

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The Houthis' maritime strategies in the Red Sea during 2023–2024 evolved into a sophisticated counter-hegemonic campaign challenging the dominance of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and their allies. Lacking conventional military strength, the Houthis relied on low-cost asymmetric tactics such as UAVs, suicide drones, and anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, employing swarm attacks to overwhelm advanced missile defenses. Their operations targeted predominantly Israeli-linked vessels, exemplified by the 2023 hijacking of the MV Galaxy Leader, reflecting political solidarity with Gaza and ideological resistance to Israeli military actions.

Initially focused near Yemen's coast, the Houthis expanded their reach into broader Red Sea areas, including the strategically vital Bab el-Mandeb Strait, threatening global shipping routes and prompting significant regional and international security responses. Their persistent attacks exposed vulnerabilities in the hegemonic maritime control, forcing costly defensive measures on dominant naval powers and revealing a cost asymmetry favoring Houthi tactics.

Beyond military actions, the Houthis framed their campaign within a strong counter-hegemonic ideological narrative rejecting Western and Zionist dominance, symbolized by their slogan “Death to America, Death to Israel.” This narrative positioned them as defenders of oppressed peoples, contesting the legitimacy of the established maritime security order. The campaign also highlighted shortcomings in

international governance, as global institutions and coalitions struggled to effectively deter or neutralize the Houthi threat, revealing challenges in addressing asymmetric and ideologically driven non-state actors.

5.2 Research limitations

The limitations of the research on "The Houthis' Maritime Strategy in the Red Sea as a Counter-Hegemony to Zionism in the Region" are as follows:

1. **Temporal Scope Limitation:** The research focuses only on the period from late 2023 (after the October 7th attacks) to the end of 2024. This excludes earlier phases of Houthi maritime activities and limits understanding of longer-term strategic evolution.
2. **Geographical Limitation:** The study is restricted to the Red Sea region, particularly maritime routes affected by Houthi operations. It does not encompass broader Yemeni conflict zones or other regional maritime areas unless directly relevant.
3. **Actor Focus Limitation:** The research centers primarily on the Houthis as the unit of analysis, with limited examination of other regional actors or non-state groups unless they are directly linked to the Houthis maritime strategy.
4. **Data Source Limitation:** The study relies exclusively on secondary data from academic articles, official reports, media outlets, and think tanks, omitting primary data collection such as interviews or fieldwork, which may limit empirical depth.
5. **Operational and Tactical Analysis Limitation:** While it analyzes ideological narratives and regional impacts, the research acknowledges less emphasis on

detailed internal Houthi decision-making, factional interests, and evolving tactical innovations over time.

6. **Comparative Analysis Limitation:** The draft primarily compares Houthis' maritime strategies with a few other asymmetric maritime actors, lacking broader comparative frameworks that could enrich understanding of similar movements globally.
7. **Institutional and Governance Analysis Limitation:** Though touching on institutional aspects, the research might not fully explore the complexities of regional and international governance responses and their effectiveness.
8. **Theoretical Scope Limitation:** The use of Robert Cox's critical theory provides a comprehensive framework, but may limit engagement with alternative theoretical approaches that could offer additional insights.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on a comprehensive empirical assessment of the evolving technological capabilities of the Houthis' missile and unmanned systems arsenal. While current studies have documented the types and ranges of missiles and drones used by the Houthis, there remains a significant gap in detailed technical analysis of their operational effectiveness, command and control networks, and integration of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems. Investigating the extent to which Iranian and other external support shapes these capabilities, especially in terms of precision targeting and asymmetric warfare

innovation, will provide valuable insights for regional security and counter-strategy formulation.

Additionally, the geopolitical implications of Houthi maritime operations on global trade and international maritime security merit deeper exploration. Given the critical importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and Red Sea corridor for global energy and commerce, future studies should quantitatively model the broader economic consequences of Houthi disruptions, including freight rate fluctuations, insurance premiums, and rerouting costs. Research could also examine how increased naval deployments by regional and extra-regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia, the United States, China, and the UAE, affect strategic stability and the potential for escalation or conflict management in this vital maritime domain.

Another fertile avenue for research involves analyzing the sociopolitical dimensions of Houthi maritime strategies within Yemen and the broader region. Specifically, scholars should investigate how the Houthis' control of maritime chokepoints influences domestic legitimacy, resource access, and socio-economic conditions under their governance. Coupling this with the study of information warfare tactics employed by the Houthis, such as propaganda framing their maritime attacks as anti-imperial resistance, can enhance understanding of the narrative battles that accompany kinetic confrontations, shedding light on the movement's ability to sustain support despite military pressure.

Moreover, comparative studies contrasting the Houthis' asymmetric maritime tactics with those employed by similar non-state actors in other strategic chokepoints worldwide would enrich theoretical frameworks on insurgency, proxy warfare, and

hegemony contestation in maritime security. Drawing lessons from groups operating in the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Guinea, or the Malacca Strait, future research could propose nuanced policy and military responses tailored to the unique operational environments shaped by geography, technological access, and proxy patronage.

Finally, there is a critical need to study the prospects and challenges for diplomatic resolutions incorporating maritime security considerations. Future work should assess existing international legal frameworks, regional security arrangements, and peace process mechanisms in light of asymmetric maritime threats. Evaluating potential confidence-building measures, arms control agreements, or inclusive governance models that address the Houthis' strategic incentives to target shipping routes will be essential for sustainable conflict de-escalation and restoring safe maritime commerce in the Red Sea region.

