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## **Comparative Analysis of Saudi-Iran’s Strategic Interest in Syria and Yemen**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research paper is to conduct a comparative analysis of the strategic interests that Saudi Arabia and Iran possess in Syria and Yemen. The objective of this study is to examine the factors that motivate individuals to engage in these wars by a thorough evaluation of academic sources, official declarations, and geopolitical occurrences. The investigation focused on historical connections, sectarian dynamics, and geopolitical strategies to enhance comprehension of the variations in their approaches. An analysis of the Middle East reveals several complex dynamics, including the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both primary and secondary data are collected to comparative the interest of Iran and Saudi Arabia in Syria and Yemen. Primary data are collected through interview and the secondary data are collected from research journals and other published materials. The findings provide valuable insights that can be employed by policymakers, analysts, and researchers to enhance their comprehension of the escalating power struggles and conflicts in the region. To effectively traverse the intricate geopolitics of the Middle East, it is crucial to apply a strategic approach that considers the subtle details.

**Key Words:** Middle East Geopolitics, Power Projection, Regional Proxy, Saudi-Iran Rivalry, Strategic Interests, Syria Conflict, Warfare, Yemen Crisis

### **Introduction**

Both Riyadh and Tehran are supporting different groups in Syria and Yemen crisis with different objectives to secure their interest, particularly security, economic and political interest. Saudi-Syrian relations faced different turmoil at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The assassination of Lebanon’s former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 massively affected the bilateral relations between Syria and KSA. KSA and its allies accused the Syrian agency of the murder of Hariri. Saudi Arabia supported the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 which demanded the

withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon (Berti & Guzansky, 2012). The Syrian forces were stationed there since the mid-1970s (Berti, 2013). Then due to the UN and Saudi Arabi pressure Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon in 2005 (Jureidini, 2005). At some point, the Saudis succeeded in overcoming their hostility to the Syrian regime and tried to work with Damascus to salvage the deteriorating situation in Lebanon, which had become politically polarized due to Hariri's assassination.

On July 30, 2010, Assad and Saudi King Abdullah made a joint visit to Beirut to calm the situation and address fears of an expected indictment of Hezbollah members for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri by a United Nations special advisor (Black, 2010). Through the reaction, it can be reduced. Surprisingly, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon did not hold Syria directly responsible for Hariri' Hezbollah responded forcefully to the indictment, while groups loyal to Hariri called for Lebanese cooperation with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Then the wave of Arab Spring started a street protest in Syria that further turned into a civil war with different fighting groups. Commonly the conflicting groups in the Syrian civil war are divided into three different groups a pro-Assad group led by Assad forces and this group is backed by Russia and Iran, an anti-Assad group led by a national coalition this group involves multiple fictions backed by Saudi Arabia and other American allies and the third group is Kurdish people they are fighting for status and autonomy and now this group has got support from USA (Berti & Guzansky, 2012). Saudi Arabia is supporting the Anti-Assad forces with the aiming to install a pro-Saudi government in Syria that would lead the Saudi's containment policy for Iran. Though Saudi Arabia did not explicitly intervene in the Syrian crisis like Iran, she provided diplomatic and economic assistance to anti-Assad forces in Syria. The Saudis, Kuwaitis, and Bahrainis also recalled their ambassadors from Damascus in early August 2011 to protest the Assad regime's policies. The previous agreement with Damascus was important, but Riyadh never viewed the Syrian regime as an ally, and the fall of that regime is expected to result in Tehran losing its most important Arab ally (Khatib, 2017). Conversely, it is almost certain that Riyadh will not see the situation in Syria as an unconditional Saudi victory, even if the Assad regime is toppled and replaced with an anti-Iranian regime.

Yemen crisis is one of the worst crises of the contemporary era and it shares its border with Saudi Arabia that's why from the beginning Saudis were more curious about Yemen. Before the unification of South and Northern Yemen, KSA faced multiple border skirmishes and they resolved these issues after the unification of northern and southern Yemen in 1990 (Laub & Robinson, 2016). The north and South became the Republic of Yemen but the historical legacies affected the power-sharing pattern badly. From day one the Republic of Yemen suffered from different uprisings but the then president Ali Abdullah Saleh successfully defend it with the help of KSA. Later when the wave of Arab Spring entered Yemen the people of Yemen start protest for political and economic reforms. Saudi Arabia and other gulf states entered immediately to resolve the issues peacefully. With the mediation of KSA and GCC Abdullah Saleh was replaced with his deputy Mansoor Hadi (Zanganeh & Hamidi, 2016) but after two years Houthis emerged as a strong force against the Hadi government and they take over the capital Sanaa then the president flew to KSA. Saudi Arabia and its allies entered the crisis with the motive to reinstall the Hadi government in Yemen. In this chapter, we are going to discuss the causes

Comparative Analysis of Saudi-Iran's Strategic Interest in Syria and Yemen of Saudi intervention in Yemen crisis with the specific prism politics, economic, and security.

### **Literature Review**

Several literals are available relevant to this study however few of them are elaborating here. Berti argued that since the Islamic revolution of 1979 Syria is the only friend of Iran in the Arab region that not only welcome the new government in Iran nonetheless Hafez Assad gave a rhetorical speech in the favor of Iranian revolution (Berti, 2013). However, Syria supported Iran against the Saddam regime during the Iran-Iraq war (Sun, 2009) and Tehran also support Syria's and Saudi's narrative during the first Gulf war. Later when Bashar al-Assad came to power after the death of Hafez al-Assad, Tehran warmly welcomes the new government and both agreed to cooperate in the future at all costs. The Syrian crisis is considered the offshoot of the Arab Spring and Tehran is the front ally of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian crisis due to its political, economic, and security interests (Berti, 2013). The Syrians and Iranians, along with Hamas and Hezbollah, declared themselves the axis of resistance, citing the common desire of these countries and organizations to confront Israel. The Iranians often seem to see themselves as the natural leaders of this alliance. This struggle is hard sometimes because Iran is a major source of military aid to the Syrians, particularly in the area of missile and missile technology. Tehran has also sought to help deter future Israeli attacks against Syria. The primary purpose of Syria's relationship with Iran is to provide it with logistical support that allows Tehran to support its allies. Since Hezbollah is also an ally of Syria in Lebanon, it is difficult to assert that Syria is making any kind of sacrifice in support of the Iranians (Goodarzi, 2013). Press sources reported that Iran provided Syria with equipment, planning advice, and technical expertise to disrupt efforts to organize anti-government protests. Some of this support could be very useful and allow the Syrian security forces to learn from the Iranians. Iran is likely to be the last country to abandon the Syrian government for several reasons, including fear of a Sunni-led Khalaf government being more inclined to work with other Arab countries than Iran. Tehran's leaders are also concerned about the possibility of a pro-American government emerging in Damascus. Any kind of successor government could completely sever previous ties with Tehran. Moreover, if the new Syrian government cuts ties with Iran, Tehran would lose much of its ability to project power in Lebanon and possibly the Palestinian territories, making its country a regional leader, which would represent a serious setback for Iranian efforts to achieve this. The uprising in Syria also introduced a new dimension to Saudi views on Syria, leading to a hardline approach.

The Yemen crisis has escalated dramatically, with devastation growing daily. Stephen W. Day and Noel Brehony's book offers comprehensive insights into its global, regional, and domestic aspects. The first section examines global dynamics, discussing major powers like the US, UK, Russia, EU, China, and the UN. The second focuses on regional actors including Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, and Turkey. The third delves into domestic factors, detailing roles of local figures and groups like Mansour Hadi, Islah party, Houthis, and Southern Transitional Council (Day & Brehony, 2020). Initially, the Syrian crisis was considered the end of Iran's hegemonic desire from the region but later Russia and Iran explicitly entered into the civil war to support the Assad government. Iran provides training, military

equipment, and intelligence sharing, as well as Tehran, deployed its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Syria to protect the key sites (Calabrese, 2020). Now the situation is changed and the Assad government is controlling the major part of Syria with the assistance of Iran and Russia.

Yemen crisis has erupted in response to political marginalization and economic catastrophe in Yemen but the Arab Spring is considered a driving force behind the street protest the regional power interventions in the peaceful protest further created trouble. The Saudi-led GCC mediator take over the office of Mansoor Hadi by replacing Abdullah Saleh to calm down the protestor but the solution not proved successful and the Houthis emerged as a major stakeholder in the politics of Yemen. Saudi Arabia and GCC accused Iran of backing Houthis but initially, Tehran's support for Houthis was only limited to rhetoric speeches by their supreme leader and other officials. Saudi and other Gulf monarchies saw the Arab Spring as a threat to their regimes but Iran used it to deter the opponent Arab monarchies by calling the Arab Spring the 'Islamic awakening' and natural continuation of the Iranian revolution (Fürtig, 2013). Darwich, (2018) argued that the Saudi intervention in Yemen is the struggle for status and he accused KSA for mobilizing Houthis however, according to Ghasemzadeh and Heidarpour (2019), Tehran was not supporting Houthis before the civil war in Yemen but later when its rival KSA accused her of supporting the Iran-Houthis relationship was established. However, since the Arab Spring and street protests in Syria and Yemen both regional power of Middle East Iran and Saudi Arabia are engaged in both crises with different objectives.

### **Methodology**

The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of Saudi and Iranian strategic interests in Syria and Yemen using a comparative qualitative research method. Qualitative research is adopted because it emphasizes understanding processes and meanings that aren't easily quantifiable in terms of quantity, amount, or frequency. For primary data collection, in-depth interviews were conducted with five academic experts specializing in Middle East politics. Open-ended questions were distributed one week before the interviews, which were held via Zoom (three) and LinkedIn (two). Additionally, official documents and media statements from both countries were examined to supplement the interview data. For the validity of the interview protocol, the interview questions were initially discussed with academic experts. Based on their guidance, the interview questionnaire was designed. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions. After conducting the interviews, the data obtained were compared with the objectives of the study and reviewed against published research materials to verify content validity. But Ethical guidelines, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed during and after the interviews. Secondary data were collected from various sources such as books, research papers, articles, newspapers, reports, NGO publications, and online databases. Given the extensive scope of the study area, priority was given to expert opinions and publications from reputable government bodies, semi-government organizations, autonomous bodies, and political think tanks. Data analysis involved thematic analysis, where data from both primary and secondary sources were analyzed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to Saudi and Iranian strategic interests in Syria and

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Yemen. This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic interests of both countries in the selected regions.

## **Results and Discussion**

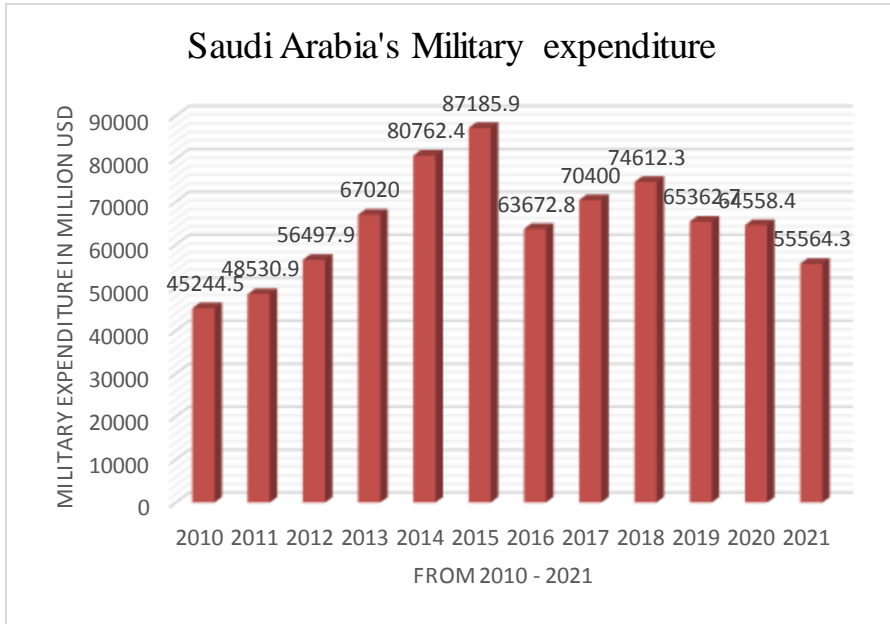
### **Saudi Arabia's Strategic interest in Syria and Yemen**

The strategic interest of Saudi Arabia in both Syria and Yemen is creating more trouble in both crises. Both the Syrian and Yemen crises are considered the offshoot of Arab Spring but the domestic peaceful demonstration turned into international civil war with the explicit and implicit intervention of different regional and international actors. Saudi Arabia is one of the major powers in the Middle East and it is trying to strengthen its regional hegemony to counter its rival Iran. Several works of literature are providing in-depth details about the rivalries and antagonism between Riyadh and Tehran on the base of ideology but in reality, only ideology is not a driving force behind the strategic competition (Ali, Azhar, et al., 2022; Kamrava, 2012). The antagonism and competition have a number of reasons but the most important factors are the security, economy, and political interest of both states in Syria and Yemen.

In the first months of the demonstrations and uprising against the Baath regime. In Syria, the Riyadh government, as the authorities of Qatar and Bahrain Kuwait supports Assad. In several meetings between senior Syrian officials and Saudi officials in April and May 2011, The Saudis even offered 275 million Rial to aid Syria (Gause, 2014) also, Saudi media did not attack Assad and his regime, even in the US announced the Syrian president illegally. For two reasons for Saudi support: first, the Saudis fear possible changes in regional instability as seen in Riyadh, despite the fall of the Baathist regime its many flaws that can open doors to worse, more dangerous things.

The Saudis' hope is for Assad to reform, pacify, and contain the spread of protests against him. Second, given what's happening in Bahrain, where Shiite protests are growing Saudi had to send troops to help deal with riots in Manama, Riyadh needs Damascus as the agent for Iranians for an early end and prevent it from turning into full fledged conflict (Aras & Falk, 2015; Gause, 2014). Since the emergence of the modern state system, state security, and its survival are the primary concern of every state. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) came into existence in 1932 due to the struggle of Al Saud and his supporters. KSA is investing billions of dollars in security and purchasing several types of arms from different states. According to the report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report of 2021, KSA spent \$ 55564.3 million in the fiscal year 2020-21. In the below graph, the annual military expenditure of KSA is shown from 2010 to 2021. The statistics show that after 2010 the military expenditure of KSA dramatically increased and it reached its highest peak in 2015. She spent \$87185.9 million in military expenditure and the United States is the top arms provider to Saudi Arabia.

Graph: 1 Military expenditure of Iran and Saudi Arabia in million USD (2010-2021)



**Source:** SIPRI Military Expenditure Database <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri> (2022)

In 2015, KSA purchased \$ 8.6 billion worth of weapons from the US alone (Jonathan, 2020), and Qatar, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia were the top three arms purchaser in the developing world. The graph shows that in 2015 KSA’s military expenditure reached to highest point and the situation in the crisis of Syria was at its worst condition the Assad government lost more than 80 percent of its territory as well as from the beginning of street protest Riyadh were supporting anti-government forces- national coalition (Ali, Ullah, et al., 2022; Khondker, 2019). The same situation was in Yemen because in 2015 KSA and its allies started military intervention in Yemen with the hope to restore the Hadi government in Yemen. The Arab Spring increased the concerns of Saudi Arabia that’s why she tried to maximize its military capability (Zehraa et al., 2018).

Saudi Arabia supported the rebels in Syria to fulfill three basic interests; to overthrow the Assad government, to install a pro-Saudi government, and to counter Iran’s growing influence in the region by installing an anti-Iran government (Ali et al., 2023; Calabrese, 2020). KSA was curious regarding their security after the Arab Spring because Iran’s claimed that the Arab Spring is the ‘awakening of Islam’ and the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution which will further crush the Arab monarchies. So, Riyadh adopted the policy to contain the rival forces in the region that’s why she provides diplomatic and financial support to Syrian rebels to overthrow the Assad government to secure their security interest. Though, KSA assist the Syrian national coalition and other rebel groups but they have little security interest in Syria as compared to Iran.

Saudi Arabia provides full-scale military assistance to Syrian anti-government groups such as Jaish al Islam, Jabel al Nusra, and Liwa al Islam- led by a son of Saudi cleric, Jaish al Fateh and Ahrar al-Sham including guns, grenades, and anti-

Comparative Analysis of Saudi-Iran's Strategic Interest in Syria and Yemen tank weapons (Awaad, 2020; Nyadera & Islam, 2020). According to Blanga (2017), KSA is involved in Syria due to three reasons, to strengthen its regional influence, for regional stability, and counter the rise of radical Islam. Riyadh accused the Assad government and its allies of the destruction and humanitarian crisis in the Syrian civil war but she also involved in it by providing full assistance to rebels like Free Syrian Army, National Coalition, and several other fighting groups, and its primary concern was to encircle the threats before its border. According to New York Times report "if Saudis don't do this in Syria, they will be fighting them next inside Kingdom" (Worth, 2013). According to Dr Zlatko Hadzidedic director of Center for Nationalism Studies "before the emergence of the crisis both Sunnis and Alawites are being living together peacefully despite of different ideologies then why they cannot live together now? The Saudis and other foreign powers are the main provoker who provoked the Sunnis in Syria to pick up arms for due share in politics. KSA wants to break the supply chain of Hezbollah by introducing anti-Iran government in Syria that will reshape the regional politics.

In the eyes of the Saudis, Iran is a major threat to their national security; Tehran's nuclear arms race and its involvement in Syria are the same things. James B. Smith, the former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, emphasized this point: "Saudi Arabia's three main foreign policy issues are Iran, Iran, and Iran (Smith, 2016). In the battle for Middle East supremacy, Riyadh has Strengthening, including in the military arena, and is seen as a serious threat, so efforts to bring down Iran's most powerful ally, the Damascus regime, are important to Tehran. Remarks by Bernard Haykel, a professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University, reflect Saudi Arabia's fear of Iran: "For the Saudis, the Iranian nuclear program and the war in Syria are part of a single conflict.

Saudi Arabia shares its border with Yemen and the situation in Yemen matters a lot to Riyadh. When pro-democracy protests erupted in Yemen as a consequence of the Arab spring, KSA and other GCC states played a significant role in resolving the issue, and with the mediation of Riyadh Mansoor Hadi became president of Yemen (Lackner, 2019). Later the issue emerged and Houthis captured the capital Sanaa and ousted Mansoor Hadi and flew to Riyadh. Then the KSA and its allies directly entered the Yemen crisis to reinstall the Hadi government (Karakir, 2018). According to the military expenditure report of SIPRI, Riyadh's military expenditure theatrically increased and she signed billions of arms deals with different states.

Rhetorically KSA claimed that they are protecting the Yemeni people but in reality, KSA was trying to protect their strategic interest. The situation in Lebanon, Tunisia, and Egypt was alarming for the monarchies of Gulf States and the uprising in its bordering state Yemen is more threatening to Riyadh. Iran's narrative on these uprisings was further increasing the tension of Gulf monarchies. There were maximum chances of pro-democracy protest in Saudi Arabia if such an uprising was successful in Bahrain and Yemen that's why Riyadh and its allies are engaged in these threats before entering its border (Hoetjes, 2021). Riyadh has had a significant role in Yemeni politics from the beginning and the most important objective of the protest in Yemen was to 'free Yemeni politics from external involvement' while Riyadh was not in the favor of such a government in which they have no influence (Zimmerman, 2022). Both Riyadh and UAE are still engaged in the Yemeni civil

war and trying to protect their favorite group in Yemen while the major part of Yemen is under the control of Houthis. Riyadh is most curious about the control of the Gulf of Aden due to its strategic importance. In 2021 after several years of unrest and crisis, Saudi officials visited Damascus and they are trying to develop relations with Syria under president Assad because KSA is now interested in a reconstruction program in Syria (Ali, Ullah, et al., 2022; Kassim, 2021). After several years of chaos and uncertainty, millions of people lost their love once and more than half of the pre-civil war population are now displaced but both crises are continued.

### **Iran's Strategic Interest in Syria and Yemen**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is another key player in the Middle East. It has a great history and since the 1979 revolution, Tehran is trying to promote its style of revolution in the whole region. The Islamic revolution of Iran and its expansionist foreign policy is deterring the Gulf monarchies and they established GCC to counter the growing threat of Iran (Bianco, 2020). Though Arab League and GCC both protect their interest in the region under the leadership of Saudi Arabia the Arab Spring shakes this system. The waves of pro-democracy uprisings entered different states such as Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen. Tehran welcomed these uprisings and claimed it as the success of its style of revolution. Irani's supreme leader called the uprising an 'awakening of Islam' and his rhetoric speech creates further suspicion among gulf monarchies (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2021; Bajoghli & Keshavarzian, 2018). Both the Syrian and Yemen crisis are the offshoot of the Arab spring and Tehran have a strategic interest in both states. Tehran has economic, security, and political interest in both Damascus and Sanaa that's why she is trying to protect its interest with different tactics.

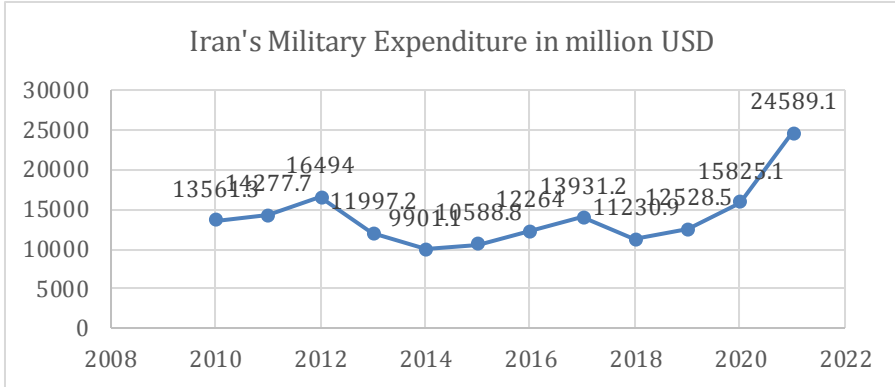
The Syrian crisis started with the street wall chalking for regime change and the Assad government arrested these students then in March 2011 the demonstration reached its full swing. Iran provides full assistance with economic, military, and diplomatic support to the Syrian government. Tehran used two approaches in the Syrian crisis; military and security influence by directly working with the foreign militias, and by recruiting local fighters and then establishing a core group by the combination of both groups. Iran recruited multiple fighter groups both local and foreign. Local militia groups such as the National Defense Force (NDF), Local Defense Force (LDF), and other Shia militias from the northern region of Aleppo, Homs, and Raqa support the Bashar al Assad government. Tehran also recruited thousands of foreigners to fight in Syria like Iraqi fighters - Zulfiqar Brigade, Abul Fazal Abbas Brigade, Assad Allah al Ghalib Brigade, Iman Ali Brigade, Fatemiyoun Brigade- Afghani fighters, and Zaynibion- Pakistani fighters recruited by IRGC (Ali, 2022; Saban, 2020). Now the Assad forces recaptured the major parts of Syria from the opposing groups and the Iranian-backed forces are constantly present in all strategic locations including airports and military bases.

Iran has some core interests in Syria such as Tehran's wanting to become a regional hegemon, secure its route to Hezbollah Lebanon, invest in the Syrian energy sector, and maintain a pro-Iran government in Syria (Juneau, 2020). Both Iran and Hezbollah were aware of the consequences of regime change in Syria that's why they are protecting the Assad regime by all means. Iran established a Syrian-Iranian Business Forum in 2018 to strengthen bilateral trade and investment and now Tehran is investing in several energy projects in different parts of Syria (Rezaei, 2019). The



Iranian intervention in the Syrian civil war can be proved a major setback for Iran in case of regime change but now the Assad regime strengthening and gaining more parts in its control with the help of Russia and Iran. The failure of regime change is now proved a major setback for KSA and other rebel-supporting groups and Tehran's strategy to deter opponents is going to be successful (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2019). Since the Syrian and Yemen crises erupted military expenditure of Iran increased as compared to the previous annual military expenditure. The below chart shows the military expenditure of Iran from 2010 – 2021. The statistics are fluctuating in different years but from 2018 they increased smoothly.

Graph:2 Iran's Military Expenditure



**Source:** SIPRI Military Expenditure Database <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

Tehran's role in the Yemeni civil war is limited as compared to the Syrian war but after the takeover of Sanaa by Houthis, initially, Iran is providing diplomatic support to Houthis through rhetoric speech but later their cooperation started (Gul et al., 2021). Though Saudi Arabia and its allies accused Iran of providing military equipment and arms but failed to provide solid evidence (Mirza et al., 2021). The history of Iran and Yemen relations are not showed any type of strong relations between Iran and Houthis while Hussain al Houthi visited Tehran in the 1980s and 1990s. The Yemeni uprising and Houthis takeover was a good opportunity for Iran to pressurize Riyadh and other gulf monarchies that's why she obtained the benefit from it. Iran wants to gain control of the Gulf of Aden and its military presence very near Saudi Arabia to monitor Riyadh's politics and strategies.

Now the situation in Yemen is worst and the installment of the pro-Irani government is much away but Tehran desires to install a pro-Iranian government in Yemen to protect its national interest. However, the decision of the UAE to withdraw its forces from Yemen creates an illusion of the Yemen crisis (Vatanka, 2020). The situation has not yet been resolved, although the accused individuals have disappeared from view and may have fled to Iran. Recently, both Saudi Arabia and Iran need to consider how the civil war in Syria affects their interests and how to deal with these new developments. It was clear that in case of Assad regime collapsed Tehran lost its key ally while now the Assad government gained control of a major part of Syria which is alarming for KSA and other Gulf states.

## **Conclusion**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran both are major players in the Middle East and they are trying to maximize their sphere of influence in the region by different means. Since the Iranian revolution, the relations between Tehran and Riyadh faced several ups and downs due to clashes of interest. The core reason for these antagonisms and rivalries is due to strategic competition such as economic, security, and political. The Arab Spring played an influential role in further maximizing their rivalry and competition in the region where KSA runs to protect monarchies of the region while Iran welcomed these uprisings. Their rivalries and competition are more explicitly seen in the Syrian and Yemeni crises. Both crises are the offshoot of the Arab Spring where the public demanded reforms and regime change. In Syria, KSA supported the anti-Assad group and wants to ouster Bashar al-Assad's regime while in Yemen her objective is to maintain and reinstall the Mansoor Hadi government which was ousted by Houthis. In reality, both cases are similar that the people are in the favor of regime change while Saudi's interest is linked with the Mansoor Hadi government in Yemen and the Bashar al Assad government is pro-Iranian where Riyadh supported regime change.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also adopts the same policy where she welcomed the Arab Spring and named it the 'awakening of Islam' but practically she opposed the pro-democracy uprising and provide full support to Bashar al-Assad. Now the Assad forces regained control of major parts of Syria with the support of Russia and Iran while Saudi Arabia and its allies failed to gain their objective of regime change. Tehran is doing the same in Yemen as Riyadh did in Syria where she is in favor of Houthis who ousted Mansoor Hadi's government. However, both regional power is trying to increase their sphere of influence in the region by protecting their interest with different narratives. Both are accusing each other of creating regional instability and chaos but in reality, they are fighting for their economic, political, and security interest by using ideology as a tool to fulfill their dreams. Neither Saudi Arabia nor Iran is following the same pattern in both Syria and Yemen but either they are trying to balance the power or fighting for regional hegemon.

KSA wants an anti-Iran government in Syria and a friendly government in Yemen but Tehran's primary interest is prolonging the pro-Tehran government in Damascus and the anti-Riyadh government in Yemen. Iran wants to protect its regional ally and supply route to Hezbollah, Lebanon and Hamas, Palestine to encircle the Jewish Israel as well as counter KSA's influence from the region while Riyadh is more curious about the expansionist and proxy war policies of Tehran and her primary goal is to stop the proxies before reaching in the Kingdom because such types of the uprising and civil war not required any passport and it have no defined border. Both Riyadh and Tehran are showing keen interest in the Syrian reconstruction program and Tehran's starts investment in the Syrian energy sector, education sector, construction sector, and health sector. During the Covid days, Iran provides several health facilities in different rural areas and also launched an Iranian-style schooling system in different parts of Syria.

## **Recommendations**

The first and foremost thing after the restoration of the pre-crisis status quo is that they must establish a new constitution on the base of equality and representation of all different groups where the fundamental rights of all citizens must be protected.

After the pre-crisis status quo, Syria should introduce political and economic reforms under the supervision of international experts to bring stability and peace to the state. For the peaceful and prosperous future of Syria, it is necessary to resolve the issue of the Kurdish people and she has to stop foreign involvement in policy making. The foreign powers must be withdrawn from Syria whether they are supporting the Assad government or any rebel group. Saudi Arabia has to stop its military campaign and airstrikes inside Yemen and have to withdraw all foreign forces while UN peacekeeping forces must be deployed in Yemen to maintain the law-and-order situation for a limited time. To bring peace in Yemen, it is compulsory to unite the bring all groups to the table for negotiation and then have to establish an international committee of experts for the formation of the new constitution as well as the new constitution must be designed without any discrimination among Yemeni people on the base of tribes and region. The new election must be conducted according to the new constitution under the observation of international agencies and when the new government is established then the UN forces must be withdrawn from Yemen.

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