



Written by [Patrick J. Buchanan](#) on November 24, 2017

The US-Saudi Starvation Blockade

Our aim is to “starve the whole population — men, women, and children, old and young, wounded and sound — into submission,” said First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill.

He was speaking of Germany at the outset of the Great War of 1914-1918. Americans denounced as inhumane this starvation blockade that would eventually take the lives of a million German civilians.



Yet when we went to war in 1917, a U.S. admiral told British Prime Minister Lloyd George, “You will find that it will take us only two months to become as great criminals as you are.”

After the Armistice of Nov. 11, 1918, however, the starvation blockade was not lifted until Germany capitulated to all Allied demands in the Treaty of Versailles.

As late as March 1919, four months after the Germans laid down their arms, Churchill arose in Parliament to exult, “We are enforcing the blockade with rigor, and Germany is very near starvation.”

So grave were conditions in Germany that Gen. Sir Herbert Plumer protested to Lloyd George in Paris that morale among his troops on the Rhine was sinking from seeing “hordes of skinny and bloated children pawing over the offal from British cantonments.”

The starvation blockade was a war crime and a crime against humanity. But the horrors of the Second World War made people forget this milestone on the Western road to barbarism.

A comparable crime is being committed today against the poorest people in the Arab world — and with the complicity of the United States.

Saudi Arabia, which attacked and invaded Yemen in 2015 after Houthi rebels dumped over a pro-Saudi regime in Sanaa and overran much of the country, has imposed a land, sea and air blockade, after the Houthis fired a missile at Riyadh this month that was shot down.

The Saudis say it was an Iranian missile, fired with the aid of Hezbollah, and an “act of war” against the kingdom. The Houthis admit to firing the missile, but all three deny Iran and Hezbollah had any role.

Whatever the facts of the attack, what the Saudis, with U.S. support, are doing today with this total blockade of that impoverished country appears to be both inhumane and indefensible.

Almost 90 percent of Yemen’s food, fuel and medicine is imported, and these imports are being cut off. The largest cities under Houthi control, the port of Hodaida and Sanaa, the capital, have lost access to drinking water because the fuel needed to purify the water is not there.

Thousands have died of cholera. Hundreds of thousands are at risk. Children are in danger from a diphtheria epidemic. Critical drugs and medicines have stopped coming in, a death sentence for diabetics and cancer patients.

If airfields and ports under Houthi control are not allowed to open and the necessities of life and humanitarian aid are not allowed to flow in, the Yemenis face famine and starvation.



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What did these people do to deserve this? What did they do to us that we would assist the Saudis in doing this to them?

The Houthis are not al-Qaida or ISIS. Those are Sunni terrorist groups, and the Houthis detest them.

Is this now the American way of war? Are we Americans, this Thanksgiving and Christmas, prepared to collude in a human rights catastrophe that will engender a hatred of us among generations of Yemeni and stain the name of our country?

Saudis argue that the specter of starvation will turn the Yemeni people against the rebels and force the Houthis to submit. But what if the policy fails. What if the Houthis, who have held the northern half of the country for more than two years, do not yield? What then?

Are we willing to play passive observer as thousands and then tens of thousands of innocent civilians — the old, sick, weak, and infants and toddlers first — die from a starvation blockade supported by the mighty United States of America?

Without U.S. targeting and refueling, Saudi planes could not attack the Houthis effectively and Riyadh could not win this war. But when did Congress authorize this war on a nation that never attacked us?

President Obama first approved U.S. support for the Saudi war effort. President Trump has continued the Obama policy, and the war in Yemen has now become his war, and his human rights catastrophe.

Yemen today is arguably the worst humanitarian crisis on earth, and America's role in it is undeniable and indispensable.

If the United States were to tell Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that we were no longer going to support his war in Yemen, the Saudis would have to accept the reality that they have lost this war.

Indeed, given Riyadh's failure in the Syria civil war, its failure to discipline rebellious Qatar, its stalemated war and human rights disaster in Yemen, Trump might take a hard second look at the Sunni monarchy that is the pillar of U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf.

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Patrick J. Buchanan is the author of a new book, Nixon's White House Wars: The Battles That Made and Broke a President and Divided America Forever. To find out more about Patrick Buchanan and read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators website at www.creators.com.

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