

Washington Faces Defeat in Red Sea Donnybrook

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The Houthis have agreed to end their attacks on commercial traffic in the Red Sea if Israel allows the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. This is not just a reasonable proposal, it's a policy that is supported by the vast majority of people around the world.

In June, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) released a report highlighting the impact of Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea. The report is a devastating account of Washington's failure to protect critical transit corridors in one of the world's most important waterways. The Biden administration's makeshift naval coalition, dubbed Operation Prosperity Guardian, has not only been unable to ensure safe passage for commercial carriers in the Red Sea, it's actually made matters worse. The Houthis have fine-tuned their military operations while adding more lethal weapons to their arsenal. In short, the Houthis have shown that a disparate group of militants can impose costly penalties on their enemies by implementing asymmetrical strategies that undermine the "rules-based order". Here's an excerpt from the DIA's report:

As of mid-February, container shipping through Red Sea had declined by approximately 90% since December 2023; shipping via the Red Sea typically accounts for approximately 10-15% of international maritime trade....

Alternate shipping routes around Africa add about 11,000 nautical miles, 1-2 weeks of transit time, and **approximately \$1 million in fuel costs for each voyage**. For many shipping companies, the combined costs of crew bonuses, war risk insurance (roughly 1000% more than pre-war costs)...

As of mid-February, insurance premiums for Red Sea transits have risen to 0.7-1.0% of a ship's total value, compared to less than 0.1% prior to December 2023 [Houthi Attacks Placing Pressure on International Trade](#), DIA

This is a shocking report. **According to the Government's own analysis, Biden's Red Sea policy has been an abject failure.** Container shipping is down by 90 percent while insurance premiums, fueling costs and 'extra miles sailed' have skyrocketed. There's not a trace of optimism in the entire report. **The Houthis have basically achieved all of their strategic objectives while Washington's meddling has accomplished nothing.**

Surprisingly, the journalists at *Business Insider* have drawn the same conclusion as the DIA, that the Houthis have out-manuevered Uncle Sam at every turn. Here's a clip from a recent BI article:

The Houthis have proven to be a wily and formidable foe. Five months after rounds of US-led coalition airstrikes to "disrupt and degrade" their capabilities, the militants continue to wreak havoc. They're routinely forcing the US-led task force to intercept their missiles, bomb boats, and flying drones that have turned shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden into a dangerous — and deadly — corridor.

The Houthis have struck multiple ships in the last week, and US officials say these attacks are unlikely to end anytime soon, raising concerns the US is stuck in a costly and unsustainable standoff.

The Houthis have managed to drag Washington into a prolonged, expensive, resource-depleting conflict and driven shipping costs much higher. While no American warships have been hit, the US must bear the growing financial costs and wear and tear to its warships. [US Navy warships are stuck in a Red Sea battle they can't fight forever](#), *Business Insider*

The Houthis have essentially closed commercial shipping through one of the world's most important transit chokepoints and the US is unable to do anything about it. Couldn't someone have anticipated this scenario before Biden impulsively deployed a naval flotilla to the Red Sea?

There were plenty of skeptics who knew the Biden strategy had no chance of succeeding, but their voices were drowned-out by the armchair warriors who always set the policy. These are the senior members of the foreign policy establishment who invariably ignore the facts and charge ahead with their "shoot first and ask questions later" philosophy. In the present case, these tenacious uber-hawks simply couldn't accept that an upstart battery of sandal-clad militants could deliver a blow to US interests by launching missile and drone attacks on merchant ships protected by US destroyers. But that is precisely what happened and—as we said earlier—Biden was warned that such a result was likely. This is from an article at *Responsible Statecraft*:

...a number of realist voices are decrying the folly of once again falling into a spiral of retaliatory violence that will likely lead to a real military crisis, even the death of U.S. service members, before it is done.

"They (strikes) won't work. They won't sufficiently degrade Houthi capability or will stop their attacks on shipping," says Ben Friedman, senior fellow of Defense Priorities. "Why do something that is so evidently reckless? **Restraint reminds us that no such law says we must conduct airstrikes that won't work.** We always have the option not to employ pointless violence." [US strikes Yemen again, but Houthi attacks keep coming](#), *Responsible Statecraft*

“Restraint”? The author thinks the US foreign policy establishment is capable of restraint?

Unfortunately, all of the capable, sober-minded realists who once played a role in shaping US foreign policy have long-since been replaced by armchair warriors who reflexively respond to every crisis with the same counterproductive application of military force. We have no doubt that these same warhawks will escalate once again in Yemen as they have in Ukraine, dragging the country deeper into a conflict it has no chance of winning. Check out this revealing excerpt from [Biden’s 2022 National Security Strategy](#):

...the United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to jeopardize freedom of navigation through the Middle East’s waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al Mandab, nor tolerate efforts by any country to dominate another—or the region—through military buildups, incursions, or threats.”

There you have it: The Houthis represent a clear and present danger to US national security by merely asserting control over their own territorial waters. Does that mean escalation is inevitable?

It does. The excerpt above is tantamount to a declaration of war. We should expect that Biden will act accordingly by increasing the bombardment of Yemeni cities and infrastructure, tightening the economic blockade and, eventually, deploying combat troops to conduct a ground offensive on the Arabian peninsula. Judging from past experience, the decisions on these matters have probably already been made.

By the way, Biden’s naval operation—Operation Prosperity Guardian—was never approved by the UN Security Council, the US Congress or the American people. It is another unilateral, fly-by-night intervention that precludes a diplomatic solution and guarantees the US will face another humiliating defeat at the hands of its enemies sometime in the future. Here’s more from energy studies fellow Jim Krane who helps explain the global impact of the Houthi attacks:

The Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping present a new phenomenon in geo-economic conflict: **a non-state actor using asymmetric warfare not just to fight conventional armed forces, but to also impose targeted economic sanctions by selectively attacking international shipping.** The Houthis have made this leap by combining two factors: inexpensive and high-tech weaponry that can threaten—even sink—ocean-going ships and control over strategic coastal territory overlooking one of the world’s busiest maritime chokepoints: the Bab al-Mandab Strait....

The siege on Red Sea shipping has re-oriented trade between Asia and Europe in an uneven way. **Shipping firms based in countries where governments have spoken out against the Israeli offensive in Gaza have received exemptions from Houthi attacks, resulting in cost advantages and higher profits.** Conversely, shippers based in countries supporting Israel, along with those carrying Europe- or US-bound cargoes, have lost access to the Red Sea shortcut between Asia and Europe. As a result, cost and voyage duration have increased together with demand for vessels, which helped push up cargo fees, including on routes that do not travel via the Red Sea.

The skewed disruption to global shipping suggests that **the Houthis have succeeded in meeting their objective of imposing costs on supporters of Israel... Houthi**

leaders have reportedly cemented competitive advantages for Chinese and Russian shippers ... The selective strategy employed by the Houthis is imposing economic penalties resembling economic sanctions that disproportionately affect EU-based firms ... Indeed, **the added supply chain costs are weighing heavily on already pessimistic economic forecasts for the European Union and Egypt.** The longer the attacks continue, the greater the residual impact, dampening the prospects for growth.

The Houthi campaign in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea has produced a new form of global economic disruption based on grievances with Israel, and is proving difficult to deter or counter....**The Houthi campaign has also exposed ineffective countermeasures by the United States and its NATO allies...**

US and British attacks on Houthi sites inside Yemen have created new grievances and **a rationale for a potential extension of the Red Sea attacks beyond a ceasefire in Gaza....** Houthi attacks on shipping actually intensified after the onset of US-UK retaliatory strikes....

The emboldened militant group announced on March 14 that **it would extend attacks beyond the immediate Bab al-Mandab area to the broader Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean** to target Israel- and allied-linked shipping diverted via the Cape of Good Hope. ... [Houthi Red Sea Attacks Have Global Economic Repercussions](#), Arab Center

Okay, let's summarize: Houthi attacks on the Red Sea have...

1. Created new opportunities for non-state actors to conduct asymmetric warfare on conventional armed forces.
2. Imposed targeted economic sanctions on backers of Israeli genocide
3. Re-oriented trade between Asia and Europe in a way that provides competitive advantages for Chinese and Russian shippers
4. Helped the Houthis succeed in meeting their objective of imposing costs on supporters of Israel
5. Added supply chain costs have negatively impacted already pessimistic economic forecasts for the European Union and Egypt... dampening the prospects for growth.
6. Set the stage for the expansion of Houthi operations beyond the Red Sea to the broader Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean

Which of these outcomes advance US interests or strengthen US national security?

None of them, which is why we will ask a second question:

Do the people who make these short-sighted decisions ever wonder about the impact their choices have on the country or on the American people?

Probably, not.

And, please, let's not blame the Houthis for a conflict for which the Biden administration is 100 percent responsible. No one put a gun to Joe Biden's head and forced him to deploy the US Navy to the Red Sea to engage in pointless fracas in order to defend Israel's right to murder women and children in Gaza. That's a decision that Biden made unilaterally while

disregarding the groundswell of international condemnation, the blistering rulings of the ICC and the ICJ and virtually every human rights organization on Planet Earth. Biden chose to ignore the moral judgement of the entire world to promote the sordid agenda of the Jewish state. That's on him! In contrast, the Houthis are just doing their bit to stop Israel's genocide. They weren't itching for a war with the United States. That's not it at all. They're just trying to get the Israelis to lift their blockade, so more people don't die of starvation. Is that too much to ask? Here's how Houthi leader Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti summed it up:

Taking action to support the oppressed... is a true test of morality... and whoever does not take action to stop the crime of genocide... has lost his humanity.

Moral... values.. do not change with the race and religion of the person... If another group of humans were subjected to the injustice that the Palestinians are subjected to, we would take action to support them, regardless of their religion and race.

... the Yemeni people (are committed) ... to achieve a just peace that guarantees the dignity, safety and security of all countries and peoples Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti
@M_N_Albukhaiti

Al-Bukhaiti's statement might sound odd to people in the West who find it hard to believe that any leader would put moral convictions above their own self-interest or accumulation of more power. But that's what energizes the Houthi movement; their determination to put their religious beliefs into practice. The Houthis have nothing to gain by fighting the United States. They are doing it because they oppose the sadistic brutality and homicidal violence of the IDF. That's why they have put themselves at risk of serious injury or death. It's because they believe it is the 'right thing to do'; because justice is worth dying for, and because -as Al-Bukhaiti says—Taking action to support the oppressed is the true test of morality.

Ironically, the views of the American people align more closely with those of the Houthis than they do with their own government. The majority of Americans support justice for the Palestinians, support a sovereign Palestinian state, support a permanent ceasefire, and support an end to the violence and bloodshed. It is only our government (and Israel) that want the bloodbath to continue.

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