

Hadi's Fall, Rise of South Yemen, End of the War?

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Separatists just liberated South Yemen.

[Clashes](#) broke out in the country's interim capital of Aden, which was also the seat of government for the formerly independent country of South Yemen, over the weekend after President Hadi banned the "Southern Transitional Council" (STC) and its supporters from protesting him. The STC had given the Yemeni leader an [ultimatum](#) set to expire on Sunday to replace his allegedly corrupt government or face a revolt, and they claim that he ordered his soldiers to shoot at activists who defied his anti-protest decree and tried to assemble in the city regardless. The fast-moving situation saw the party's armed wing, the "Southern Resistance Forces" (SRF), take over Aden in a move that Hadi's government decried as a "coup", which will undoubtedly have profound domestic and international implications.

The country's internationally recognized government was already expelled from the former territory of North Yemen following the success of the [Houthi insurgency](#) in early 2015 and the militants' subsequent alliance with former President Saleh's General People's Congress, and the authorities' eviction from South Yemen essentially means that it no longer has any formal representation in the nominally unified state, thereby [setting the stage for its re-division](#) into its two previously independent constituent halves. This unfolding scenario could pit coalition allies Saudi Arabia and the UAE against one another since Riyadh is said to be in favor of preserving the country's unity while Abu Dhabi is allegedly backing the STC and wants to [restore South Yemeni independence](#). A further wrinkle in all of this is that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman is supposedly mentored by his older Abu Dhabi counterpart **Mohammed Bin Zayed**, so any split between the two would be deeply personal.

That said, the two Gulf allies will probably resolve whatever disagreements they may have about Yemen's post-war political future behind closed doors, and the UAE would be wise to present a "face-saving" method for MBS to change his presumed position and accept South Yemen's secession if the STC is successful with its struggle. Riyadh might have ultimately backed the wrong horse by supporting the unpopular Hadi, who is visibly despised in both parts of the country, so this "inconvenient" fact alone might be enough to get it to reconsider its backing for this failed politician and come to grips with the reality that neither Northerners nor Southerners want him ruling over their country. Getting rid of him, however, would nullify the official reason for the Saudi-led War on Yemen in the first place, but that in and of itself might be the pretext that Riyadh needs to downscale its disastrous and highly expensive participation in this conflict.

All told, the seemingly unexpected rebellion of Yemen's Southern secessionists might represent the final phase of the War on Yemen if the STC is able to oust Hadi's government from Aden once and for all, and a prospectively [Russian-brokered "solution"](#) might see the

country either “decentralize” along the Bosnian model of broadly independent “[Identity Federal](#)” halves or outright return to its pre-1990 division into two de-jure independent states.

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