

“Egypt’s Vietnam”

A Case Study of Egypt’s War in Yemen 1962-1967

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Introduction

The Yemen War is often referred to as “Egypt’s Vietnam” by Egyptian military historians because of both the length of the engagement and Nasser’s futile attempts to end it by means of escalation.¹ Egypt’s direct involvement and war against the Saudi backed Royalists proved to be a long and, ultimately, failing endeavor. In 1962, a group of Yemeni officers, called the Free Officers Movement, successfully orchestrated a coup to throw out the Royal family. The Yemen War, also known as the North Yemen Civil War, was a war fought in North Yemen between Royalists of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen and Republican factions of the Yemen Arab Republic from 1962 to 1970. When the republican faction gained control of the government, Egypt committed to defending the new government with conventional forces and Saudi Arabia backed the royalists with money and equipment. Quickly, what started as a civil war became a proxy war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The fighting was fierce, featuring heavy urban combat as well as battles in the countryside. Both foreign irregular and conventional forces were involved.

Gamal Abdel-Nasser was the President of Egypt and Kings Saud and Faisal were the leaders of Saudi Arabia during the Yemen War (Faisal took over when Saud died in 1964). Egyptian forces arrived in Yemen on October 5, 1962 to help prop up the new regime, headed by the Yemeni revolutionary, Colonel Al-Sallal. Between 1962 and 1967, the Egyptians would have as many as 55,000 troops fighting Saudi-backed Royalists in Yemen. After a few years of involvement, however, Nasser was desperately looking for a face-saving way out of Yemen. It came in the form of the 1967 Six-Day War, when Nasser's saber rattling against Israel, coupled with a withdrawal of United Nations forces

¹ Dekmejian, 306

from the Sinai, led Israel to take a bold offensive and succeed in defeating the combined armed forces of Syria, Egypt and Jordan. After the Six-Day War, Arabs began to unify against Israel and this gave Nasser a way out of Yemen at the Arab Summit in Khartoum. From 1968 to 1971, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, along with hundreds of mercenaries, disengaged from Yemen and the “Yemen War” came to a close.

Conceptual Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, I will provide explanatory variables for each stage of the crisis: onset, escalation and de-escalation. In the onset period, I will examine the variables of *geographic contiguity*, *regime divergence* and *geographic salience*. I define *geographic contiguity* as the proximity between adversaries. As an enabling/context variable, *geographic contiguity* increases the probability of war and violence. According to Brecher, “crisis actors are more likely to employ violence in crises ‘close to home.’”² Nasser’s ability to intervene in Yemen after the collapse of the Royalist government, as well as his interest in doing so, was partially by its geographic contiguity, while Saudi Arabia’s involvement in Yemen, a country with whom a border is shared, can be seen as primarily fueled by state’s *geographic contiguity*. I define *regime divergence* as a clashing difference in the ideological or structural makeup between two regimes. .For example, democratic and non-democratic regimes are more likely to be adversaries and experience an international crisis over it than are two democratic adversaries.³ I define *geographic salience* as the strategic importance of a specific area for a state. Geographic salience is based on the “heartland” theory of geopolitics that was coined by the quondam Tory MP for Maryhill, Sir Halford Mackinder, in 1904: whoever controlled the area

² Brecher and Wilkenfeld, Crisis in World Politics, 32

³ Brecher and Wilkenfeld, Crisis, Conflict, and Instability, 213

between the Carpathians and the Caucasus controlled the "World Island."⁴ Though Mackinder was referring to a specific area (Central Europe), his larger geopolitical point has wide applications. It can be argued that Yemen had similar strategic importance for Egypt, along with any other Middle Eastern state that might be receptive to Nasserism, and thus was *geographically salient*.

For the escalation period, in which Nasser flooded Yemen with conventional Egyptian troops (and was ultimately bogged down by fighting with guerrilla style royalist fighters), I will examine the presence of a *violent trigger*, *geographic contiguity*, and a new variable, *national pride escalation*. I define a *violent trigger* as an act or event that initiates a change or increase of intensity and a heightened probability of war.⁵ The 1962 revolutionary coup in Yemen, led by Colonel Abdullah Sallal, acted as the *violent trigger* that spurred Egypt, and subsequently, Saudi Arabia into involvement in the crisis. I define *national pride escalation* as escalatory behavior that is primarily caused by a fear of defeat or national embarrassment. *National pride escalation* is closely associated with *prospect theory*, which holds that once a state is down and suffering, it becomes risk averse and is willing to commit more to the fight in hopes of regaining what it had lost.⁶

In analyzing the Yemen war, the creation of new variables proves helpful in effectively explaining the main causes of de-escalation. Unlike many other crises, the Yemen war resulted in a strategic quagmire and, therefore the factors that led to de-escalation are harder to pin down and relatively abstract. Thus, I have created two variables that most aptly explain the causes of de-escalation in this case: the presence of a

⁴ "Mackinder, Sir Halford John." The Columbia Encyclopedia. Sixth ed. 2007. 15 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-Mackinde.html>>.

⁵ Brecher and Wilkenfeld, Crises in World Politics, 3

⁶ McDermott, Rose, Fowler, James H. and Smirnov, Oleg, "On the Evolutionary Origin of Prospect Theory Preferences" . Journal of Politics, 2008 Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1008034>

third party threat and a *face-saving diplomatic agreement*. When two states are engaged in a conflict and a third state emerges as more threatening to each of the first two states, this is a *third party threat*, and will increase the likelihood that the first two states will de-escalate their own conflict in favor of shifting attention to the new one.⁷ I define a *face-saving diplomatic agreement* as a diplomatic agreement that allows a state that is seeking de-escalation but is caught in an escalatory cycle due to national pride to withdraw or de-escalate without feeling like it has suffered total defeat. Based on the analysis of this case, I will argue both that national pride played a major role in Egypt’s escalation and that, subsequently, the *third party threat* led to the Khartoum Agreement, which fits the criteria for a *face-saving agreement* that I have set forth.⁸

Analysis of the Case

Onset

The onset of the Yemen war came during a time in which Nasser was determined to regain his prominence throughout the Middle East. His recent creation, the United Arab Republic (UAR), a federation with Syria had crumbled after secessionists took power in Damascus in a coup. Nasser blamed Saudi Arabia for aiding the secessionists in dissolving the UAR. Having hoped to spur an Arab revolution across the Middle East, the

⁷ For my purposes, the *third party threat* variable does not necessarily need to *unite* the two previously conflicting states in their efforts to counter the threat from the third state. Instead, so long as the threat from the third state is sufficient enough to warrant a cessation of the conflict on the part of both states, regardless of whether they are threatened for the same reason, the *third party threat* variable may apply as long as it is that third party threat that each side is wary of.

⁸ It can be argued that the variables I have created (for the purposes of most accurately explaining the crisis) contain pieces of other variables. For example, while it is true that the *third party threat* variable could be switched with a change in the *international system* or in the regional political structure, I aim to provide more specificity for the purpose of adding clarity to this complex crisis.

failure of the UAR was a great disgrace for Nasser.⁹ Saudi Arabia’s perceived hand in this disgrace, coupled with the difference in regime type between the two nations, increased the likelihood that a confrontation between the two nations was going to occur.

The importance of the *regime divergence* between Nasser’s Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a variable that led to the Yemen War cannot be underestimated. Nasser was the pioneer of Arab Socialism, also called Nasserism. Nasserism is a revolutionary Arab nationalist and pan-Arab ideology that, like Ba’athism, is largely secular. This secularism, for Nasser, led to direct conflict with Islamic oriented Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia. In addition, Nasser espoused an end to Western interference in Arab affairs, modernization and industrialization. Nasser himself was vehemently opposed to what he saw as Western imperialism, sharing the common held Arab view that Zionism was an extension of European and American colonialism on Arab soil.¹⁰ Thus, Nasser’s regime held substantial inherent opposition to the regime of Saudi Arabia, an Islamic monarchy with close ties to the West. Thus, the inter-actor variable *regime divergence*, specifically the conflicting ideological foundations of the two regimes, was pivotal in setting the stage for a conflict between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Yemen also represented a strategically important area for Nasser and Egypt. Though the specific area does not represent, necessarily, the “heartland of the World,” (as Hal Mackinder had defined *salience*) it was of the utmost importance for President Nasser in his quest to spread his revolutionary Nasserism throughout the Middle East.

⁹ Even despite this failure, Egypt continued to use the name “United Arab Republic” until Nasser’s death in 1971.

¹⁰ The irony of this is that, due to his extended involvement in Yemen, Nasser and the Egyptians would be seen as foreign, imperialist occupiers by a good deal of Yemeni’s before the conflict was over, a fact that would ultimately play a role in Egypt’s disengagement.

The Egyptian National Charter, inaugurated in May of 1962 by Nasser, that established an ideological basis for socialism in Egypt, declared:

Revolution is the only means by which the Arab Nation can free itself of its shackles, and rid itself of the dark heritage which burdened it. For, the elements of suppression and exploitation which long dominated the Arab Nation and seized its wealth will never willingly submit.¹¹

Moreover, the Charter asserted:

The United Arab Republic, firmly convinced that she is an integral part of the Arab Nation, must propagate her call for unity and the principles it embodies, so that it would be at the disposal of every Arab citizen, without hesitating for one minute before the outworn argument that this would be considered an interference in the affairs of others.¹²

Nasser was committed to aiding revolutions in any Arab state. Thus, any Middle Eastern state with a regime hostile to Egypt's revolutionary Nasserism was seen as having specific *geo-strategic salience* in the eyes of Nasser, with his goal being regime change in his favor whenever possible.

Another important variable in play during the onset of the Yemen war was the *geographic contiguity* between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, which share a horizontal border. While the element of contiguity can also explain Egypt's involvement to some extent, in that Egypt isn't that far from Yemen and they are both part of the same general area (the Middle East), as a variable it is much more relevant in terms of explaining Saudi

¹¹ UAR Charter, 11

¹² Ibid., 94

Arabia's involvement. In addition, there was a disparity in capability, with the Saudis knowing their forces would be unable to battle a conventional war against those of Egypt.¹³

Thus, any major ideological shift in Yemen, especially one that was hostile to the Saudi Arabian royal family, would be perceived as a major threat to Saudi Arabia's territorial and ideological integrity. In that sense, any foreign involvement in Yemen, unless an ally of Saudi Arabia undertook it, was a threat to the Saudi Arabians and would certainly induce their involvement in said crisis. However, Saudi Arabia's intentions were never to involve itself in Yemen save from a defensive posture.

Overall, the variable most at play during the onset of the Yemen War was the *regime divergence* between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. *Geographic contiguity* is also important, especially in terms of Saudi Arabia's potential involvement, because the Saudis shared a long, horizontal border with the state in which the crisis would play out, Yemen. The *geographic salience* variable is also important, though less so than the previous two variables, because it helps to explain the speed and determination with which Nasser was willing to involve his army in any conflict in surrounding states.

Escalation

Upon the death of Imam Ahmed on September 18, 1962, who had ruled Yemen ruthlessly for three decades, his son, Imam Badr, succeeded him. There had already been substantial dissent among the ranks of the Yemeni Army officers, as evidenced by the failed coup d' etats of 1947 and 1955. Officers in those coup attempts received advanced military training in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, during which they lamented the backwardness of their own nation and received heavy doses of Arab nationalism, ideas on how civil-

¹³ Bidwell, 211

society functioned, and the determination to bring these ideas back to Yemen.¹⁴ For these officers, who made up what is called the "Free Officers Movement" in Yemen, the methods by which Nasser and his own free officers movement had overthrown the Egyptian monarchy of King Farouk provided inspiration for their dreams of a Royalty-free Yemen.

Once Imam Badr took control, Colonel Sallal decided to act and ordered that the military academy in Sana'a go on full alert, opening all armories and having weapons issued to all junior officers and troops. On the evening of September 25, Sallal gathered known leaders of the Yemeni nationalist movement and other officers who sympathized with or participated in the military protests of 1955 and prepared to overthrow the newly empowered Imam Badr.

That night, a unit of revolutionary officers, accompanied by tanks, drove towards Al-Bashaer Palace in Sana'a. Using a microphone, the revolutionaries voiced an appeal to the Imamate Guard, which was guarding the palace, for tribal solidarity and urged them to surrender Imam Al-Badr to the revolutionaries, promising he would be sent peacefully into exile. The Imamate Guard refused to surrender and instead opened fire, leading the revolutionary leaders to respond with tank and artillery shells. The battle at the palace continued until guards surrendered to the revolutionaries the following morning of September 26, 1962. The radio station was the first to fall, secured after a loyalist officer was killed and the resistance there collapsed. The armory was the easiest target, as a written order of Colonel Sallal was sufficient to open the storage facility, subdue the few guards who guarded it, and secure rifles, artillery and ammunition.¹⁵ The revolutionaries also easily took the telephone exchange and Al-Wusul palace, which housed various

¹⁴ Thus, Egypt had a history of involvement in Yemen. This would only serve to heighten the possibility of further involvement and subsequent escalation.

¹⁵ Wenner, p. 134

dignitaries and diplomats. By late morning on September 26, all areas of Sana'a were secure and the radio broadcasted Al-Badr had been overthrown and the revolutionary government was now in power. Revolutionary cells in the cities of Taiz, Al-Huffa, and the port city of Hodeida then began securing arsenals, airports and port facilities.

On September 28, the radio announced the death of Imam Al-Badr, who was very much still alive. By this time, Al-Badr had left the capital of Sana'a and fled towards Al-Hujjah to the north. He intended to do what his forefathers had done: rally tribes in the north and in the Hadramaut Mountains and wage a war to regain his capital.

The revolutionary coup served as the *violent trigger* that spurred Egypt into action. Upon news of the coup, Nasser immediately sent General Ali Abdul Hameed by plane to Sana'a to assess the needs of the Revolutionary Command Council that was now in power in Yemen. Gen. Hameed recommended that Egypt aid the revolutionaries and, desperate to defend the revolutionary overthrow of the Yemeni monarch, Nasser immediately dispatched a battalion of Special Forces (called the Saaqah) with orders to act as personal guards for the Yemeni Colonel Al-Sallal.¹⁶ They arrived at the port city of Hodeida on October 5.

The revolutionary coup also served as the *violent trigger* that initiated Saudi Arabian involvement in the crisis. Anticipating Egyptian involvement, Saudi Arabia had begun sending supplies to the Royalists even before the first Egyptian forces landed in Yemen. Fearing Nasserist encroachment, Saudi Arabia moved troops to their southern border and the Jordanian monarch dispatched his army chief of staff for discussions with Imam Al-Badr's uncle, Prince Hassan, who was allied with Al-Badr and also raising armies among the royalist tribesmen. Between October 2 and 8, four Saudi cargo planes left Saudi Arabia loaded with arms and military material for Yemeni royalist tribesmen.

¹⁶ Bidwell, 218

Though Nasser claimed that he was never interested in moving all the way to Riyadh, the Saudis were rightfully threatened by his involvement in the nation with which they shared a southern border, especially given that Nasser was famously hostile to monarchies and "saw it as Egypt's destiny to overthrow imperialism and monarchy"¹⁷ wherever the opportunity presented itself in the Middle East. It is also notable that Nasser partially blamed Saudi Arabia for undermining his United Arab Republic with Syria in 1961.¹⁸

Within three months of sending troops to Yemen, Nasser realized that this would require a larger commitment than anticipated.¹⁹ Putting down the royalist resistance was proving to be an extremely difficult task, as Nasser's conventional army was forced to fight in an unconventional war, primarily against guerrilla style fighters. By early 1963, he would begin a four-year quest to extricate Egyptian forces from Yemen, only to find himself committing more and more troops. A little less than 5,000 troops were sent in October 1962, following the coup. Two months later, Egypt had 15,000 regular troops deployed. By late 1963, the number had increased to 36,000; and in late 1964, the number of Egyptian forces in Yemen had risen to 50,000. Late 1965 represented the high-water mark of Egyptian troop commitment at about 55,000 troops, which were broken in to 13 infantry regiments, one artillery division, one tank division, and several Special Forces and paratroop regiments. Though Nasser wanted desperately to extricate his forces from the quagmire into which Yemen had devolved, he believed that a withdrawal without victory would further damage his ailing influence in the region. It seems Nasser had become engulfed by his desire to maintain Egypt's prestige, falling victim to *national pride escalation*.

¹⁷ Wenner, 142

¹⁸ Bidwell, 145

¹⁹ Zabarah, 38

Ambassador Ahmed Abu-Zeid served as Egypt’s ambassador to Royalist Yemen from 1957 to 1961. He sent numerous valuable reports on Yemen that apparently did not reach the officials in the Ministry of Defense and instead seemed to get buried in the Foreign Ministry.²⁰ Most importantly, Abu-Zeid warned Egyptian officials in Cairo, including Defense Minister Amer, that the Yemeni tribes were difficult and had no sense of loyalty or nationhood. The Ambassador stood against sending Egyptian combat forces and argued that only money and equipment should be sent to the Yemeni Free Officers. Prior to Egyptian involvement, Abu Zeid warned that the Saudis would flood Yemen with money to turn undecided Yemenis against the revolution. In the end, it seems, Nasser would regret disregarding Ambassador Abu-Zeid’s warnings.

Nasser and his Revolutionary Command Council did not understand that placement of troops in Yemen – at the gates of Saudi Arabia – would be viewed as a matter of life or death to the Al-Saud family. Apparently, this was not taken into consideration when the final decision was made to commit Egyptian forces to Yemen.²¹ Aside from directly threatening the Saudi royal family’s existence, Nasser also threatened Saudi Arabia’s position of dominance in the Arabian Peninsula. Nasser’s expeditionary forces threatened the traditional dominance Saudi Arabia enjoyed over Yemen and the other Gulf States.

The Saudi Arabian role in the Yemeni conflict came as a result of the establishment of a republican regime in Yemen and as a consequence of Egyptian intervention. Saudi involvement was essentially defensive and conservative.²² It feared the establishment of a republican regime in Yemen because of its potential danger to the

²⁰ Whether this break in communication was a mistake or an effort by Nasser’s bureaucracy to hide damaging intelligence remains unclear.

²¹ Zabarah, 134

²² Boals, 280.

Saudi regime, which, according to Kathryn Boals, was as vulnerable to the onslaught of certain “modern ideas” as Yemen had been during the 1930s.²³ Thus, King Saud began arming the royalists in an attempt to stymie the Egyptian presence in Yemen and to keep the republicans occupied with an internal war and away from Saudi territory. As a result of Saudi involvement in Yemen, two Saudi pilots defected to Egypt with their planes, and Egyptian forces were subsequently increased in Yemen.²⁴ Saudi Arabian forces were incapable of defending Saudi territory against Egyptian incursions that occurred several times during the latter part of 1962 and early in 1963. Thus, due to the *geographic contiguity* of Yemen and the subsequent territorial threat felt by the Saudis, the Saudi government adopted a three pronged policy intended to ensure its security from the potentially dangerous events in Yemen: to have the United States formally declare its support of Saudi integrity, to develop the capability of the Yemeni royalist force so that the royalists would be able to keep both the United Arab Republic (UAR) and Yemen Arab Republic forces engaged in Yemen and away from Saudi territory, and to remove the threat of UAR forces from the Arabian peninsula.²⁵ The interests of the royalists were consistently subordinated to the third objective.²⁶

Saudi determination to remove the Egyptians from Yemen intensified after Faisal succeeded his brother, Saud, in November of 1964. Massive doses of money and arms were supplied to the royalists. But the supplies tended to slacken whenever Saudi Arabia believed it necessary to give the UAR a chance to extricate itself from Yemen.²⁷ This occurred after agreements were reached between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, aimed at ending their respective interventions.

²³ Ibid., 281

²⁴ Stookey, 500

²⁵ Bidwell, 155

²⁶ Stookey, 501

²⁷ Wenner, 224

When Saudi Arabia saw the inevitability of Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen, it changed its political objective regarding the Yemeni republic. Previously, Saudi Arabia had worked to bring an end to the republic because it symbolized the new ideology – modernity, Arab unity, and social progress. However, when it became evident that the republic had no formulated ideology, Saudi objectives were altered. In 1969, its opposition to the republic was shelved in favor of sustaining a weak republican regime in Sana'a. Such a policy aimed at fostering the historical animosity between the tribes and the central government by carefully keeping the two parties equal in strength. Saudi funds were made available to both the republican government and to the tribes. Each faction, therefore, became dependent upon Saudi money for its existence.

All of Saudi Arabia's efforts at funding factions in Yemen were done in order to oppose the Egyptian presence in the context of Saudi Arabia's inability to oppose the Egyptians with their own military forces. Thus, Saudi involvement and escalation of the conflict can be seen as primarily defensive and based on Yemen's *geographic contiguity* with Saudi Arabia.

As Egypt became more and more bogged down in Yemen, Nasser found no recourse but to commit more troops. With no victory looming, Nasser felt compelled to keep deepening his involvement in Yemen, despite his desire to extricate his forces. Egyptian involvement in Yemen had become a matter of national pride and, therefore, Nasser felt that a withdrawal simply for a lack of success would be too damaging to both his and his country's reputation.

The *violent trigger* of the revolutionary coup inside Yemen is the most important escalatory variable for both the Egyptians and the Saudis. For the Egyptians, Colonel Al-Sallal's Nasserism-inspired revolution offered just the opportunity Nasser needed to get involved in and, ultimately, escalate the Yemen War, with the hope that the new

government in Sana'a could sustain itself. For the Saudis, the opposite was true. The revolutionary overthrow of the Yemeni throne was threatening enough to trigger Saudi involvement, in both a defensive posture against the potential spread of Egyptian influence as well as the threat to their own sovereignty (geographic contiguity). Once the war had begun, however, the primary cause of escalation was Egypt's inability to either A) secure a decisive victory due to the conditions on the ground or B) find the strength to withdraw its forces without said decisive victory. Thus, once the war had begun, the primary cause of escalation was *national pride escalation* initiated by Egypt, but subsequently met by the Saudis in an attempt to fend them off.

De-escalation and Disengagement

Nasser found his troops bogged down in Yemen with no end to the hostility in sight and he desperately wanted a face-saving way out of the conflict. His conventional army in Yemen, numbering up to 55,000 at its highest level²⁸, was being fought to a standstill by a handful of Yemeni tribes successfully employing hit-and-run guerrilla tactics.

The occupying Egyptian forces did not fare well in their battles with the armies raised by the deposed Al-Badr. In 1962, 1963, and the first part of 1964 the Yemeni royalists inflicted heavy losses upon the Egyptians in hit-and-run partisan-type actions. A major Egyptian offensive directed against the royalist armies in August and September of 1964 failed, and from this time on the Egyptians suffered an unbroken series of disasters. By the late summer of 1965, their front in eastern Yemen had collapsed completely, and the Egyptians were in trouble on the western, northern and central fronts.

²⁸ Zabarah, 154

Nasser, therefore, decided to accept and offer of mediation tendered him by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia who was giving financial support to the Yemeni royalists. On August 23, 1965, the two executives concluded the Jeddah Pact, which put at least a temporary end to the war in Yemen. Nasser agreed to withdraw his army of occupation from the old land of the Imams. Saudi sources report that, at Jeddah, Nasser said to King Feisal: "I beg you to save the prestige of the Egyptian Army."²⁹

However, following the diplomatic conference at Jeddah, the USSR informed Nasser that it would underwrite any continued Egyptian involvement in Yemen. In addition, the Jeddah Pact was conducted between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but apparently didn't include the actual royalists or revolutionaries in the Yemen. Thus, each of those two groups had misperceptions about the outcome of the pact, each believing that they had won the surrender of the other. With neither the revolutionaries nor the royalists ready to back down and Nasser, still desiring a Republican victory, receiving pledges from the Soviets, this attempt at de-escalation failed as others had before it.

The war in Yemen continued to intensify until the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. The massive defeat of the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan by Israel shifted the attention of Egyptian policy decision makers from Yemen. It was the prelude to a permanent disengagement of Egyptian forces from Yemen. No longer was ideology the all-important factor in the conflict between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The immediate need of Egypt was the restoration of its army and its shattered economy in the wake of the defeat. Consequently, Egypt agreed in the Khartoum Agreement of August 1967 to withdraw its forces from Yemen and to revive the Jeddah Pact. In return, Saudi Arabia

²⁹ Editor Hamad Mutawi' of the Saudi morning journal *Al Nadwa*, March 26, 1966. Note, too, the comment of *Al Thaurah*, the official Baathist organ in Syria, that Nasser had yielded to Feisal at Jeddah and so betrayed the Yemeni Revolution. (Issue of August 25, 1965).

agreed to give Egypt the financial support necessary to replace revenues lost through the closing of the Suez Canal. This quid pro quo agreement served as a *face-saving diplomatic agreement* and, though it was satisfactory to both patron states, their clients inside Yemen were not receptive to the agreement. Sallal rejected the agreement because it was reached without his having been consulted.³⁰ The royalists contended that Nasser was just stalling for time so that he could recover from the defeat at the hands of Israel.³¹ However, with new dangers looming, this agreement was finally enough for Nasser.

In December 1967, practically all of the Egyptian forces in Yemen were withdrawn. By coincidence, this occurred only ten days after the British had left Aden. In the same month, Sallal was overthrown by the dissident republicans who opposed his rule. The Yemeni Popular Forces Union, a third party that had emerged in Yemen and opposed what it saw as an Egyptian occupation, did not play a role in the ousting of Sallal. It contended that the new republican regime opposed the creation of an Islamic state whose objective would be the perpetuation of the Islamic Shari’a. Nonetheless, the new government, composed almost entirely of civilians, pledged to open peace talks with the royalists. The royalists, however, had by then lost their effectiveness as a unified entity. They had become split between forces loyal to al-Badr and followers of Prince Mohammed ibn al-Hussein, the leading member of the royal family during the war. The split, coupled with the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Yemen (and, therefore, the lack of an outside enemy), weakened the effectiveness of the royalists. A great part of the royalist resistance was aimed at the Egyptian presence in the country.³² Once the Egyptian troops had left, royalist resistance to the republic declined.

³⁰ “Over Their Heads,” The Economist, October 14, 1967. 145

³¹ Guldescu, 484

³² Bidwell, 209

While royalist military effectiveness was declining rapidly, the republic was becoming more viable, largely because of help from Syria, Algeria, and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was instrumental in assisting the republican army in ending the royalist siege of Sana'a that had been in effect during the last quarter of 1968. The inability of the royalists to capture Sana'a convinced the Saudis that continuous support of the royalists was now a liability. Events in the peninsula had been instrumental in their decision. Not only was the republic showing signs of stability, but also it was also apparent that it was the system likely to succeed in Yemen. Moreover, events in South Yemen had progressed considerably since the British departure. The Egyptian-backed Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY), which had taken control of South Yemen before the British departed, lost the power struggle with the radical National Liberation Front (NLF), the Soviet-backed party. To the Saudis, the NLF was an outright communist party, and the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen was viewed clearly as a communist regime. It became imperative for the Saudi government to seek improved relations with the republican regime in Sana'a in order to make possible a unified action against the NLF.

The disintegration of the royalists as a military force may be said to have occurred in the middle of 1969, when the republican forces opened the Sana'a-Taiz road, which had been closed by the royalists for 15 months. In March 1969, Mohammed ibn al-Hussein resigned as the imam's deputy. The cohesiveness of the Hamid al-Din family withered. In October 1969, the republican forces captured the last royalist stronghold. After seven years and countless thousands dead, the war in Yemen came to an end.

The Khartoum Agreement was the event that finally allowed for Saudi and Egyptian disengagement from Yemen. The need to refocus energy from the Yemen conflict into a defensive posture against Israel is a reaction to the new *third party threat*.

The third point of the Khartoum Agreement demonstrates both the presence and importance of this variable:

The Arab Heads of State have agreed to unite their political efforts at the international and diplomatic level to eliminate the effects of the [Israeli] aggression and to ensure the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands which have been occupied since the aggression of June 5.³³

Nasser’s inability to achieve decisive military victory in Yemen, coupled with the creation of the new, more important objective of uniting against what the Arab states saw as Israeli “aggression” finally allowed both sides to disengage from Yemen and put an end to the Yemen war.

Hypotheses

Onset

- When two states demonstrate geographic contiguity, a crisis is more likely to occur.
- When two regimes hold contradictory and hostile ideologies, a crisis is more likely to occur.

Escalation

- When a violent trigger occurs between two or more inter-state actors, a crisis is more likely to occur.
- When involvement in a conflict becomes a matter of national pride, escalation is more likely to occur, even when victory may not be possible (prospect theory).

De-escalation

- If two states are at war with one another but a third state emerges as common enemy that poses a threat to each, the first two states are more likely to de-escalate their own conflict in favor of repositioning to address the problem of the third state.
- When national pride causing irrational escalation, a face saving diplomatic agreement with the enemy will lead to de-escalation.

³³ Khartoum Agreement, 1967. § 3. Text of the agreement is available at http://www.hsje.org/histo_documents/khartoum%20resolution.htm

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