Iran's Political Role in Yemen and Syria Crises: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Iran has formulated policies to expand its ideology to Middle East nations since 1979 and these policies were expressed as direct or indirect military involvement in all Middle East crises such as in Syria and Yemen. Indeed, economic, political, and military interest were the real driven factors for Iranian involvement under the cover of expanding ideology. Political control is the door for gaining economic interests similar to what happened in Iraq. The aim of this research was to analyze the political role played by Iran in the current Yemeni and Syrian crises by employing a desk research design. The analysis shows that although Iran's interest in both countries is ultimately the same, the approach used to achieve this interest is relatively different. Iran's approach in Syria is contained within the interests of major players and tends towards promoting ceasefire and starts peaceful negotiations among parties and this approach could be considered positive. On the other hand, in Yemen, Iran seems to be conducting activities through the Houthis that disrupt peace and destabilize economic activities and this approach is considered negative. In both cases, Iran's involvement is a sword of two edges, either translated into political win or war attrition. In conclusion, political ideology of the Iranian regime is the only way of its survival. This will put Iran in a rather unenviable position, and it could bring a lasting peace to Syria and Yemen.

Introduction

The Middle East has been renowned as the world's most turbulent territory for many years with a series of unprecedented crises in the region. Terrorism, poverty, autocracy, and international cross-affairs are the main driven factors for Middle East crises (Abadie, 2006) and the spark of Arab spring era (Kim & Sandler, 2020). Lister and Campling (2017)) puts it that the uprising by the Arabs have stunned this catalogue of terrors, but the most fundamental cause of theses series of crises is often captured in the political order shaped by years of autocracy and cross-affairs of international superpowers. The issue of sectarianism and extremism that often permeates the region is not a fallout of the activities of protesters, whose drive was to overthrow the ruling powers, but this situation is created by the different political regimes (Lynch, 2018).

However, it has become imperative to evaluate the roles that were played by the prominent and powerful western countries during the crises in Syria and Yemen. In 2015, the Syrian crisis in the region took a significant turn and at the same time crisis in Yemen followed through, both of which were internationalized at the same time. Although focusing on these regions could be attributed to be neo-realistic, it can be justified on the basis that in the Middle East, the state is considered to be the main determinants of the patterns of events in the constituent states, and as such, the resulting anarchy triggers security concerns for all (Korany & Dessouki, 2019).

Iran is a powerful influential country in the Middle East and exerts its influence just like Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Unlike some Middle-Eastern countries, Iran has severely challenged the interest and influence of western countries and even defiantly challenged the United States of America. Despite multiple sanctions from the European Union and the United States, Iran has been described as a rising power in the Middle East and with its nuclear program, it can become a contender for a world power (Saikal, 2019).

Iran has formulated policies to expand its influence on some other Middle East nations including Yemen, and Syria. It has had contentions with countries like Iraq and Saudi Arabia due to economic, political, and military interests. Iran has succeeded in executing some of her plans of gaining a bulk control of affairs related to some Middle East states (Cooper, 2012). Among its success is the military influence it wields in Yemen and Syria. Leaders in Iran are more concerned with the dominance and continuity of the territory. They wish to promote the affairs of Iran in ways that position them as prominent players in global politics and economy while deterring powerful opponents with more sophisticated military power and alliance with the western regions (Nasr, 2018). They respond promptly to reject polices and strategies that promotes fear, isolation, and dominance, and as such their role in conflicts and crises in the eastern region, particularly Yemen and Syria deserves attention (Grumet, 2015; Mason, 2014).

The aims of this research were to evaluate and critically analyse the political role of Iran in the Yemeni and Syrian crises and propose potential outcomes of this role relative to the ongoing Yemeni and Syrian crises. Although, several studies have been conducted under different themes on the Yemeni and the Syrian conflicts since the onset of these crises, most of these studies have studied each country in isolation. There is very limited literature that have examined the political role of Iran in the Yemeni and Syrian crises. Hence the current study was conducted to fill this gap in literature.

Research Methodology

This study employed desk search to conduct a comparative and interpretative analysis of the political role that Iran is playing in the current crises in Syria and Yemen. The researcher made an in-depth evaluation of the historical background of the crises in Yemen and Syria, and Iran's political involvement to understand the relationship between Iran and the two countries under study. A qualitative approach was used to make comparison of Iran's involvement in the ongoing crises in the two countries. The data collected were secondary data obtained from sources that are related directly to the theme of the research. The data for this study were collected from scientific publications in the form of journals, books, doctoral dissertations, scientific articles, theses, print and online media, as well as other sources applicable to the research theme. Moreover, the researcher used important documents like laws, foreign policy, surveys,

reports, and other materials both online and in print to shore up and complete the primary data used in research.

Literature Review

- *History of the Political Crisis in Yemen*

Yemen is surrounded by maritime borders with some North African countries and other Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Oman (Figure 1). Yemen's geographical location plays a very important and invaluable role in world trading (McLaughlin, 2014).

Figure 1: Yemen political map
(https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/yemen)

Over the years as history relates, Yemen has been experiencing tensions caused by political social and economic factors (Brandt, 2017; Burrowes, 2016). The history of the region reveals (and Iran too claims) that Yemen was a part of the Persian empire (Terrill, 2014), for example, in 575 AD, the king of Yemen, Seif bin Zi Yazan, beckoned on the Persian government of the time to push the Abyssinian's army out of Yemen. The Persian government arrived at Yemen and fought against the Abyssinian soldiers. As a result, the Persian government (present day Iran) controlled the affairs of Sana in Yemen (Al-Medej, 1983). This historical background indicates that despite the fact that Iran does not share a direct border with Yemen, their political and military prowess have made them expand their influence into middle eastern countries like Yemen in a bid to become a leading force in the region (Al-Medej, 1983; Beck, 2020). Moreover, Iran is also interested in the political and economic affairs of Yemen because it sits under Saudi Arabia which is a core rival of Iran. Secondly, Iran does not like that Saudi Arabia takes part in the Yemeni crisis by strongly backing the Houthi fighters.

Brandt (2017) observes that tribal sentiments in Yemen represents an internal factor that is prone to cause crisis and this is obvious in the Houthi movement. The Houthi for years has been opposing the government while they sought to grab power and control of Yemen. Selvik (2015) reported that former president Saleh was a dictator and had mismanaged the political and economic structures of the state, which had led to unemployment, tribalism, and economic breakdown (Selvik, 2015). Moreover, the Houthi group which formed an ally with the former president also considered him as a dictator which led to his death at the hands of his purported allies, the Houthi group.

However, in modern times, the crisis took a different dimension when revolutionist groups attacked the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In 2012, about a year after the opposition became intense, President Saleh was forced to resign and Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the former vice president, took over the power and undertook measures to unite the government in accordance with the agreements reached with the opposition. Surprisingly, in 2014, the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, aligned with the Houthi movement (who over the past years have been opposing and threatening the government) to take control of Sana, the capital of Yemen (Brandt, 2017; Burrowes, 2016; Yadav, 2020). President Hadi resisted the movement by Saleh and Houthi, however, a coup led by both allies, Saleh and Houthi group, overpowered president Hadi from Sana and forced him to move to Aden, a commercial city in Yemen, as a temporary capital. In March 2015, United Arab Emirate (UAE), and her neighbour the influential Saudi Arabia (KSA) recognised president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi as the legitimate president; consequently, KSA and UAE took measures to fight against President Saleh and his Houthi allies (Popp, 2015).

The alliance between former president and the Houthis have been described as weak and dicey, which was formed during a crisis by parties (Al-Akwaa, 2017). The desperation to hold on to power blindfolded the former president Saleh into forming an alliance with a group which had sought to get power and had heavily opposed him for more than 20 years. Meanwhile, former president Saleh had killed a Houthi leader Hussein Badr Al-Deen Al-Houthi during a battle between the Houthi and the government in 2004 (Day & Brehony, 2020; Salisbury, 2015; Salmoni, Loidolt, & Wells, 2010). The unforgiving memory and the suspicion between the former president and the Houthis prompted the bloody separation of the alliance in December 2017, much worsened by suspicion of corruption, mismanagement and accusations and counter accusations. As a result, Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) and the Houthi fighters were engaged in a bloody fight and the former president and some of his loyalist were killed and the GPC was divided into a group that allied with the Houthis and another group allied with president Hadi (Brandt, 2017; Yadav, 2020).

Meanwhile, since Saudi Arabia backed the government led by President Hadi, it gained support from countries like United States of America and United Arab Emirates and other Arab countries. The Hadi led government controlled the south while Houthis with fragments of GPC controlled the north. The killing of the former president did not weaken the power of the Houthis, instead it gave them a clear role in decision making. At present, Yemen is still in turmoil as the Saudi backed government of the south continues to battle with the Houthi led government of the North (Clausen, 2018; Juneau, 2016).

o   *Iran's Role in Yemeni Crisis*

In modern times, after the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran's interest in Yemen took a different turn. Iran started granting scholarships to some Yemeni students to get their education in Iranian universities. Iran constructed temples and other institutions of secular and religious learning in Yemen. Its aim was to sell its ideology in an attempt to incite a revolution in Yemen Juneau(Juneau, 2016; Salisbury, 2015). Moreover, Iran's role in Yemen was more evident in 1990, during the union between the south and north of Yemen. These activities were expanded especially when Iraq, former ally of Yemen, had harsh international sanctions imposed on her as a result of its invasion of Kuwait. Iran promoted its interest and its political ideology by supporting the Shiite Twelver sect in a clandestine act of visits as well as inviting some popular Yemeni scholars to visit Iran in the name of conferences and as a result the Shiite Zaidi factions collaborated with Iranian government (Salamey & Othman, 2011; Terrill, 2014; Transfeld, 2018).

During the Kim and Sandler (2020), Iran gave maximum support to the revolutionary Houthi group who were fighting against the Yemeni government in a bid to ignite a revolution which Iran had for years been steaming. In 2011, Iran no longer masqueraded its activities in Yemen as it now aimed to upturn the government and support the Houthi fighters. It supported their political ideologies, facilitated Yemen with economic empowerment, finance, weapons and even soldiers. Iran also developed close relations with some political and religious Yemeni leaders such as Ali Salem al-Beid, a former president of Yemen (Saul, Hafezi, & Georgy, 2017; Seddon, 2014).

Mohamed (2018) reports that Houthi fighters, former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the Iran government signed agreements to share trade on oil, electricity, aviation and sea shipments. Iran agreed to establish electricity generating plants in northern Yemeni cities such as Aden, Hodeida and Taiz. These agreements showed that Iran was no longer being clandestine in their quest to control political and economic activities of Yemen. Their support to the Houthi fighters was well noticed by countries such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (Transfeld, 2018).

It was reported that Iran's main interest in Middle East countries such as Yemen was in a bid to control affairs of the Middle East (Ramazani, 2004).

It is worthy to note that Saudi Arabia and Iran do not have a healthy relationship because Iran sees Saudi as an economic and political rival. Yemen sits under Saudi Arabia in the map; if Iran can exert control over Yemen, then it would have succeeded in dealing a deathblow to Saudi Arabia (Berti & Guzansky, 2014). History shows that Iran, formerly Persia, has the desire to control the whole of Persian peninsula and that desire has not been inundated. By means of their nuclear programmes and political expansion in Middle Eastern states, Iran has rejuvenated that ambition of being the main influential state in Middle Eastern countries (Mason, 2014). Iran seeks to control Yemen because of the geographical location of Yemen in the Middle East as it is located in an international channel. The Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Bab Mandab are passages that link the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. The controlling of the the economic and political structure of Yemen is of great advantage to Iran (Clausen, 2018; Juneau, 2016). It is also observed that Iran borrowed the idea of death to America and death to Israel as tools to mobilise youths in Yemen to support the cause of the Houthi fighters. This strategy worked for them as they were able to get support of the Houthi fighters from youths who were willing to protect Yemen from western influence (Mohamed, 2018; Sharp & Brudnick, 2015).

Ibrahim (2016) observed that Iran employed religion as a weapon to influence the Houthis into accepting its support. In fact, Ibrahim opines that Houthi movement was founded with support from Iran. This indicates that Iran over the years have identified Yemen as a state that can be used to realise its revolutionary aim of gaining political control of the affairs of the middle east, and this is one reason why Iran gave support to the alliance of Houthi and the president Saleh to resist the Saudi led coalition in Yemen. The war in Yemen is clearly between the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Houthi fighters in the North. Saudi Arabia and its allies are supporting the northern government while Iran is backing the Houthis. This has strengthened them to put up a fight with the government of the South. Presently, due to the face-off between the Houthis and the death of the former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Houthi fighters are now independent of a clear Iran's backing. Yet, they are still capable of resisting the authority of the Saudi supported government in the south (Antonopoulos & Cottle, 2017).

There are three conflicting parties in Yemen as observed by Exum (2017). The first is the national conflict between the Saudi-led military coalition backing the legitimate government of Yemen versus the resisting Houthis and its backed allies. The second conflict is better described as external and clandestine. It is the quest of Iran to exploit the crisis in Yemen so that they can get control of the Bab al Mandeb Strait which can be advantageous for trade. The third is the United States anti-terrorism campaign against Al Qaeda whose presence is felt in the Arabian Peninsula (Exum, 2017). This shows that Iran is not concerned about restoration of peace until it achieves its aim of wielding power in the Arabian Gulf.

- *History of the Political Crisis in Syria*

Syria is another Middle East country suffering a crisis Juneau (2016) . Syria is located in South-Western Asia. It is bounded to the North by Turkey, to the East by Iraq, to the South by Jordan and Palestine and to the west by Lebanon (Figure 2). The capital is Damascus and based on history, Syria (Damascus) is an ancient state.

Figure 2: Syria political map
(https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/syrian-arab-republic)

In 2000, Hafez Al Assad died and his son Bashar al Assad become the Syrian President. Bashar al Assad sustained the stringent policies of his father of allowing limited freedom of speech and public association. Worst still, Bashar al Assad is described as financially corrupt who mismanaged the resources of Syria to an extent that sects of opposition gradually gained momentum and defiantly opposed some policies of the government (Dagher, 2019; Lesch, 2012).

The year 2011 was a turning point in the history of Syria when the Arab spring started. At the beginning, protesters peacefully asked the government to restructure its policies and allow citizens to exercise their fundamental human rights of freedom and justice. However, president Bashar followed the same policy of his father's in dealing with the protest and he was vehement about it. Using weapons and other military tactics, he was able to disperse the protesters and some of them were killed, or arrested or injured. In late 2011, the protesters adapted the role of rebels and those who were dominated by the Sunni group in Syria, armed themselves and attacked the government. The result was catastrophic and laid the foundation for a civil war in Syria (Carpenter, 2013; Qureshi, 2018; Van Dam, 2017).

Phillips (2015) observes that the crisis rocking Syria in early times was caused by the wanton manner and Hafez al Assad managed opposition to governmental policies (Phillips, 2015). In his words, he said Hafez al Assad

was "killing anybody who stood against him". The Syrian army does not have national interest as its primary objective instead their major concern was to promote and protect the interest of the Baath party and any other sect loyal to Hafez al Assad. The leadership role played by the Assad family contributed to the crisis that Syria faces today. Turmoil, uprisings and protest in the Middle East is a result of bad leadership. He opines that most leaders in the Arabian regions are autocratic and this has given rise to the formation of sects, extremist and calls for gender rights (Lynch, 2018).

o   *Iran's Role in Syrian Crisis*
Syria has been Iran's closest ally in the Middle East. This alliance is what Iran also wishes for in Yemen with hopes that they can control major events in the Middle East without being strained by their major rival, Saudi Arabia (Hetou, 2018). Nasur (2014) listed reasons why Iran and Syria are described as close allies in the Middle East: (1) Some Middle Eastern states like Syria and Iran do not believe in democracy. Both states share the same interest as it relates to regime survival. So, Iran is in Syria to protect the regime of the Assad. (2) Iran has always raised the slogan of western imperialism resistance in the Middle East and this idea has been bought by their ally, Syria. Iran is in Syria to protect the national security structure of Syria and also promote the territorial integrity of the region. (3) Israel and American influence in the Middle East embitter dictators like Assad and his partners. Syria is a channel through which Iran ensures that Israel and America influence stays under inspection and is contained. (4) Lebanon is close to Syria and Israel. The Syrian autocratic government and the revolutionary Tehran makes use of Lebanon to inflict tough measures against rival countries in the Middle East, especially Israel. So protecting Syria also means having control in Lebanon. (5) Religiously, both regimes are allies. The Syrian leadership is Alawite which is a Shia Muslim group similar to the Iranian regime. So, Iran sees it as an obligation to support and protect Syrian government under Bashar al Assad. (6) Iran has a major ambition to be the leading state in Middle East and to achieve this aim it ensures that it protects the trusted state in Syria. Letting go of her trusted ally in the region means an end to its hope of toppling Saudi Arabia and her allies (Nasur, 2014).

The defeat of Assad in Syria will mean a defeat of Iran's interest, as such, the Saudi Arabia decided to support Syrian opposition because it perceived that Iran will ultimately support the Syrian government of Assad regime. In a bid to prevent Iran from exploiting the event into her gain, therefore, Saudi Arabia supports the opposition in order to disarm the Syrian government, who Iran gives physical and military support (Berti & Guzansky, 2014; Hashemi & Postel, 2017; Phillips, 2015).

From the foregoing, it is interesting to note that Iran is in Syria to support the autocratic government of Assad's because Iran considers him and his political family as close allies who are willing to defy international sanctions and regional restrictions to help Iran actualise her desire to gain political control of the Middle East.

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Findings

The presence and operations of Iran is conspicuously registered in Yemen and Syria. Iran tends to use non-state players as coalitions in Yemen. However, Iran has also deployed its military personnel to Syria in support of the current government of the country. This reality is evident in the manner Iran has supported non-state players like Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine, Iraqi Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Lebanese Hezbollah, Afghan Shi'a fighters and so on in the Middle East. Moreover, in forming coalitions with non-state players, Iran tends to be hard-headed in first providing support for all players in any country it is interested in, then choose the most loyal and most influential and eradicate others that are not loyal or useful.

In Syria and Yemen, there are many prominent terrorist groups that have been a threat to political stability in these countries. According to data gathered by the Global Terrorism Index published in 2020, Syria ranks 4th while Yemen ranks 6th as the countries that are affected most by terrorism globally(Yin, Zhang, & Li, 2020). The most dominant and active groups in Yemen are Ansar Allah or Houthis, followed by Ansari Sharia or AQAP, and then ISIS. In Syria, the most active groups include ISIL, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. Since 2015, the Houthis have become the deadliest group, overpowering AQAP, while ISIL has remained the deadliest group in Syria from the same year (Yin et al., 2020).

Although Iran tends to support the government of Syria, it does so mostly through a number of loyal non-state actors including Syrian Hezbollah, Iraqi Shi'a militias, Lebanese Hezbollah and Afghan Shi'a fighters. This observable fact is without doubt, linked to the role of Iran, which has been providing support to Houthi, Hezbollah and other militia groups in Syria and Yemen both through military training, advice and funding. Houthis are active in the Ma'rib and Taiz regions, AQAP in the Lahij and Abyan regions, while ISIS is in the south coast region of Aden. When considered from the perspective of opposition to the Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the US, these groups have the potential to form alliance with Iran. In spite of the similarity of the common rival, Iran chooses to support and form alliance with the Houthis. Juneau (2016) states that Iran does support certain actors on the basis of shiism. For any group to get help from Iran, it only has to stand against the status quo, which is dominated by the United States and its allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel. This reality is evident in Iran's support for Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine, which are the primary rivals to Israel.

Another evidence of the presence and operations of Iran in Yemen and Syria is enshrined in the financial assistance provided by Iran to different groups in these countries. This support is reportedly used for oil subsidies, economic assistance, military assistance and commodity transfers in Syria. However, the one hundred million dollars received by Yemen was used to fund militia activities and alliance with Iran. The main reason for this financial support and alliance with groups in these countries is for Iran to

gain their loyalty, eliminate other groups that are not loyal to them and thus gain political power in the Middle East.

The perception of imperialism, particularly against the United States and Israel is also a reason for the alliance between Iran and these two countries, Yemen and Syria. To Iran, the United States have been making efforts to wield influence on Iran for a very long time. Prior to the Shah's entrance into power, the Iranian Prime Minister was overthrown by Britain and the United States, eventually; they made the Shah the leader and marionette of the United States. The influence of the United States was dominant and evident in Iran during Shah's regime (Jalil, 2011). The relationship between the United States and Iran started becoming weaker after the 1979 Revolution of Iran.

The United States' biggest worry for Iran is related to the nuclear power project that is being built by the country with the world's most notable Shiite preponderance. The United States' concern for Iran's nuclear project stems from Iran's potential to deter Israel and the United States from making policies in the Middle East. In 2003, the Houthis shouted anti-United States slogans which were exactly the same as those chanted in Iran during the 1979 Iranian revolution. Iran's alliance with Syria is also highly anti-Israel. The spate of the 2011 Syrian civil war gave Iran an ample opportunity to establish military presence in Syria. Through its existence in Syria, a land route could be built connecting Shia enclaves from Iran to the Levant, to enable Iran's control in the Middle East. The deployment of Iranian forces and Shia militia groups led by Iran to Syria under the charge of Quds was initially meant to help Assad; however, Iran was to parlay its victory against the rival into a permanent presence in Syria, just few kilometres away from Israel's northern font. These groups in Syria led by the Quds force were potential tools in any future military conflict with Israel (Zeina, 2018).

The involvement of Iran in the Yemeni and Syrian crises is mainly for political and economic gains. If Iran manages to get control of Syria and Yemen as well as the strategic regions surrounding these countries which are world trade centers, these positions could be used to improve Iran's economic conditions which are largely affected by economic sanctions by the United States at the moment. However, Iran's economic interests in these countries are not as significant as its political interests. Any economic interest will be fully and easily achieved if Iran can gain full political control of these countries.

Discussion

Iran pursues a supra-nationalist foreign policy such that when implemented, it will result in the improvement of its national performance. The direction of Iran policies impacts on the activities of the Eastern region. It was noted that Iran's policies are somewhat revolutionary and this is demonstrated in the Syrian and Yemeni crises (Mamadkul, 2014; Vatanka,

2020). The implications of the strategic response of Iran towards Syrian and Yemeni crises shows tendency for political and economic dominance. This assertion is supported by the revolutionary strategy Iran adopts in response to crises in the Middle East which often is capture in nature and delivery of its policies in this regard (Mossalanejad, 2020; Nasr, 2018; Vatanka, 2020) .notable strategy of Iran in both cases of crises (Yemen and Syria) is the quest to champion the course of Islamic ideology, especially in the Yemeni region. Promoting the development of new Islamic political system throughout the Middle East was a prominent motive for the role played by Iran during the crises (Mousavian & Chitsazian, 2020; Nasr, 2018; Uzun & Ekşi, 2017).

From the foregoing, a comparative evaluation of Iran's role in Yemeni and Syrian crises revealed that the major driving factors for Iran's role in the Syrian crises is the strong political and economic relationship both countries promote. Syria has been a long and important ally of Iran. In the past, Syria was the only Arab country that conspicuously stood by Iran in 1980 to 1988 when Iran was experiencing the difficultly of war against Iraq. During that period, the Alawite leaders and the Shia shrines strengthened their strategic relationship by applying the principle of sympathy, while in Tehran, the need to maintain a land bridge to Hezbollah in the Lebanon territory solidified (Balanche, 2018; Deeb, 2013; Norton, 2018).

In the case of Yemen, Iran's role in the crises was promoted by the vacuum resulting from the weak and vulnerable region of Yemen which served as an expansion signal for Iran to advance their influence and realize their target in the new state (Lackner, 2019; Sharp & Brudnick, 2015; Vatanka, 2020). While Iran's role in the Syrian crises is defined by established relationship, that of Yemen is defined by the intent to expand political and military interest to Yemen region. Certainly, Iran's focus was to establish a proxy group to ensure a complete control of Yemen region (Mabon, 2018). However, the position of Iran in Yemen was not absolute, and scholars believe that it was bound by major challenges that could hamper the chances that could foster the attainment of Iran intent in the Yemen territories (Kendall, 2019).

Again, in 2014, Iran was interested in endorsing a settlement for the Syrian crises because it called for a ceasefire to ensure that the Syrian minorities are protected and to pave the way for a new constitutional reform, to promote a free and better election, and to ensure that the country maintains national unity based on the dictates of the constitution. This shows that Iran's role in Syrian crises was to establish the long-held coalition and peaceful relationship with Syrian government. Iran has huge investments in Syria, and as such, the intent to maintain peace was different in the case of Yemen (Hinnebusch, 2017).
For Yemen, Iran's role in the crises is based on the consideration of the gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Iran considered Yemen as a major point of interest to promote its status in the territory and confront its rival in terms

of region, and international political power especially the USA (Juneau, 2016; Vatanka, 2020). his explains why Iran played a major role in the Yemen crisis, adopting power through the pragmatic, sectarian and pursuit of ideology and soft power captured in the partnership with other prominent non-state actors such as the Hezbollah and the Houthis (Juneau, 2016; Vatanka, 2020).The intent is to adjust the power balance to promote its impact on Yemen and other close countries which have raised concerns about the implications of Iran's role in Yemen on the productive activities and regional security.

Other officials consider this pursuit in Yemen to be different in the case of Syria because Iranian role in Syrian crisis was to ensure that the status quo is restored. This means that Iran provides full support to the territorial integrity of Syria, and wants to ensure the partitioning of the Syria into various conflicting regions and partly independent territories is avoided (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015; Vatanka, 2020). However, in Yemen, gaining a better influence on the affairs of the region and also matching up to international rival countries like the United States defines the firms' intent to provide the Houthis a full support. In Syria, Iran's aim was to ensure the preservation of institutions, including the Syrian army and intelligence, while sustaining economic, social and political ties with Syria (Day & Brehony, 2020; Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015; Oktav, 2018; Vatanka, 2020).

Although, Iran's interest in both countries is ultimately the same, the approach used by Iran to achieve this interest is relatively different. Iran's approach in Syria tends towards promoting peace and settlement in that, as mentioned earlier, Iran has called for a ceasefire and peaceful negotiations among parties in Syria. Perhaps, because Iran has gained the trust and allegiance of the current Syrian government, but whatever the reason may be, since it calls for peace, this approach could be considered positive. However, in Yemen, Iran seems to be conducting activities through the Houthis that disrupt peace and destabilise economic activities in the region. This approach is considered negative. In both cases, Iran can be more positive by assuming a neutral role, farther than taking sides with who accepts its political ideology while opposing others. This will put Iran in a rather selfless position and it could bring a lasting peace to these countries.

Conclusion, Limitations and Implications

The premise of this study was to examine, comparatively, the role of Iran in Syrian and Yemeni crises. Iran is a prominent actor in both the Syrian and the Yemeni crises as noted in the study. The intent of Iran's role in the crises of both regions was borne out of distinct intentions which defined the pattern and strategic policies administered in both regions. Iran's involvement in the Syrian crisis was based on important strategic interest that have long been established and have gained relevance in recent times coupled with the intent on preserving long held relationship. In fact, from

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all indications, Iran is expected to continue promoting its interest in Syria far into the future. The involvement of Iran in the Yemeni crisis had a different implication; its intent was to promote a more domineering role and political influence in the Yemeni territories resulting from its relatively weak political and economic position. Iran's intent to advance political and economic will on the Yemen territories as established is further defined by the aim to intensify internal political power amidst other powerful countries like the United States. The study revealed that the drive to dominate the Yemeni region and to establish a better alliance in the Syrian region determined Iran's role during these crises.

Due to the role of Iran in the ongoing Syrian and Yemeni conflicts, peace may not return to these countries in the near future. This is because, like Iran, other players like Saudi Arabia and Israel who share close geographical relations with Yemen and Syria respectively see Iran as a threat to their national security and are determined to put all efforts to ensure that Iran do not establish political control in Yemen and Syria and maintain a war attrition. However, since this research was limited to the political role of Iran in the Syrian and Yemeni crises, further studies can be conducted to ascertain other roles, Iran plays in the conflicts in these countries. Also, further empirical studies should be conducted on this topic. Since this research focuses on the political role Iran plays in the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen, its findings are limited to this aspect and may not be generalized to other aspects. Also, the data used in the research are secondary data obtained from other studies. Thus, the findings of the research are limited to the scope of the studies from which these data were obtained. Lastly, the data used in the research were obtained from historical documentations and may not depict the current or future state of things in the countries involved.

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