louis XIV castle in France — a replica of the famous Chateau de Vaux-le-Vicomte.

The world’s most expensive painting, paying $450 million for Leonardo da Vinci’s Salvator Mundi.

The world’s most expensive yacht, paying $500 million for Russian tycoon Yuri Shefler’s 440 foot ship named the Serene.

On the surface these purchases are obscene. Dig deeper and it gets even worse.

He bought all of these things while putting already dirt poor Saudi citizens on an austerity program meant to offset the drop in global oil prices.

He bought all of these things while locking up other members of the Saudi Royal family under the guise of a corruption crackdown which was really a shakedown to further enrich himself.

And he bought all of these things while launching thousands of airstrikes on Yemen and creating the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet…

A crisis where more than 22 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, the entire country is on the edge of famine, and the worst cholera outbreak in modern human history is quickly spreading.

Let’s be real.

This man’s hypocrisy knows no bounds.

Which leads me to believe there is no reason to believe that this man possesses a conscience that would stop him from unleashing the Saudi oil weapon of mass destruction.

Are You Ready For $400 Oil?

Over the past weekend, excerpts of President Trump’s interview with 60 Minutes were leaked.

Included in what was leaked was President Trump saying that Saudi Arabia would face “severe punishment” if the kingdom was found to be behind the disappearance of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The next morning, Riyadh issued through the Saudi Press Agency a rejection of all threats of economic sanctions, political pressure and false accusations, adding that it will respond to any action with “greater action.”2

The “greater action” being the thinly veiled reference to use oil as a weapon.

Just minutes after the Saudi Press Agency released that statement, Turki Al Dakhil, the head of the Saudi state-owned news network (and tight ally with the Royal Court) wrote the following in reference to what the oil weapon could result in:

“If President Trump was angered by $80 oil, nobody should rule out the price jumping to $100 and $200 a barrel or maybe double that figure.”

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out the fact that this article came just minutes after the official press release from Saudi Arabia means that these comments can be connected directly to MBS himself.

And yes, those comments would be a threat of $400 oil. (If that is what double $200 still equals!)

If that were to happen, could you imagine the carnage? It would be a Mad Max film come to life.

As to whether MBS would actually do it?

I certainly don’t know.

But given what he has done so far… how could you rule it out?

## AT: Houthi Victory DA

### 2AC Frontline

#### 1. Plan Decreases Iranian Influence — the Houthis aren’t a proxy for Iran, but the plan weakens Tehran’s influence.

Hartung 19 — William D. Hartung, Director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy, former Senior Research Fellow in the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation, former Director of the Arms Trade Resource Center at the World Policy Institute, 2019 (“It’s Time To Stop Arms Sales To Saudi Arabia,” *LobeLog*—the Inter Press Service’s blog, May 15th, Available Online at <https://lobelog.com/its-time-to-stop-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia/>, Accessed 06-07-2019)

Last but not least is the claim that stopping arms sales to the Saudi/UAE coalition will aid Iran. But the Houthi-led opposition is by no means a proxy for Tehran. They have longstanding grievances that have nothing to do with Iran’s limited military support and would be fighting no matter what posture Iran takes towards the conflict. If anything, the brutal Saudi/UAE intervention is driving the Houthi coalition closer to Tehran. The best way to undercut Iranian influence in Yemen is to support UN efforts to end the war.

#### 2. Plan Key To Peace — it’s impossible for the coalition to win, but the plan builds momentum for a negotiated settlement.

Larison 18 — Daniel Larison, Senior Editor at *The American Conservative*, holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago, 2018 (“The Ridiculous Hawkish Arguments for Supporting the War on Yemen,” *The American Conservative*, March 6th, Available Online at https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-ridiculous-hawkish-arguments-for-supporting-the-war-on-yemen/, Accessed 06-24-2019)

James Jay Carafano must assume that his audience doesn’t know anything about the war on Yemen:

Instead of turning our back on Yemen, the U.S. should focus on ending the war.

If U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition were withdrawn, that would go a long way towards ending the war by making it much more difficult for the coalition to continue waging it. Carafano frames stopping U.S. support for wrecking Yemen as “turning our back on Yemen,” which is about as misleading as can be. The U.S. has been turning its back on the civilian population of Yemen for the last three years by aiding and abetting the governments that have been bombing and starving them. He notably omits any mention of the coalition’s commission of numerous war crimes against the civilian population. The plight of the civilian population created by the coalition blockade is likewise nowhere to be found. If the U.S. were no longer enabling coalition war crimes and collective punishment, that would be the first time in years that our government would be seriously paying attention to the plight of the people of Yemen.

Carafano writes:

America is there for a reason: to keep the region from falling apart. The collapse of any friendly regime there is bad for us.

The first part of this is debatable, but when applied to Yemen it is clearly not true. U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war has been contributing to the country’s fragmentation. The war is causing the country’s devastation and division, and by supporting it the U.S. is encouraging those outcomes. There is no “friendly regime” in Yemen to be defended. The Hadi government has no legitimacy in the eyes of most Yemenis and has virtually no support anywhere in the country, and the coalition’s goal of reimposing him on Yemen will never be reached.

Helping the Saudis and their allies to pummel and starve a country that has done nothing to us is what is bad for the U.S. In addition to making ourselves complicit in terrible crimes and famine, U.S. support for this war has created conditions in which Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the local ISIS affiliate have been flourishing. Backing the Saudi-led war on Yemen is harmful to U.S. interests and a shameful blot on our national reputation.

Carafano gets something else profoundly wrong:

The greatest threats to Middle East stability and security are Iran and transnational Islamist terrorists groups, principally the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. And it is precisely these forces that are fueling the Yemen war.

That is undoubtedly what the Saudis and Emiratis would have us believe, but it is simply not true. In Yemen, these are not the greatest threats to security and stability. Iran’s involvement has been and remains limited, and it is a gross exaggeration to say that their involvement is what is “fueling the Yemen war” when the coalition’s role in keeping the war going is a hundred times greater. Jihadist groups are benefiting from the instability and upheaval created by the war, but they are not the driving forces behind it. AQAP and ISIS are exploiting the situation for their own ends, but the war continues because the coalition insists on continuing it. The longer that the U.S. provides them with military assistance, the longer it will be before they acknowledge that their intervention has failed.

Carafano makes another misleading statement:

If Congress forces the administration to abandon our allies, Tehran, Islamic State group and al-Qaida would feel emboldened and likely double-down on expanding the war.

There is no reason to think any of this is true. First, these governments aren’t really our allies, and calling them that creates the impression that we owe them something when we do not. AQAP and ISIS have gained strength since the coalition intervened because the Saudi-led war has diverted attention and resources away from combating them. When the Saudi-led war ends, those groups should have a harder time operating. Cutting off U.S. support does not risk “expanding the war” at all. On the contrary, it will pressure the coalition governments to curtail their interference in Yemen and create an opening for a diplomatic solution. It is telling that hawkish defenses of U.S. involvement in this war rely on thoroughly misrepresenting the nature of the conflict.

The U.S. absolutely should “drive the other players toward a peaceful political settlement.” The first step in doing that is to stop being a party to the war and to end our military backing for the governments that have done so much damage to the country.

#### 3. Coalition Withdrawal Solves — Houthi attacks are reactionary.

Bandow 18 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2018 (“It's Time to End U.S. Support for the Saudi War on Yemen,” *The National Interest*, May 15th, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/the-skeptics/america-should-see-saudi-arabias-war-yemen-the-horror-it-25838, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Secretary Mattis claimed that ending U.S. combat support would allow the Houthis to use ballistic missiles to threaten “vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea.” Alleged proof of this was an earlier Houthi missile attack on an American warship. That attack led other administration officials to express concern about navigational freedom, especially in the Bab-el-Mandeb waterway.

But Yemenis attacked the U.S. vessel because Washington is helping their killers, Saudi Arabia. Before this war, Houthis did not target Americans and they had no reason to. In peace the Yemenis rely on Gulf trade and they would never want to impede it. Yet now the Saudi-led coalition has blockaded Yemen and its access to the Gulf. By internationalizing the war Riyadh has also internationalized the weapons. As U.S. Vice Admiral Kevin Donegan complained and noted, previously “there was no explosive boat that existed in the Yemeni inventory.”

#### 4. No Strait Closure Impact — disruptions and price spikes would be minimal.

Cornell 19 — Phillip Cornell, Non-Resident Scholar in Energy and Foreign Policy at the Arabia Foundation, Non-Resident Senior Fellow in the Global Energy Center at the Atlantic Council, former Senior Corporate Planning Advisor to the Chairman and CEO of Saudi Aramco, former Special Advisor to the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, holds an M.A. in International Economics and European Studies from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, 2019 (“Gulf Military Tensions and Oil Supply Security,” Arabia Foundation, May 14th, Available Online at <https://www.arabiafoundation.org/saudi-arabia-the-gulf-states/gulf-military-tensions-and-oil-supply-security/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

Oil prices are already up after Washington’s decision last month not to renew Iran sanction waivers and amid signs that few if any shipments are leaving Iranian ports. In an already tightening market, current military tensions are likely to push these prices higher. It is still unclear whether the purported tanker attacks near Fujairah on May 12 are linked to Iran, but the subsequent media battle, the misreporting, and the 2 percent increase in oil price all demonstrate how sensitive the political situation and oil prices are to regional posturing. The price response is a function of the risk of conflict, its potential impact on oil exports, and the military and oil policy scenarios that may develop as a result around one of the most critical choke points in the global oil supply chain.

Around 18 percent of global oil demand (or 18 million barrels per day [mb/d]) flows through the Strait of Hormuz at the twenty-one-mile-wide entrance to the Persian Gulf. When formulating energy security strategy at NATO in the late 2000s, we focused on international shipping lanes around choke points like Hormuz because of their vulnerability to piracy, accidents, and strategic conflict.

But the risk is not really that Iran will block the strait; the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain should quickly neutralize any attempt to do that. Increased maritime hazard would more likely occur as a result of mines, rocket fire, or even sabotage affecting insurance rates and shipping schedules. The Fujairah attacks could be a sign of things to come. Yet under conditions of such sporadic threat, transit volumes would probably not decline significantly, even if tankers were eventually subject to naval escort timetables. During the height of the “tanker war” in the mid-1980s when Iran targeted oil exports to cripple Iraq, only 2 percent of shipments were disrupted. Experience shows that despite higher-risk premiums, insurers will continue to cover ships and cargos, and sailors will continue to sail.

Recent tanker attacks and diversions on the other end of Arabia near the Bab al-Mandeb strait show that Iran’s regional proxies and allies can also affect shipments. Some ships veered farther from the Yemeni shore after a Saudi tanker was hit in 2018, but only Saudi Aramco stopped transiting the area. If these kinds of proxy attacks on vessels are stepped up, for example in the Persian Gulf, then in the absence of direct conflict the United States and its allies could find themselves in the awkward position of facing shadow saboteurs without a fixed target to retaliate against. But supplies will continue to flow.

The more serious risk of oil supply disruption probably comes from attacks on export infrastructure, perhaps by Iranian proxies in Iraq, and particularly if Iran targets Saudi installations on the opposite shore. A May 13 Houthi drone attack on an East-West pipeline pumping station shows how cheap UAVs can now reach far into the country, even if their impact is limited. Saudi Arabia exports about 7 mb/d, most of this via its main Persian Gulf ports of Ras Tanura (3.4 mb/d capacity) and Ras al-Ju’aymah (3 mb/d capacity). Both ports, as well as oil stabilization towers at Abqaiq, are well within range of Iranian missiles.

A direct attack would represent a major escalation, but the impact could be significant. A 2011 Belfer Center study calculated that it would require thirteen hundred Shahab-type missiles to achieve a 75 percent probability (with Patriot missile defense attrition) of knocking out Abqaiq and thousands to knock out an entire port. At the time of the study, Iran only had about four hundred of these missiles. But the Iranian missile program continued, unrestrained even by the JCPOA, and antiradar homing technology on the modern Fateh-110’s has increased their lethality. Whether or not installations are seriously damaged, the presence of falling missiles would cause the evacuation of personnel and at least partial shut-in of the facility for the duration of the attack itself (which may be spread over days or weeks).

If all of Abqaiq’s 7 mb/d capacity were taken offline, either by damage or shut-in, Saudi Arabian exports could fall by more than 3.5 mb/d. Without a functioning wharf at Ras Tanura, other ports and the East-West pipeline to the Red Sea could still export upwards of 9 mb/d, so exports might fall by about 1 mb/d.

Such a supply disruption would likely prompt a strategic oil stock release coordinated by the International Energy Agency (IEA). At the IEA in 2010, we developed stock release simulations around possible instability in the region. Supplies would comfortably be covered by existing strategic oil stocks, particularly over a thirty- to ninety-day release period when facilities might be shut in because of an ongoing safety threat.

In the lower-probability case of significant infrastructure damage, longer-term outages can result when specialized repair parts are not readily available. Saudi Aramco has worked to develop redundancy and flexibility in the repair supply chain to improve resiliency, in part by fostering technologies like on-site 3-D printing, but some of these technologies are still in development. A six- to fifteen-month repair time is “in the midrange” of past repair experiences. Even in a relatively extreme case, a 1 mb/d to 4 mb/d disruption would not come close to depleting IEA strategic stocks—the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) alone holds 650 million barrels.

Oil prices will certainly spike if the threatened attack on oil exports from the Persian Gulf materializes. But in terms of volume, those exports are resilient because for the right price ships will continue to sail; spare capacity and redundancies exist for most oil facilities; repair times are improving; and international strategic oil stocks provide insurance against the most extreme scenarios.

#### 5. No Oil Shock Impact — increased U.S. production and decreased global demand cushion the blow.

Reed 19 — Stanley Reed, Energy, Environment, and Middle East Reporter at *The New York Times*, former London Bureau Chief at *BusinessWeek* magazine, 2019 (“The Oil Market Shows It Can Take a Punch,” *New York Times*, June 21st, Available Online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/business/oil-prices-us-iran.html>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

So far, this isn’t your typical oil crisis.

Previous moments of tension in the Persian Gulf region, like Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, once caused a major kink in oil supplies, igniting spikes in prices. After all, the Gulf provides around a third of the world’s oil, and much of that crude passes through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, which has recently been a target of attacks on tankers.

But this week the response in the oil markets to the tensions following Iran’s shooting down of an American drone has seemed muted — even to the surprise of some participants. Analysts say this could stem from profound changes that have occurred in oil markets in recent years.

Production in the United States has risen significantly. America has become an oil exporter, sharply reducing its purchases of oil from the Middle East, although that region remains the world’s largest source of oil overall.

Another change this time around: The world’s demand for oil is growing at a slower pace. One cause for this drop-off is that world economic growth is slowing, partly over concerns about the trade war between the two largest economies — the United States and China. But another, more permanent reason is the slow pivot away from fossil fuels as a source of energy.

Certainly, the tensions in the Gulf could escalate quickly. But oil markets have evolved, changing the calculus for risk in the region.

Persian Gulf tension is having an impact

Oil prices have moved higher, although modestly, the last few days. The price for brent crude, the international standard, has risen about 5.8 percent since the drone was shot down, trading at about $65 a barrel Friday morning. But the recent high was about $72 a barrel in mid-May.

Oil tanker companies, worried about the safety of their crews, say they are concerned about operating in the area. With so much business coming from shipping oil out of the Persian Gulf, the companies would be very reluctant to pull out of the region entirely.

“The general area of the Strait of Hormuz represents a real and very serious risk to shipping,” Robert Macleod, chief executive of Frontline, an Oslo-based tanker company, wrote in an email. “Ships must continue to passage the area but all precautions must be put in place.”

A Frontline tankers, the Front Altair, was one of two tankers in the Gulf of Oman attacked on June 13.

Tanker charter rates have ticked up substantially over the last week, hitting about $28,000 a day for chartering the largest class of tankers. Insurance premiums for shipping in the area have also risen. If anything, though, tanker operators have been disappointed that prices have not risen even higher; in late 2018, the operators were able to charge about $50,000 a day.

“Rates have increased some, though not as much as many had thought or even hoped for,” wrote Fearnleys, an Oslo-based ship broker, in a report published on Wednesday.

Traders may be shrugging off the threat of disruptions in the Gulf knowing that a shortage could be made up by surging supplies from the United States.

A boom in oil and natural gas production in the United States in recent years, driven mainly by shale drilling, has shaken up world oil markets and revived the United States as a petroleum power. That trend is expected to continue.

Oil production in the United States grew by an extraordinary 17 percent last year, and natural gas output was up by 12 percent. In the last decade, the United States has added roughly six million barrels of oil a day, the equivalent of the combined production of the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, two stalwarts of the Organization for the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Canada, too, has seen its oil output surge, up 8.5 percent last year.

The explosive growth has weakened OPEC’s hold on the oil markets and cut gasoline prices sharply around the world, as supplies from the United States make their way into circulation. Under pressure, OPEC and Russia have joined forces in coordinating production cuts, but they have not been able to restore prices to the $100-a-barrel levels of 2014.

Traders know that because OPEC and Russia are keeping oil in the ground, there are large volumes of additional oil that could be unleashed on the market.

The pace of world oil demand is slowing

The oil market’s tame response so far to the threats of disruption has surprised some analysts. Others, though, point to fears about the world economy, and say that signs are emerging that growth in demand for oil, which had been strong in recent years, is sharply easing.

The research firm IHS Markit concluded recently that some major markets were experiencing an actual contraction in demand for oil, “the largest such decline since the worst of the financial crisis” of 2008.

Analysts say that if a weaker global economy continues to soften demand for oil, then relentlessly increasing supplies from the United States and elsewhere may swamp the markets.

“As long as growth held up, you could absorb all the growth of U.S. supply,” said Roger Diwan, vice president for energy at IHS Markit. “Now with weaker demand, the global supply growth is going to overwhelm global demand growth,” he added.

What if oil shipments were cut off?

It is important to keep in mind that there has been no actual disruption of oil flows from the Gulf region.

But a major episode might well roil the markets. Analysts say that it would be very difficult to replace a large portion of the 21 million barrels or so of oil that flows through the Strait of Hormuz on an average day.

A major disruption would likely do the most damage to Asian economies. According to the United States Energy Information Administration, a government agency, 76 percent of the crude oil that flowed out of the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz went to Asian markets like China, India and Japan.

But a cutoff of supplies would not be in the interest of any of the countries in the region, including Iran, which still exports what oil it can through the Gulf. Oil provides a vital source of revenue for many governments in the region.

The United States has shown in the past that it is willing to go to great lengths to keep the sea lanes open. In the 1980s, for instance, after dozens of ships were damaged during the conflict between Iraq and Iran, navy vessels from the United States and other countries escorted tankers through the area. This time around, the United States might seek help from other oil importing countries like China and Japan.

#### 6. Case Outweighs — a shipping lane doesn’t justify the ongoing slaughter of civilians.

Hunt 18 — Edward Hunt, Freelance Writer covering war and empire, holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from the College of William and Mary, 2018 (“As More Yemenis Die, U.S. Support Keeps a Major Oil Trade Route ‘Open for Business’,” *The Progressive*, September 19th, Available Online at <https://progressive.org/dispatches/yemenis-die-major-oil-trade-route-remains-open-180919/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

As the Trump Administration continues to support the vicious Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, growing evidence indicates that its support is largely motivated by concerns about the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a narrow sea passage off Yemen’s western coast.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait is one of the three most important oil trade chokepoints—narrow channels along widely used global sea routes—around the Arabian Peninsula. Although its place in the war has been largely ignored by the U.S. media, the strait has been a central factor in U.S. planning. Roughly five million barrels of oil and oil-based products pass through the strait on a daily basis, eventually making their way to Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Publicly, Trump Administration officials say very little about the strait, insisting they are simply looking for a way to end the war. They claim to be focused on helping the Saudi-led military coalition pressure Iranian-backed Houthi rebels into accepting a political deal that will return to power the government of exiled Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.

Yet over the past year, Trump officials and analysts have repeatedly prioritized the strait in both strategic and military planning.

A recent report by the Congressional Research Service, for example, includes a section titled “Houthi threaten Commercial Shipping in the Red Sea.” The report, which maps the world’s major oil chokepoints, highlights the 4.8 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum liquids that passed through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on a daily basis in 2016.

The war in Yemen began in March 2015, when a Saudi-led military coalition attacked the Houthi rebels, who had taken over the western part of the country. Since the beginning of the intervention, the U.S. government supported the Saudi-led coalition with military advice, intelligence support, precision-guided munitions, and air-to-air refueling.

This has been devastating for the people of Yemen. The U.S.-backed Saudi-led coalition has killed thousands of civilians and caused a humanitarian crisis. More than 8 million people are facing starvation, more than 1 million people have contracted cholera, and more than 2,000 people have died of cholera.

“I’ve argued from the beginning that there is a U.S. imprint on every single civilian death inside Yemen,” Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, has said. “I don’t think the Saudis would be conducting this level of atrocity if not for the support from the United States.” Additional U.S. officials have accused the U.S. government of complicity in both the killings of civilians and the humanitarian crisis.

While the Trump Administration claims it is trying to end the conflict, its officials are clearly worried that a Houthi-led government will make it more difficult for oil tankers and other ships to pass through the area.

U.S. General Joseph Votel, the Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) warned Congress in February that sixty to seventy ships pass through the strait every day, making any disruption “a very real threat that we have to pay attention to.” A month later, he told Congress that it was a priority for CENTCOM to keep the shipping lanes open. “We are principally focused on the ballistic missile threat and the maritime threat that plays out in the Bab el-Mandeb and in the Red Sea to the west of Yemen,” he said.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis has raised similar concerns, warning that shipping would be imperiled if “we don’t get this under control.”

The Trump Administration’s concerns are consistent with broader U.S. strategic priorities for the Middle East. President Trump has repeatedly mused about the possibility of taking the region’s oil, and establishment officials have voiced their commitments to keeping the region’s oil available to global oil markets.

About a year ago, former U.S. diplomat Eric Edelman told Congress that any disruptions in the global oil supply could be problematic for the U.S. economy. “This is especially true of the Middle East, which contains half of global proven oil reserves, accounts for one-third of oil production and exports, and is home to three of the world’s four biggest oil transit chokepoints,” he explained.

In July, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the Trump Administration would prevent disruptions. “The world should know that America is committed to keeping sea lanes open, to keep transit of oil available for the entire world,” he said.

These intentions clarify the reasons behind the Trump Administration’s military support for the Saudi-led coalition. The administration appears to prioritize the sliver of sea off the western coast of Yemen, where much of the region’s oil remains in transit.

Its support continues despite a recent spate of horrors, including deadly attacks on a fish market, a school bus, and fleeing civilians.

“The Bab el-Mandeb is open for business, as far as we're concerned,” General Votel recently remarked. “One of our key missions here is to ensure freedom of navigation, freedom of commerce, and we will continue to exercise that through the region.”

By prioritizing the security of the Bab el-Mandeb strait for oil transit, the Trump Administration ensures that the war will continue and that the Yemeni people will continue to die.

#### 7. No Economic Decline Impact — strong disincentives still prevent war.

Jervis 11 — Robert Jervis, Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics in the Department of Political Science and School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, former President of the American Political Science Association, holds a Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley, 2011 (“Force in Our Times,” *International Relations*, Volume 25, Number 4, December, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Sage Journals, p. 414)

Even if war is still seen as evil, the security community could be dissolved if severe conflicts of interest were to arise. Could the more peaceful world generate new interests that would bring the members of the community into sharp disputes?45 A zero-sum sense of status would be one example, perhaps linked to a steep rise in nationalism. More likely would be a worsening of the current economic difficulties, which could itself produce greater nationalism, undermine democracy and bring back old-fashioned beggar-my-neighbor economic policies. While these dangers are real, it is hard to believe that the conflicts could be great enough to lead the members of the community to contemplate fighting each other. It is not so much that economic interdependence has proceeded to the point where it could not be reversed – states that were more internally interdependent than anything seen internationally have fought bloody civil wars. Rather it is that even if the more extreme versions of free trade and economic liberalism become discredited, it is hard to see how without building on a preexisting high level of political conflict leaders and mass opinion would come to believe that their countries could prosper by impoverishing or even attacking others. Is it possible that problems will not only become severe, but that people will entertain the thought that they have to be solved by war? While a pessimist could note that this argument does not appear as outlandish as it did before the financial crisis, an optimist could reply (correctly, in my view) that the very fact that we have seen such a sharp economic down-turn without anyone suggesting that force of arms is the solution shows that even if bad times bring about greater economic conflict, it will not make war thinkable.

### \*\*\*\*Extensions\*\*\*\*

### Extend: “Plan Decreases Iranian Influence”

#### Ending the war is the best way to contain Iranian influence — their impact is not unique.

Reisener 19 — Matthew Reisener, Program Associate at the Center for the National Interest, 2019 (“America Must Question Ally Actions in Yemen,” *The National Interest*, February 23rd, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/middle-east-watch/america-must-question-ally-actions-yemen-45112, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Ironically, Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the conflict seems to be have strengthened the positions of the forces it sought to oppose. At an event hosted by the Center for the National Interest last December, Daniel Byman of the Brookings Institute argued that while Iran offered limited support to the Houthis during the early stages of the conflict, the ties between the two Shia forces have deepened as a result of Saudi intervention, strengthening Iran’s position on the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, in addition to benefiting from increased access to American-made weaponry, terror groups like Al Qaeda have capitalized on the chaos brought about by the near-collapse of the Yemeni state and solidified their foothold in the war-torn country. The longer the conflict rages and the more American-made bombs are dropped on civilians, the easier it becomes for groups like the Houthis and Al Qaeda to recruit new generations of militants into their ranks. The Saudi campaign has become self-defeating.

#### The Houthis aren’t Iranian proxies — they’re trying to bleed the coalition, not take over Yemen.

Pillar 18 — Paul R. Pillar, Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Center for Security Studies and former Visiting Professor in the Security Studies Program at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institution, served for 28 years in the U.S. intelligence community including as the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia and as a Member of the Analytic Group at the National Intelligence Council, holds a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University, 2018 (“Why Does the U.S. Support War Crimes in Yemen?,” *The National Interest*, September 5th, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/paul-pillar/why-does-us-support-war-crimes-yemen-30572, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Fixation on Iran

Obsessions are never a sound basis for policy. The U.S. obsession with Iran drives the current U.S. policy on Yemen. Iran has given aid to the Houthis, and the U.S. urge—which the Trump administration exhibits to an extreme—is to oppose anyone and anything with a connection to Iran, and to support anyone opposing Iran.

This obsession, like others, muddies perceptions and thinking about where threats really lie. Although the Houthis commonly are described as Iranian proxies, they aren’t, notwithstanding how glad they may be to accept Iranian aid. The most significant thing the Houthis have done during this war—their capture of the capital city of Sana—they did against Iran’s advice.

Therefore, American policy with such unfortunate roots also may be counterproductive. Yemen is not a critical theater for the Iranians, but their modest aid to the Houthi movement has been a low-cost way of making their Saudi rivals bleed. The more that the regime of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman seems distracted and flummoxed by its misadventure in Yemen, the more incentive Iran has to keep encouraging the bleeding. This U.S. administration is a part of this mess because it is waging economic warfare against Iran and aiming to destabilize its regime. America also shares in the Saudis' international infamy that is documented in the U.N. report—and gives Iran even more incentive to encourage the conflict.

#### Iranian influence is strong now despite U.S. support for the coalition.

Reisener 19 — Matthew Reisener, Program Associate at the Center for the National Interest, 2019 (“America Must Question Ally Actions in Yemen,” *The National Interest*, February 23rd, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/middle-east-watch/america-must-question-ally-actions-yemen-45112, Accessed 06-24-2019)

This strategy is certainly not without risk; ending American participation and undercutting Saudi and Emirati efforts in Yemen’s civil war could result in greater Iranian empowerment through the success of the Houthis or could, as former Defense Secretary James Mattis warned, result in the loss of civilian life if Saudi Arabia continues its bombing campaigns absent the support of American intelligence or targeting assistance. However, both of these scenarios are happening now even with America’s involvement, and Saudi-led efforts to broker a political settlement could only stand to improve the deteriorating conditions on the ground. American military support has proven insufficient to prevent Iranian influence from spreading into Yemen or spare civilians from the horrors of the conflict, and there is no reason to suspect that continuing these failing policies will eventually bring about a different end.

#### By extending the war, U.S. arms sales increase Iranian influence.

Larison 19 — Daniel Larison, Senior Editor at *The American Conservative*, holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago, 2019 (“Trump’s Bogus ‘Emergency’ and the War on Yemen,” *The American Conservative*, May 28th, Available Online at <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/trumps-bogus-emergency-and-the-war-on-yemen/>, Accessed 06-07-2019)

Like clockwork, The Wall Street Journal editors rush to defend Trump’s outrageous abuse of power to send weapons to the Saudis and Emiratis in defiance of Congressional opposition:

Every decision Mr. Trump makes these days is supposedly a constitutional crisis, but in this case the President is relying on a provision in the Arms Export Control Act that allows for sales in the event of an emergency.

By abusing his power with this decision, Trump is making a mockery of the emergency provision contained in the law. He is doing what he wants when there is no emergency that could possibly justify it. Whenever there is an emergency or national security loophole contained in the law, Trump exploits it to take actions that Congress would otherwise block. It is obviously a cynical abuse of an exception that was intended to be used only in extraordinary situations. Nothing has happened that supports Trump’s action on these arms sales, and by pressing ahead with these sales the president is making every effort to ensure that the U.S. continues to be an accomplice in the slaughter of innocent people.

The weapons that the U.S. sells to the Saudis and the UAE won’t be used to defend against a supposed Iranian threat, and they won’t be used for deterrence. We know very well that the Saudi and Emirati governments will use the weapons they obtain from the U.S. to continue waging an atrocious war against Yemen, and those weapons will very likely end up being used to kill civilians as so many other U.S.-made weapons have been. Trump is helping to fuel Saudi coalition aggression against a poor country that they have been wrecking and starving for more than four years. This will not avert a war with Iran, but it will help to keep the war on Yemen going. That means that the Saudis and Emiratis will continue to be bogged down in a war they can’t win, and Iran’s limited influence in Yemen will continue to grow. As usual, Iran hawks’ preferred policies do nothing to reduce Iranian influence, and instead they help to increase it by fighting reckless, unwinnable wars that Iran can exploit to its own advantage.

#### The Houthis aren’t closes allies with Iran.

Zigismund 18 — Michael Zigismund, Associate Attorney at the Law Offices of Robert Tsigler—a New York City immigration law firm, holds a J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University, 2018 (“The United States Should Leave Yemen, Not Broker Peace,” *The National Interest*, November 18th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/middle-east-watch/united-states-should-leave-yemen-not-broker-peace-36252>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

The Houthi rebels are considered, at least by the Saudis, to be an Iranian client, like Hezbollah in Lebanon. Since 1979, U.S. analysts have considered Iran to be uniquely destabilizing, anti-Western, and a sponsor of terrorism. American strategists have grown increasingly wary of Iranian influence in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria over the past two decades. Because it’s located at the significant meeting point of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, the idea of losing Yemen to Iran is bound to worry any American defense official.

America’s anti-Iranian tradition has been amplified under the Trump administration. After all, Donald Trump rose to power arguing that the prior administration’s nuclear deal with Iran was the “worst deal ever.” Add to this the fact that U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Israel are regional rivals against Iran, and the idea of countering Iranian influence among Houthis in Yemen becomes a no-brainer. The administration is now even contemplating designating the Houthis as terrorists.

But this logic assumes a robust Iranian-Houthi alliance. At best, however, they’re allies of convenience against their common Saudi enemy. After all, Iranian support for the Houthis was limited until after Saudi Arabia’s offensive. Further, the group’s religious connection is only skin-deep: Zaydi Shiism, which Houthis practice, diverges significantly from the Twelver Shiism that most Iranians practice.

#### There’s no threat of an Iranian “empire.”

Bandow 18 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2018 (“Why America Should Say No to an Arab NATO,” *The National Interest*, November 26th, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/skeptics/why-america-should-say-no-arab-nato-37162, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Moreover, against the U.S. administration’s claims, Tehran doesn’t even seriously threaten its neighbors. Only in the nightmares of administration hawks and their friends in Riyadh is Iran on the march. The latter’s economy is a wreck, ruling regime is unstable, its military is weak, its allies are pitiful, and international friends are sparse. Talk of some sort of empire including unstable Iraq, divided Lebanon, ravaged Syria, and the nightmare of Yemen is a parody of serious analysis. Forgetting his talking points during an interview, even MbS dismissed Tehran’s potential: “Iran is not a rival to Saudi Arabia. Its army is not among the top five armies in the Muslim world. The Saudi economy is larger than the Iranian economy. Iran is far from being equal to Saudi Arabia.”

### Extend: “Plan Key To Peace”

#### Coalition withdrawal won’t lead to Houthi victory, but it will cause a political settlement.

Larison 19 — Daniel Larison, Senior Editor at *The American Conservative*, holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago, 2019 (“The Disgraceful Case for Increasing U.S. Support for the War on Yemen,” *The American Conservative*, May 2nd, Available Online at <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-disgraceful-case-for-increasing-u-s-support-for-the-war-on-yemen/>, Accessed 06-14-2019)

The authors suggest that cutting off the Saudi coalition would lead to a total Houthi victory. That is doubtful, and they are relying on this scenario to try to scare their audience into going along with their awful recommendation. None of the warring parties has been able to win outright, and a withdrawal of the Saudi coalition from the war would allow for a political settlement among Yemenis that isn’t possible as long as the Saudis and Emiratis keep trying to impose their proxies on the country. The authors tendentiously claim that Congressional pressure on the Saudi coalition has encouraged the Houthis, but the reality is that U.N.-led peace negotiations have made more progress in the last six months since the Senate first voted to end U.S. involvement than they made in the previous three and a half years. It is regrettable that it took Congress so long to do the right thing, because we have already seen the positive effect that sustained criticism of the coalition can have.

#### The turn is unique — the Houthis are dug in now.

Horton 19 — Michael Horton, Fellow for Arabian Affairs at the Jamestown Foundation, Contributor to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, *The National Interest*, and *The Economist*, 2019 (“Saudi Arabia is Losing the War in Yemen,” *The American Conservative*, March 28th, Available Online at <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/saudi-arabia-is-losing-the-war-in-yemen/>, Accessed 06-25-2019)

As the war in Yemen marks the end of its fourth year this week, it is clear that, with the aid and complicity of the United States and United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have savaged an impoverished country. Yemen’s infrastructure has been laid waste to, as has some of its most productive farmland. The result has been the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet.

Yet despite this destruction, Yemen has turned into Saudi Arabia’s Vietnam. Ditto for the UAE. The two countries have sunk billions of dollars and countless troops and mercenaries into what has become a quagmire of catastrophic proportions. What they had hoped would be a decisively quick war has turned into an albatross, with the rest of the world now questioning their motivations and urging their Western helpmates to withdraw support immediately.

The overt reason for Saudi and Emirati involvement is to defeat the Houthi rebels, a Zaidi Shia group with deep roots in Yemen. Yet this hasn’t been achieved. The two Gulf States claim that the Houthis are proxies for Iran, but it has become increasingly clear that they are fiercely independent, and while they receive limited aid from Tehran, they do not take orders.

Saudi and Emirati leaders would do well to learn from Yemen’s 2,000-year history of draining the blood and coffers of imperial and lesser powers. The Yemenis defeated the Romans, the Ottoman Turks twice, and evicted the British in 1967. They also defeated the Egyptians who invaded in 1962. Much like the U.S. in Vietnam more than 40 years ago and more recently in Afghanistan, the goliath invaders are fighting a war of attrition, bleeding their resources, and losing whatever moral and political authority they might have had in the process.

But were they ever being honest about their real intentions in Yemen? Saudi Arabia and the UAE have armed and supported a mushrooming number of Yemeni militias and factions, some of which have ties to al-Qaeda. These policies have purposefully turned Yemen into a patchwork of warring fiefdoms. This is because the covert purpose of the “intervention” has less to do with perceived Iranian influence than it does with securing access to Yemen’s strategic real estate and its natural resources. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are engaged in a neo-colonial war for power, resources, and territory. The two countries, which are increasingly in competition with one another, are trying to carve Yemen up into spheres of influence.

Because it has a slightly more competent mercenary army, the UAE has the lead over Saudi Arabia in this regard. It’s set up military bases throughout southern Yemen where it supports separatists of various stripes who want everything from an independent south Yemen to an Islamic emirate. Not content with just occupying the mainland, the UAE has also established bases on the once pristine Yemeni island of Socotra—a UNESCO world heritage site—and the island of Perim.

Saudi Arabia is playing catch-up with its ally and is laying claim to the governorate of al-Mahra in eastern Yemen. There, Riyadh hopes to build a pipeline that will allow it to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. However, as in other parts of Yemen, the people are fighting to stop what many view as a land grab by a foreign power. Residents of al-Mahra protested the construction of a Saudi-funded madrassa that would have undoubtedly used Saudi schoolbooks, the same schoolbooks that were used by the Islamic State. Residents are also blocking the construction of a Saudi military base.

Both countries have much to learn from America’s costly misadventures after 9/11. Despite fielding the world’s most capable armed forces and spending several trillion dollars, the U.S. failed to achieve its aims in Iraq or Afghanistan, a country that is in many respects similar to Yemen. In Iraq, the invasion destroyed much of that country and paved the way for the rise of the Islamic State, as well as driving Baghdad into Iran’s open arms. In both nations, new and deadlier strains of extremism grew out of the power vacuums that were created.

The war in Yemen will have similar results. By continuing to fight the Houthis, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are paradoxically strengthening their enemies and providing Iran with more fertile ground for its influence operations. The Houthis are superb fighters, but have shown less competence with regard to governance. The war and Saudi and Emirati airstrikes have enhanced the Houthis’ legitimacy by allowing them to do what they do best: fight.

It may be years before Yemen is a unified country with a functioning government again. In fact, Yemen may never again be unified. However, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are unlikely to ever see a return on their investment. Even a cursory reading of Yemen’s history would have told them this. And failing that, an examination of America’s failed wars should have dissuaded them from becoming involved in the first place.

### Extend: “Coalition Withdrawal Solves”

#### Houthi attacks would end if a peace agreement was reached.

Pillar 18 — Paul R. Pillar, Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Center for Security Studies and former Visiting Professor in the Security Studies Program at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institution, served for 28 years in the U.S. intelligence community including as the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia and as a Member of the Analytic Group at the National Intelligence Council, holds a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University, 2018 (“Why Does the U.S. Support War Crimes in Yemen?,” *The National Interest*, September 5th, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/paul-pillar/why-does-us-support-war-crimes-yemen-30572, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Neither does the administration's policy toward the Yemeni war accord with a realist perspective of where U.S. interests in the area do and do not lie. The United States does not have a stake in the outcome of civil warfare in Yemen. The Houthi rebellion is rooted in very local issues involving what the Houthis contend has been insufficient central government attention to the interests of tribal elements in the north of the country. Nor do the Houthis pose more than a trivial threat to anyone else in the region. Although the Trump administration and Saudi Arabia have made a big deal about missiles that the Houthis have fired at Saudi Arabia, those firings are pinpricks compared to the aerial assault in the other direction for which the rockets have been an attempt at retaliation. Missiles would not be launched if the Saudis and Emiratis had never launched their destructive expedition.

An end to U.S. military aid to the Saudi-Emirati war effort would encourage the Saudis and Emiratis to find ways to extricate themselves from their quagmire and to attempt to sponsor a Yemeni peace settlement rather than an indefinite war.

#### Ending the war would end Houthi attacks — they’re responses to the coalition’s invasion.

Bandow 19 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2019 (“U.S. Support Has Fueled, Not Moderated, the Yemen War,” *The National Interest*, May 19th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/skeptics/us-support-has-fueled-not-moderated-yemen-war-58097>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Fourth, the Kingdom’s claim of self-defense is a contemptible attempt to turn its initial aggression into a bootstrap argument. The Houthis only recently began launching missiles against Saudi Arabia, after years of coalition bombing. Bizarrely, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisted that America was aiding the Saudis because Houthi missiles aimed at the airport in Riyadh might hurt an American: “the United States has an obligation to protect our citizens.” But there were no missiles flying when the KSA launched its attack and America intervened on the royals’ behalf. Moreover, ending the war would ground the missiles.

#### The Houthis aren’t a threat — attacks are only retaliation.

Bandow 19 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2019 (“U.S. Support Has Fueled, Not Moderated, the Yemen War,” *The National Interest*, May 19th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/skeptics/us-support-has-fueled-not-moderated-yemen-war-58097>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Even the Republican-controlled Senate turned against the war, joining the House in voting to end U.S. involvement. However, enough Republicans stood with the administration to sustain the president’s veto. Administration arguments for continuing participation in the conflict ranged among unbelievable, contemptible, and risible. For instance, that Washington is not involved militarily: tell that to Yemenis who have died from U.S.-made bombs delivered by U.S.-built planes refueled and guided by U.S. military personnel.

Another was that Houthi control would threaten the Kingdom, the Persian Gulf, and America. This indigenous religious/political movement is far less radical than Wahhabism, the variant of Islamic fundamentalism lavishly promoted by Riyadh across the globe, including in Yemen. The Houthis spent years battling Saleh before joining with him against a common enemy, Hadi (and then the coalition). They never waged war on the United States, KSA, or anyone else. Missile attacks were retaliation for military aggression by the Kingdom, following years of ravaging air attacks on Yemen.

### Extend: “No Economic Decline Impact”

#### Data about the Great Recession disproves their thesis.

Drezner 12 — Daniel W. Drezner, Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, former International Economist in the Office of International Banking and Securities at the United States Department of the Treasury, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Stanford University, 2012 (“The Irony of Global Economic Governance: The System Worked,” Working Paper Published by the International Institutions and Global Governance Program of the Council on Foreign Relations, October, Available Online at http://i.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/IIGG\_WorkingPaper9\_Drezner.pdf, Accessed 09-17-2013, p. 5)

Another salient outcome is mass public attitudes about the global economy. A general assumption in public opinion research is that during a downturn, demand for greater economic closure should spike, as individuals scapegoat foreigners for domestic woes. The global nature of the 2008 crisis, combined with anxiety about the shifting distribution of power, should have triggered a fall in support for an open global economy. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the reverse is true. Pew’s Global Attitudes Project has surveyed a wide spectrum of countries since 2002, asking people about their opinions on both international trade and the free market more generally.17 The results show resilient support for expanding trade and business ties with other countries. Twenty-four countries were surveyed both in 2007 and at least one year after 2008, including a majority of the G20 economies. Overall, eighteen of those twenty-four countries showed equal or greater support for trade in 2009 than two years earlier. By 2011, twenty of twenty-four countries showed greater or equal support for trade compared to 2007. Indeed, between 2007 and 2012, the unweighted average support for more trade in these countries increased from 78.5 percent to 83.6 percent. Contrary to expectation, there has been no mass public rejection of the open global economy. Indeed, public support for the open trading system has strengthened, despite softening public support for free-market economics more generally.18

The final outcome addresses a dog that hasn’t barked: the effect of the Great Recession on cross-border conflict and violence. During the initial stages of the crisis, multiple analysts asserted that the financial crisis would lead states to increase their use of force as a tool for staying in power.19 Whether through greater internal repression, diversionary wars, arms races, or a ratcheting up of great power conflict, there were genuine concerns that the global economic downturn would lead to an increase in conflict. Violence in the Middle East, border disputes in the South China Sea, and even the disruptions of the Occupy movement fuel impressions of surge in global public disorder.

The aggregate data suggests otherwise, however. A fundamental conclusion from a recent report by the Institute for Economics and Peace is that “the average level of peacefulness in 2012 is approximately the same as it was in 2007.”20 Interstate violence in particular has declined since the start of the financial crisis—as have military expenditures in most sampled countries. Other studies confirm that the Great Recession has not triggered any increase in violent conflict; the secular decline in violence that started with the end of the Cold War has not been reversed.21

### They Say: “Houthis Worsen Humanitarian Crisis”

#### The coalition is responsible for the most of the violence.

Bandow 19 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2019 (“U.S. Support Has Fueled, Not Moderated, the Yemen War,” *The National Interest*, May 19th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/skeptics/us-support-has-fueled-not-moderated-yemen-war-58097>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Third, coalition forces have committed the vast majority of atrocities. Humanitarian groups figure that the Saudis and Emiratis are responsible for two-thirds to three-quarters of the casualties and destruction. Yemen has been ravaged, its civilian population reduced to misery, so wealthy monarchies can gain geopolitical and commercial advantage.

#### Hadi and the coalition are worse.

Bandow 19 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2019 (“U.S. Support Has Fueled, Not Moderated, the Yemen War,” *The National Interest*, May 19th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/skeptics/us-support-has-fueled-not-moderated-yemen-war-58097>, Accessed 06-13-2019)

Second, Washington has intervened on the wrong side. The Houthis never were friends of America or liberty and have grown only more hostile under attack. But the Saudis and Emiratis are far worse, unabashed aggressors for essentially imperial ends. The Houthis oppose AQAP and support a united Yemen. Hadi and the coalition have aided AQAP and other radical forces, while the UAE is promoting Yemen’s break-up in search of economic advantage.

### They Say: “Saudi Oil Weapon Impact”

#### No Saudi Oil Weapon — they lack leverage.

Pillar 18 — Paul R. Pillar, Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Center for Security Studies and former Visiting Professor in the Security Studies Program at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institution, served for 28 years in the U.S. intelligence community including as the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia and as a Member of the Analytic Group at the National Intelligence Council, holds a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University, 2018 (“Saudi Arabia: The Choice the United States Has to Make,” *The National Interest*, December 16th, Available Online at <https://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/saudi-arabia-choice-united-states-has-make-38822>, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Too often overlooked is what the Saudis would be doing anyway for their own interests without any special deference from the United States. Regarding oil, the adage that suppliers cannot drink their own stuff is more applicable than ever, with prior Saudi leverage having been reduced by the fracking revolution, the decrease in U.S. oil imports and overall diversification of the oil market. Regarding terrorism, it wasn’t until after an Islamist attack in Riyadh in 2003 (in which the specific targets were Western military contractors) that the Saudi regime started to become part of the solution and not just a big part of the problem. But even today, any terrorists the United States might want Saudi Arabia to act against would be ones the Saudis would have their own reasons to quash.

#### It’s an empty threat — high prices would be self-defeating.

DePetris 18 — Daniel R. DePetris, Fellow at Defense Priorities, Middle East and Foreign Policy Analyst at Wikistrat, Inc., Researcher at the Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts, Columnist at the *National Interest*, *The American Conservative*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Washington Examiner*, holds an M.A. in Political Science from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, 2018 (“Three Ways to Rethink the U.S.-Saudi Arabian Alliance,” *The National Interest*, December 6th, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/three-ways-rethink-us-saudi-arabian-alliance-38052, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Concerning stabilizing the oil market, the Saudis have a mixed record. Riyadh’s motivation in maintaining stability in the market has nothing to do with being a good friend to America and everything to do with Riyadh’s economic interest. A country that depends on oil returns to pad its budget, build up its foreign exchange reserves, and finance its national subsidies on everything from gasoline and food to housing can’t afford a long period of low profits. If prices rise too high over an extended period, the Kingdom will increase crude exports to preserve market share and assure that overseas buyers don’t switch suppliers. The Saudis do so not as a favor to the American consumer but rather as a necessity their bottom-line.

#### Saudi Arabia won’t follow through on an oil threat.

Bandow 18 — Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Robert A. Taft Fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance, former Special Assistant to President Reagan, holds a J.D. from Stanford University, 2018 (“The Saudi Shakedown: Why Washington Can't Escape the Damage Done by Riyadh's Crown Prince,” *The National Interest*, November 1st, Available Online at https://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/saudi-shakedown-why-washington-cant-escape-damage-done-riyadhs-crown-prince-34862, Accessed 06-24-2019)

Despite whispered threats of an oil boycott, which would have little impact in an international market, the royals will continue selling black gold: how would the crown prince afford his next yacht without the cash? Indeed, the royal family could not survive without the revenue. Moreover, the market is far more diverse today, including the United States as an increasing supplier. Other dangers have dissipated: The Soviet Union no longer exists, let alone threatens to invade the Mideast and cut off the West’s energy supplies.