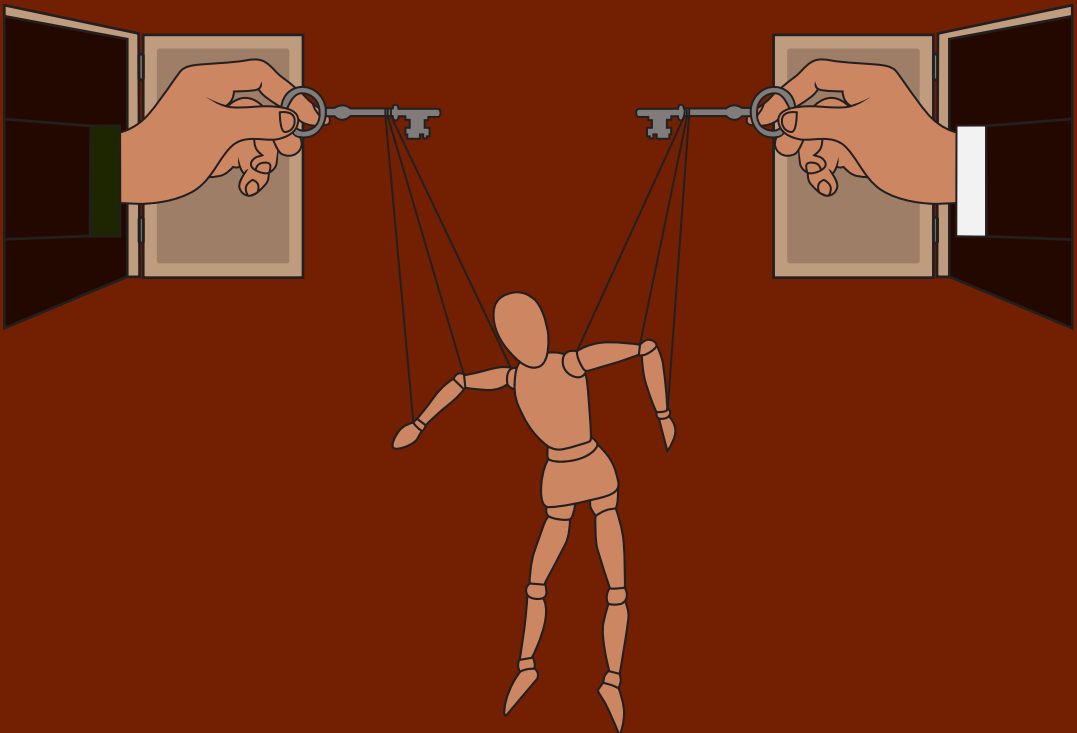
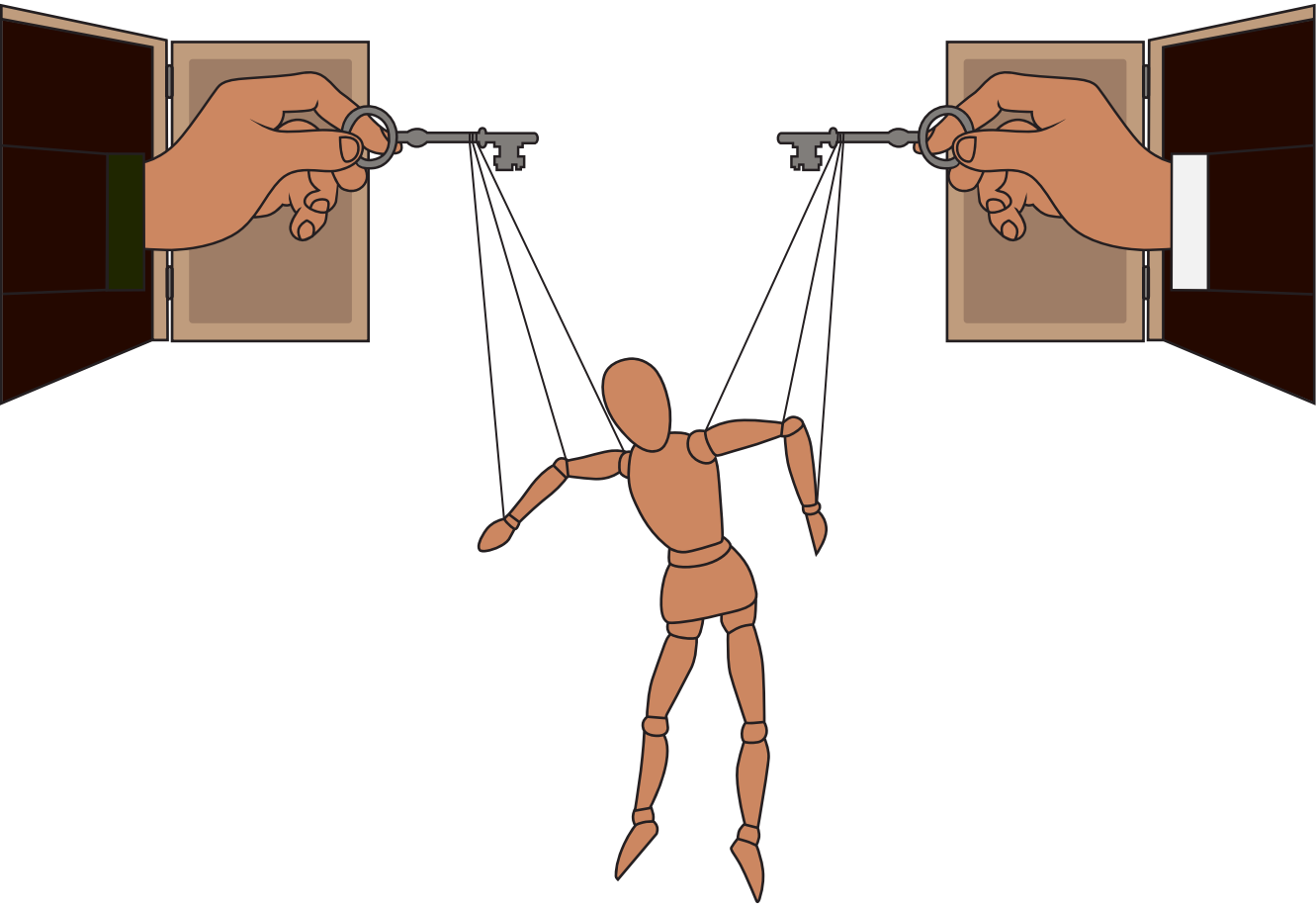


IIS BRIEF

*Power Competition at the Expense of Human Security:
The Urgency to Re-examine State-centric Policymaking*

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Power Competition at the Expense of Human Security: The Urgency to Re-examine State-centric Policymaking

A. Pendahuluan

Security, being a contested concept, has attracted many scholars and observers into determining its essential definition. Various analysis on the concept has blurred the framework and boundaries of security itself (Bhal, 2014). Altercation between national and human security, for instance, has created division among scholars. Yet, as states, with their status as duty bearers, should naturally provide security for their people, this essay will manifest on human security as an inseparable part of state's interest. Human security is a sense of protection over fundamental freedom, protecting individuals from all kinds of threats, which also constitutes freedom of fear, indignity, and want (Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, 2010). In recent years, competition among states has greatly disturbed human security.

Military confrontation carried out to pursue states' interest in the course of competition among states has been a significant source of insecurity towards individuals. This essay is going to demonstrate how state-centric decision making, especially in power competition has disturbed human security.

B. Framework

Before delving deeper into how states' military confrontation as a means for state competition disturbs human security, it is necessary to analyse the motivation of states that encourages them to derange human security, including that of their citizens. Jennifer Mitzen elaborated a security aspect pursued by states, called the ontological security which refers to the need for actors to wholly experience their identity as an agent in the system. States can only achieve such experience

of identity construction through certainty during interaction with other states. The preservation of this identity as the state's distinctiveness from others has become what Mitzen refers to as an ontological security-seeking attitude. In short, to preserve their ontological security, states desire to maintain the current recognition as their identity, even if it means assaulting human security (Mitzen, 2006). In resonance with Mitzen, Levy (1998) proposes that the desire to remain a hegemon encourages great powers to react everytime their hegemony declines. To contextualise the hypothesis, the paper will present two cases of power competition; Saudi-Iranian war in Yemen, and the Russian invasion against Ukraine.

C. Saudi-Iranian Proxy War in Yemen

The first political competition takes place in the interaction between Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shitte-dominated Iran, who both seek regional dominance in the middle east. Saudi Arabia serves as the status quo power which holds the status as the centre of the islamic civilisation. Iran, being revisionist, rose after its radical revolution, overthrowing a US-led government and replacing it with an islamic, anti-western administration, generating sympathy even from the Sunni community (Gopalakrishnan,2016, Radio Liberty, 2019 & Terrill, 2011). After the revolution, as well as the US invasion against Iraq, Iran has gained more and more regional power, especially with the shiites and kurds

forces exploiting the absence of authority in Iraq (Maloney, 2008), rising tension with Saudi Arabia. One of Iran's actions to spread its influence—through shiites—is backing up the Houthi rebel group who collectively see Saudi Arabia as enemy with Iran. In 2015, the Houthi forces began to control more of Yemeni land after their conquest of Hodeidah port. Restless, Saudi Arabia began building a coalition with UAE, Bahrain, and others to prevent Iran-backed Houthi forces from conquering a neighbour. Saudi Arabia wishes to prevent Yemen from falling under Iran's influence, like Iraq (Riedel, 2017 & Gopalakrishnan,2016). As a result of military confrontation between Saudi-backed and Iran-backed forces in Yemen, the UN considers it as one of the worst humanitarian crises. Food insecurity became a warring issue as the Saudi-led coalition attacked ports and airfields, blocking supply for food, water, and health infrastructure from coming in. They have also targeted rural areas where the majority of the area are civilian farms, destroying food supply. The competing forces have also seized and closed the Sanaa airport, breaking off the flow of humanitarian aid for civilians (Mundy, 2018). The UNDP observed that the war has caused around 370.000 deaths through both direct arm confrontation and indirect causes such as hunger and lack of healthcare (Robinson, 2022). In addition to the violation of the supply chain, the proxy war between Saudi and Iran has also disturbed the freedom of fear. Civilians in Yemen do not feel secure due to the constant assaults by the radical militias.

One time, a troop from the local forces shot a member of a secular club for allegedly spreading anti-islam sentiment. The local forces also refuse to bury the victim in the local cemetery claiming that he is not muslim. Yemenis with secular beliefs now live under fear of prosecution (El Yaakoubi, 2017). Attacks against journalists have further generated fear among the people. In late 2021, Rasha Al Harazi, who was a journalist, passed away due to a set-up explosion on her way to her pregnancy cheque. Reports stated that her husband is often critical towards the Houthi forces, and often documented human rights abuses by the forces. He also allegedly once worked for the Saudi media (Hodali, 2021). The interests of Saudi and Iran have created human insecurity amongst the Yemenis. Another trigger for fear directly comes from the threats of arms' offences by both Saudi and Iran backed forces. In January 2017 the Iran-backed Houthi forces sent an attack towards Saudi ally, the UAE. Few days later, Saudi Arabia and the UAE retaliated by attacking a detention facility in Saada. The retaliation is reported to have caused 80 civilian deaths—3 of whom are children, and 156 injuries with 2 children (HRW, 2022). The competition for regional dominance between Saudi Arabia and Iran has stimulated their military, as well as their coalition, to create battlefields in Yemen—and some other countries. The battle over Sunni-Shitte competition severely disturbs security of innocent Yemenis by taking their lives, and depriving them from their basic rights.

D. Russian Invasion Against Ukraine

The damage of power competition towards human security does not only occur on a regional scale, but also on a global level. As a legacy of the cold-war, Russian invasion against Ukraine had just revitalised power competition between the east and the west. Considering the post-soviet space as its sphere of influence, Russia expected the west not to intervene with its hegemonic domination in the region. However, NATO sees Russia as a threat to the democratic world, and considers expansion to the east as a securitising move. With NATO's continual expansion to the east—and potentially Ukraine, Russia felt it necessary to respond aggressively through military means to preserve its sphere of influence. The invasion by Russia in response to NATO potential expansion to Ukraine, and Ukraine potentially leaving Russia's sphere of influence started in late February this year (Villar, 2022). Since then, Ukraine has been a battleground for Ukrainian forces against the Russian army, creating an over 3 month long inter-state war. As a result of the war, 5 million ukrainians have fled to neighbouring countries, seeking refuge, while 7 millions become internally-displaced individuals. For individuals who are unable to find their way out of the battleground cities like Chernihiv and Mariupol, aid such as food and medical supply are often inaccessible due to the blockade (Dufour, 2022). In late March, as Russian troops backed off against the Ukrainian forces, journalists finally found their way to Sumy, and discovered a great humanitarian

catastrophe. Survivors bore witness that the city was under shelling 24/7, that going out to get some food or charge their phones would be a gamble. Authorities found hundred of bodies, some of them, showed traces of torture by the forces (Mirovalev, 2022). As if the impact of the Russian invasion against the Ukrainian residents is not severe enough, a further threat towards global human security is currently at risk. Ukraine, being an important food supplier for the world, now could not deliver their supply due to the war and blockade. Silos in the country are currently full with the undelivered supplies. The WFP predicts that the war might cause starvation for 44 million people (WFP, 2022).

E. Discussion

Two cases above have demonstrated that human insecurity increases along with escalation of power competition among states. As states pursue their state-centric interest, human security decreases. The cases above show that what states consider as a securitising measure has actually caused a bigger threat for human security. It prompts the urgency to redefine state interest and state security. If state security—both national and ontological—means insecurity for individuals outside the territory of the state, then one needs to start seeing security as a concept beyond borders. As duty bearers, states should collectively pursue security for their citizens, instead of disturbing one another. Leaning on the idea of state as duty bearer, it is also essential to highlight that although the battle ground

between Saudi and Iran are in Yemen, the Houthi did actually send an attack into the Saudi territory. It implies that Saudi's state centric decision to wage war with the Houthi has deranged the security of Saudi citizens. In other words, even in proxy war, states still put their territorial integrity at risk, hampering them from fulfilling their duty. Beyond territory, it is important to highlight that insecurity due to armed conflict will not instantly disappear once the war is over. Mentally, many will experience psychological trauma, and might struggle to recover from it. Economically, many would have lost their livelihood and will struggle to continue life. Public infrastructure would be nonfunctional due to the damage, preventing for instance, children from going to school, citizens from accessing the hospital, etc. Military confrontation, taking place due to the escalation of power competition brings a multi-layered insecurity for individuals that is not to end immediately. Such an event would impede societal development in general, securitizing individual freedom of indignity. To find possible solutions to the issue, one needs to identify some root causes. In the case of Yemen, it seems that negligence of human security comes from the gap between intra territorial and extraterritorial responsibility of states in guarding human rights. The ICCPR for instance, holds states responsible for civil and political rights of people within their territory, and territory where a state has effective control of—even if it is outside the state's border (Amnesty International, 2014). But Iran, being a party to the ICCPR (Centre for Human

Rights in Iran, 2011), might not consider itself to be in effective control of Yemen and hence does not take responsibility for their indirect involvement in causing human insecurity. In other words, there is little possibility that Iran would receive consequences either normatively or legally. When the arm embargo has proven to be ineffective in restraining Iran's mobilisation, cutting the network, or the track for arm supplies to Iran-backed forces now becomes a significantly important step to take. The trickiest part in holding the Saudi coalition accountable for their intervention is the support—both moral and material—from the world's superpower, the United States, who mutually see Iran as a threat. The Saudi and US conjoint interest against Iran impedes the enforcement of international legal measures (see Ward, 2021). Therefore, it is integral to involve all the parties, not just the proxies, in ending human insecurity in Yemen. Saudi Arabia and their allies deploying their troops to keep Yemen in their sphere of influence, and Iran backing up the Houthis to wage against the Saudi coalition, must take full responsibility for the proxy war they caused. Tawakkol Karman states that arms and weapons play a huge role in perpetuating insecurity in Yemen. All elements and actors allowing the Saudi coalition to deploy their military resources to Yemen, then, must face proper punishment and consequences (Karman, 2018). The restraint for Saudi and Iran should also apply to Russia. In reflection to the current situation, it looks like there have been more efforts by the western states to respond to the

insecurity in Ukraine, both because it directly affects their region, and because the west is not in favour of Russia winning the power competition. An example to the previous statement is the UN condemnation against Russia, as well as various sanctions they imposed against the federation (BBC, 2022). From the author's standpoint, the Russian invasion provides a model on how individuals can also play a role in guarding human security. Russian government is actively building their domestic legitimacy through informational warfare, constructing common knowledge that the Nazis are now in charge of Ukraine (Loveluck et al, 2022), and the west is an enemy. As a result, the invasion looks like it is done on behalf of the interest of some pro-war Russian community. This shows a new layer of individual responsibility to be critical against governments. Analysis on whether the pre-conceived "national interest" is harmful towards human security is vital. The Russian government manages to maintain its domestic legitimacy by portraying that the state's interest is the people's interest as well (see Beshenich, 2022). Being uncritical towards such claims would lead individuals into supporting operations that are detrimental to global human security in the long term.

F. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has elaborated how states come to pursue both material and non-material elements such as regional status and identity. The Yemen proxy war, and the Russian invasion against Ukraine portray the damage of

such pursuit, which both bring critical consequences for innocent people. Actors should take various measures to prevent state parties from blindly entering power competition without considering its consequences. To enforce it, there needs to be vertical integration of the world's constituents—from the state to individuals. Campaign against furthering state interest at the expense of human security should run as a moral obligation for state actors, non-state actors, and individuals. Further research might work on how to hold states accountable for insecurities they cause within and beyond their territories. All in all, the paper has manifested the urgency to re-examine state centric policy making mechanisms.

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