

Disruption in Maritime Trade Routes from the Black Sea to the Red Sea Triggers Crisis of the World Economy. Escalation, from Israel-Palestine War into Iran-US War?

An air or land attack on Yemen would suddenly escalate the Israeli-Palestinian war into the Iran-US crisis.

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Global Research, December 26, 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)
Theme: [Global Economy, Intelligence](#)
In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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Keeping world maritime trade routes open is vital for the world economic balance.

The reason for the start of world wars was the struggle between continental powers and naval powers for control of the seas. When this struggle reaches the stage of armed conflict, the maritime transportation system begins to fail. In this context, in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, UK, then the USA until today, ensured their own hegemony and control of trade by directly and indirectly controlling maritime transportation on eight nodes and the routes connecting them. These nodes were Hormuz, Malacca, Bab El Mandeb, Gibraltar, Danish and Turkish Straits, and the Panama and Suez Canals. Germany in the First World War; The challenge of this order by both Germany and Japan in the Second World War triggered the war process. In both cases, the main factor that determined the inevitability of war was the decision of the hegemon at sea to intervene against the powers that wanted to go to sea. In both centuries, the Anglo-Saxon will did not want to share the seas with another power and wars became inevitable.

Node Points and Marine Transportation

In 2023, 12 billion tons of cargo carried over oceans and seas for world trade, or 86% of world trade, passed through these eight vital nodes. One of these straits and channels may be affected by war, civil war, natural disaster, accident, etc. Its closure for various reasons may disrupt global balances, especially energy markets. The Suez Canal was the longest closed of these nodes throughout history. It remained closed from the beginning of the 1967

Arab-Israeli War, known as the 6-Day War, until 1975.

USA Is Having Difficulty in Controlling Sea Transportation Routes

In this century, China and Russia are the dominant naval powers, challenging the Anglo-Saxon maritime will. Both their maritime power and their nuclear navy enable them to meet this challenge. On the other hand, the quantity and quality problems of the US and UK navies and the record low shipbuilding capability of both countries play an important role in this challenge.

However, at least as important as these factors is the chain of mistakes made by the USA in the fields of global leadership and ocean gendarmerie after the Cold War. They quickly became ruthless on the end of history thesis and the assumption that American power would continue forever.

They disintegrated Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. They caused the trouble of illegal immigration and refugee problems in Europe, especially in Turkey.

They weakened these countries by shaping the government and opposition, especially in countries close to the nodes and on the edge (such as Turkey), through NATO expansion, Color Revolutions, and FETO-type structures. They recklessly announced that the borders of 22 states would be changed with the Greater Middle East and North Africa Project (GMNA).

Today, the USA is reaping storms in the seas and oceans after the destructive winds it sowed after 1990. Also today, the United States faces serious challenges in the areas where it is strongest, and its job is difficult. Because the conditions are against him in every field. Most importantly, developments in land armament and unmanned aerial vehicles have developed to a degree that will affect activities at sea. The gunboat diplomacy of the 19th and 20th centuries is no longer as effective against coastal states as it was 100 years ago. Asymmetrical armament and unorthodox war tactics can affect the freedom of action of a powerful naval force. For example, on July 14, 2006, during Israel's intervention in Lebanon, the SAAR 5 class Israeli INS Hanit corvette was hit by Chinese-made CS 802 Silkworm missiles against a Hezbollah ship fired from the shore, while it was 10 miles off the coast of Lebanon. The world's most advanced corvette nearly sank in great disrepute to Israel. As another example, let's remember the sinking of the Moscow Cruiser, the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, on April 13, 2022. Who would have thought that the Russians' most powerful warship would be sunk by two Neptune missiles fired from land? Events at sea are now greatly affected by weapons on land.

Disturbed Balances

Russia's intervention in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and Israel's Gaza operation on October 7, 2023 were the dates when the world maritime trade balances were disrupted.

Russia intervened in Ukraine due to the ethnic cleansing of Ukrainians of Russian origin living in the Donbas Region of Ukraine and the expansion of NATO to its borders. First Azov and then the Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea coast became Russian military targets, and maritime trade there was cut off. Maritime trade, which had already decreased due to the Ukrainian mine threat in the region, came to a halt after July 17, 2023, when Russia and Ukraine declared maritime merchant ships as legitimate targets. Grain trade could continue only with a limited number of merchant ships.

On the other hand, Russia did not experience any interruption in its crude oil trade despite the heavy embargo and sanctions imposed on it. Especially with the Greek Ghost Fleets, Russian oil continued to reach world markets.

Imbalance in the Red Sea

The Israel-Palestine Conflict, which started on October 7, 2023, broke a new fault line in maritime trade routes a month later. The Iranian-controlled Houthis in Yemen, which has been experiencing a civil war since 2015, targeted ships carrying goods to Israeli ports in the Bab El Mandeb Strait, triggering the opening of a new front. Following these developments, many companies, including Danish Maersk, British oil giant BP and Chinese company OOCL, changed their routes to the Cape of Good Hope. This situation causes delays of 10-17 days in flights.

In an environment where Israel uses disproportionate force and carries out ethnic cleansing in Gaza, Yemen has opened a new front in an area that is the most sensitive in the world with its asymmetric strategy. After the Western Black Sea, the Red Sea routes have now become risky areas for maritime merchant fleets. On December 18, 2023, the Bahrain-based American Naval Task Force CTF 153 launched the multinational "Prosperity Guardian" operation to prevent Yemeni attacks on Israeli-focused ships in the Bab El Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea.

US Secretary of Defense Austin spoke of the 'rules-based order' when announcing the CTF coalition. But how will he explain the killing of nearly 20,000 people in just over two months? The operation was named 'Prosperity Guardian'. Whose welfare? While women and children are being killed in Gaza with a brutality unseen even in the Middle Ages, giving this name to the operation reminds us of NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg's statement, "We are the defenders of 1 billion people" at the last NATO summit in Lithuania in July 2023. Even if the remaining 7 billion is not for them, it is okay.

Wounded US Leadership

The operation was initially supported by the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Seychelles, Bahrain, Canada and Italy, under the leadership of the United States. However, later France, Italy and Spain stated that they would not come under US operational control. They declared that they would participate if there was an operation within NATO or the EU. (I evaluate that it will not be possible for Türkiye to approve such an operation when NATO proposes it.)

On the other hand, although CTF 153 was established by the USA and Egypt on April 17, 2022, under the Combined Naval Force (CMF), Egypt does not participate in the operation. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which have the largest navies in the region, are also not participating. CMF has been very effective in combating Somalia-based piracy in the past. Türkiye also provided ships to this force in the past.

But this time the situation is very different. Now, the problem is geopolitics. There are Israeli, American, British, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, South Korean, Spanish warships and Iranian intelligence ships in the region. However, only the USA and the UK are in a position to allocate ships to CTF 153. In this context, the Australian Government's announcement last week that it will not allocate warships to CTF 153 and the fact that Chinese warships did not respond to the call for help from merchant ships carrying cargo to Israel reveal how

weak, complex and sensitive the situation in the USA is.

Asymmetric Capacity of the Houthis

While the Houthis in Yemen have a large number of cheaply priced drones, ballistic missiles and anti-ship guided missiles, the western navies have very expensive and limited ammunition. While this ammunition should be kept ready for the major conflict with Russia and China, it does not make sense to spend it on Israel. An alternative could be to pass merchant ships in the form of convoys in the Red Sea. However, these ships will have to comply with the slowest ship and increase the probability of being hit. (See [this](#)) Meanwhile, Yemen has small boats capable of carrying high-speed explosives. These boats have not been used yet. However, if the decision is made, there is a high probability that they will attack and damage merchant ships, especially in night conditions.

Possibility of Expansion of the Crisis

As long as the Gaza massacre continues, the Houthis' attacks on maritime trade routes will continue.

On land, that is, on the coast of Yemen under Houthi control. These attacks will not stop without intervention by the USA. This would be tantamount to suicide for the USA.

An air or land attack on Yemen would suddenly escalate the Israeli-Palestinian war into the Iran-US crisis. In a conjuncture where major maritime trade companies have already given up on Suez and Bab El Mandeb, the world economy cannot handle such a crisis that will cause the Strait of Hormuz to be closed. In this context, American Rear Admiral James Stavridis, who was NATO's Allied Commander in Europe in the past, suggested in his latest article that CTF 153 should hit Iran-backed arsenals in Yemen, which would be a move that Israel most desires. (See [this](#)) Let us add that this is a desirable situation not only for Israel, but also for American neocons who want a war with Iran. However, getting stuck in such a new quagmire will undoubtedly be a nightmare for the USA, which has a low number of ships, and will create a golden opportunity for China and Russia.

Israel Will Continue to Use the USA

The United States is not willing to stop Israel in the Gaza strip. The UN has no function anyway. It will be very difficult for the Red Sea route to return to normal in an environment where Israel decides to expand the operation, let alone stop it. The Pandora's Box opened by Israel does not only kill innocent Gazans, it indirectly upsets the welfare and stability of the whole world. Unless Israel is stopped by the USA and the flow of weapons is stopped to Israel, the USA's global leadership will be greatly damaged and its collapse will accelerate. Israel, on the other hand, will continue to use the power of the USA for its own geopolitical goals before it collapses.

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