

Video: The Arabian Peninsula's "New Cold War". The UAE-Saudi Confrontation in Southern Yemen

By [South Front](#)

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On August 29, the United Arab Emirates carried out a series of airstrikes on forces loyal to the Saudi-backed government of Yemen. The strikes reportedly killed or wounded over 300 people. The UAE said that the targets were some "terrorist militias". However, the Saudi-backed government claimed that the UAE targeted its troops in Aden and Zinjibar supporting forces of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. This incident became the first time when the UAE provided STC units with a direct military support in their clashes with Saudi-backed forces.

An intense fighting between UAE- and Saudi-backed forces were ongoing across southern Yemen, especially in the city of Aden, almost entire August. In the first half of September, the intensity of clashes decreased. Nonetheless, the conflict within the Saudi-UAE-led coalition remains unresolved.

Essentially, the UAE and forces it backs are shifting focus from fighting against the Houthis, to fighting against the Saudi-backed government, further widening the rift. Taking into account that STC units are the most military capable part of coalition-backed troops, this undermines the already low chances of the coalition to achieve a military victory over the Houthis.

[Watch the video here.](#)

Interests and vision of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East have been in conflict for a long time. Nonetheless, this tendency became especially obvious in 2019. The decline of influence of the House of Saud in the region and inside Saudi Arabia itself led to logical attempts of other regional players to gain a leading position in the Arabian Peninsula. The main challenger is the UAE and the House of Maktoum.

Contradictions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE turned into an open military confrontation between their proxies in Yemen. Since August 29, Saudi Arabia has provided no symmetric answer to the UAE military action against its proxies. It seems that the Saudi leadership has no will or distinct political vision of how it should react in this situation. Additionally, the Saudi military is bogged in a bloody conflict in Yemen and struggles to defend its own borders from Houthi attacks.

The UAE already gained an upper hand in the standoff with Saudi Arabia in the economic field. This motivates it for further actions to expand its influence in the region.

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