

We affirm that the United States should end its arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Our sole contention is the end game.

The majority-Sunni Muslim kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the home of Shia Islam, Iran, have been at war in Yemen over geopolitical, economic and sectarian influence for years.

[Byman '18](#) explains that the roots of Yemen's civil war trace back to the early 2000's, when Houthi insurgents rebelled against the former administration, hoping to gain influence in the government. Taking advantage of chaos in the region, Houthi rebels conquered the Yemeni capital, extending their control over the following years. Fearing that Iran would use the Houthis to gain a foothold in Yemen, Saudi Arabia entered the war in 2015, with Iran soon following.

Ultimately, [Reardon '15](#) contextualizes that the Yemen conflict has ultimately turned into a proxy war, pitting Saudi Arabian forces against the Iranian-backed Houthis.

This December, UN peace talks in Sweden finally resulted in a ceasefire. Unfortunately, this truce is on track to fall apart, as [Mahmoud '18](#) explains, the Houthis see the ceasefire as a prelude to a full-scale military assault on the port city of Hodeida. The rebels have thus reinforced defensive positions in the city and begun building up their weapons stockpiles.

Breaking the ceasefire would bring the war back to square one, as [Wintour '19](#) explains that there are no mechanisms for quickly stopping fighting if it breaks out anew, and [Akebo '13](#) finds that broken ceasefire agreements are often followed by the most intense periods of violence since the start of the war.

However, there is still hope. [Edroos '18](#) writes that while the initial ceasefire is mostly “a trust-building exercise”, breakthroughs between the two parties are still possible, and necessary for a sustainable resolution to the war.

Ending US arms sales would strengthen the ceasefire in two ways.

First, changing the narrative.

[Hartung '18](#) writes, Saudi Arabia's military is heavily dependent on U.S. weapons and support, and wouldn't be able to operate effectively without it. Two-thirds of Saudi combat aircraft and tens of thousands of missiles are of American origin.

Consequently, [Bazzi '18](#) finds that US arms sales signal to Saudi leaders that a clear military victory in Yemen remains possible, leaving little incentive for them to accept a political settlement. The [Economist '17](#) confirms that previous attempts at negotiation have fallen flat due to unrealistic demands of complete surrender by the rebels.

Moreover, arms sales have fueled overconfidence in the Saudi regime. [Bandow '18](#) confirms, so long as Riyadh can count on a blank check from Washington, the kingdom will have no reason to temper its aggressive policies.

Indeed, Saudi Arabia has taken advantage of the armistice to encroach on more Houthi territory, as [Ahmed '18](#) finds that in the week following the ceasefire, Saudi Arabia launched 50 deadly airstrikes.

Second, abandoning Tehran.

The Houthi rebels' main ally thus far has been Iran. However, [Byman '18](#) explains that the Houthis desire one day to be independent of outside influence, and follow a sect of Islam closer to Sunnism than the Shiism practiced in Iran. For these reasons, the Houthis have been highly reluctant to accept Iranian support.

American presence is the cause of this unlikely alliance, as [Hiltermann '17](#) warns, the actions of Washington in the war in Yemen have only pushed the Houthis closer to Iran, out of desperation.

If the US ends arms sales, the Houthis will no longer be forced to rely on Tehran. Thus, [Byman](#) concludes, if Washington wants to counter Iranian ascendance, it must end its military support of Saudi Arabia.

Tehran cannot be a part of any lasting solution. [Torromah '18](#) reports Iran supports the Houthis through arms exports and military training – directly prolonging the conflict and moving the rebels away from a political settlement.

For all these reasons, [Mahanty '18](#) concludes that, without a congressional freeze on weapons to the coalition states, there will never be enough political space for peace negotiations to take root and end violence.

The impact is rebuilding Yemen.

A lasting ceasefire is key to stopping violence. The [UN '18](#) explains that brutality on both sides has made it “impossible” to deliver much-needed aid to the country. That’s why [Piper '18](#) states

that the ceasefire is necessary for facilitating flows of food, fuel and humanitarian goods to the war-stricken population.

[Wintour '18](#) adds, if the ceasefire holds, the odds of a permanent resolution are significantly higher.

The longer we wait, the more will be at risk. The [UN](#) ultimately reports that, due to the eruption of violence and subsequent blockages of aid, 14 million people could soon reach the brink of starvation, in what is labeled the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Please affirm.