

We negate.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are currently locked in a cold war for geopolitical power in the middle east. As Max [Fisher](#) at Vox explains in 2016, the two countries refuse to engage in outright military conflict, instead supporting opposite sides of the region's numerous civil wars with weapons, intelligence, and training. The two sides are not equal, as Raman [Ghavami](#) at the Independent writes in November that Iran is definitively the aggressor in the conflict, as its expansionist attitude has directly caused the conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen, all in attempts to divide the Arab world and undermine the Saudi's control of the region's key oil reserves. Yemen in particular is crucially important, as victory by the Iran-backed Houthi terrorists would give Iran a foothold on Saudi Arabia's southern border. Zack [Pyzer](#) at the Jerusalem Post confirms in January that Iranian control of Yemen would provide them substantial control over the world's biggest shipping lanes as well as directly undermining the Saudi's security. Furthermore, Houthi victory would cause massive human rights violations, as [Amnesty International](#) has accused them, among a number of other heinous human rights abuses, of systematically recruiting child soldiers to serve as their front line in the conflict. Fatima [al-Asrar](#) of the National Interest confirmed last year that the Houthis neglect basic sanitation infrastructure and regularly confiscate food and medicine from international aid groups, concluding that Houthi-controlled areas are universally in worse condition than those controlled by the Saudi-backed Yemeni government.

Fortunately, the Saudi-led international coalition is making progress now. Yousef [al-Otaiba](#) at the Washington Post wrote late last year that, thanks to American support, the coalition has driven the Houthis out of crucial strongholds along the Red Sea coast. As a result, Ramadan [al Sherbini](#) of Gulf News reported in November that a number of leading Houthis have defected and their defeat is imminent.

However, withdrawing arms transfers will undercut that success in two ways.

First, direct military weakness. Mohamad [Bazzi](#) of New York University wrote in September that American aid to Saudi Arabia has been critical to sustained victories in the region, and that a clear military victory remains possible. Specifically, Bruce [Riedel](#), senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, explains in October that the Royal Saudi Air Force, which has conducted thousands of airstrikes, is entirely dependent on American support to operate. Without the air force, the coalition will inevitably fail, as Michael [Knights](#) of the Washington Institute finds in 2018 that air support gave the coalition the surveillance and cover to capture every city it attacked.

Second, emboldening Iran. Deborah [Jerome](#) at the Council on Foreign Relations explained in 2017 that the technological advantages of US military equipment is unmatched by the Iranian armed forces, meaning arms sales present a significant deterrent to Iranian expansionism. As a result, Carlo [Muñoz](#) of the Washington Times found this week that ending arms sales would only embolden the Iranian regime, increasing their support for terrorist groups in the region like the Houthis.

In addition to their rampant human rights abuses, Houthi consolidation in Yemen has x impacts.

First, scaring Saudi Arabia. As Ben [Avni](#) at the New York Post wrote in November, Houthi victory would put Iran on the Saudi border, making the region more insecure and risking an all-out war. As a result, Yoel [Guzansky](#) of Tel Aviv University wrote in 2013 that absent US support they would be forced to acquire nuclear weapons to deter continued Iranian aggression and ensure their security. In particular, Ali [Ahmad](#) at Princeton University found in 2013 that Saudi Arabia has essentially already paid for its

nuclear technology through strategic investments in Pakistani nuclear projects, leading him to conclude that they could obtain nuclear weapons at will if deemed necessary. Eric [Edelman](#) at Yale confirmed in 2011 that Pakistan would be extremely likely to sell nuclear arms to Saudi Arabia, as they have offered to do so in the past. Ultimately, Edelman continues that Saudi nuclear proliferation would set off a regional nuclear conflict, as the proximity of states in the Middle East and the resulting short flight times minimizes the time to analyze warnings, triggering policies to “launch on warning,” leading to preemptive attacks.

Second, endangering the Red Sea. Natasha [Turak](#) at CNBC reported in July that an emboldened Iran with control by proxy over Yemen would be willing to strike crucial oil shipments going through the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb strait. Simon [Henderson](#) at the Washington Institute confirmed in 2017 that the Houthis will retaliate to international pressure on Iran by laying mines in the waterway and blocking passage, forcing vessels to travel around Africa instead of through the Suez, skyrocketing global energy prices. Ultimately, Pat [Westhoff](#) at the University of Missouri finds in 2012 that increases in oil prices increase global food prices by causing production and shipping costs of food around the world to skyrocket. This is problematic, as Pinststrup-Andersen, director of the International Food Policy Research Institute, finds that even temporary blips in food prices risk pushing 1.1 billion people into poverty across the globe.

High food prices kill billions.

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On a global scale, food supplies - measured by stockpiles of grain - are not abundant. In 1995, world production failed to meet demand for the third consecutive year, said Per Pinstrup-Andersen, director of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, D.C. As a result, grain stockpiles fell from an average of 17 percent of annual consumption in 1994-1995 to 13 percent at the end of the 1995-1996 season, he said. That's troubling, Pinstrup-Andersen noted, since 13 percent is well below the 17 percent the United Nations considers essential to provide a margin of safety in world food security. During the food crisis of the early 1970s, world grain stocks were at 15 percent. "Even if they are merely blips, higher international prices can hurt poor countries that import a significant portion of their food," he said. "Rising prices can also quickly put food out of reach of the 1.1 billion people in the developing world who live on a dollar a day or less." He also said many people in low-income countries already spend more than half of their income on food.