

The Yemeni Quagmire

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A Saudi-led coalition has [rejected](#) the enforcement of a “self-administration rule” by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Yemen and called on all the parties to honor the Riyadh Agreement that includes the formation of a [technocrat](#) government with equal representation.

Abu Dhabi-backed separatist group earlier [scrapped](#) a peace deal with Riyadh-backed government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and declared a state of emergency in its controlled areas including the port city of Aden. For some time, both sides were building up their forces to resume infighting.

Council rationalized the move in the face of government’s “mismanagement, misgovernance, especially in south Yemen, which has been Houthi-less for four years now.”

It additionally accused the Hadi administration for shirking its responsibilities to implement the peace deal however welcomed Saudi Arabia’s role and [pledged](#) on “responding to any initiatives it may propose.”

STC withdrawal from the pact is a crippling blow to Riyadh peace deal that was [signed](#) in November and [hailed](#) by the Kingdom as a major step towards a wider political solution.

Though the treaty drew the two warring parties on a consensus agreement of establishing a unity government, STC’s dissolution of the accord before its implementation could lead into a collapse of the Riyadh Agreement.

At least the anguish in the ranks of internationally recognized Hadi administration tells that the deal might come to a tragic end.

Decrying the violation, the Yemeni foreign minister **Muhammad Al-Hadhrami** [threatened](#) “The so-called transitional council will bear alone the dangerous and catastrophic consequences for such an announcement.”

With the latest wearisome rows between the two ostensible allies, one of the world’s poorest countries can drift into a deeper and shaper chaos. But it wasn’t unexpected.

In January, the STC had [pulled](#) out of the committees that were responsible for the implementation of the November peace deal, protesting against the violence in Shabwa province linked with the Muslim Brotherhood-[affiliated](#) Hadi’s al-Islah party.

The government dismisses the allegation but separatists’ complaints grind on, making the route of negotiations bumpy and obscuring the fate of arrangement.

All this ensues as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) battle out with the Houthis in a separate conflict who in early 2015 overran and [captured](#) the capital Sana'a - ousting the Hadi administration and forcing it to declare Aden its de facto capital.

It was the moment that herded Riyadh for military intervention, which didn't do anything good for the battle-weary country as it continued to grip into further dissent and discord.

After years-long intense shelling, bombardment and fierce fighting that brought no significant change on the ground, Saudi Arabia is exhausted. It now seeks a safe exit from the enervating Yemen war to focus on its fast-flagging economy, being hit hard by plunging oil prices and the Covid-19.

The coronavirus outbreak unbridled a sporadic opportunity to the Kingdom to move away from military adventurism to a political solution. Mining some good out of the evil, the war-tired Saudi-led coalition last month [announced](#) a unilateral ceasefire of two weeks in Yemen.

Saudi peddling of the proclamation in a comeback to UN Secretary General's call and to "reaching a political settlement" and "comprehensive and lasting ceasefire agreement" with Houthis - implied about its remodeled strategy in its neighborhood.

The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen on April 24 [extended](#) ceasefire in Yemen by one month to bolster its efforts of containing coronavirus and renew commitment for "to reach a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Yemen."

As the Houthis has [rejected](#) the extension and exacted to lift the air and sea blockades of their controlled areas before agreeing to a truce, the dismissal multiplies the risks of increased violence and the fears that the war is going to reoccupy the nation.

While the armed faction should carefully observe the country's vulnerability to the coronavirus and forge ahead for a ceasefire and political dialogue - the Coalition must also preclude stage-managing the crisis by apparently withdrawing the troops but firing the conflict by hinging more on the proxies.

UAE, the key Coalition member, in July last year formally [announced](#) its exit from the Yemeni riddle and started to hand over responsibilities to its domestic ally STC.

Riyadh would most likely follow the footsteps of Abu Dhabi and withdraw from the devastated state by delegating the task of confronting Houthis to the STC and forces loyal to Hadi administration and engage itself as a political negotiator in the Yemeni conundrum.

The strategy, if pursued, won't provide any respite to the peace and stability in Yemen, expressly when there is obstinate spat between the two disparate allies, STC and Hadi government.

Last year, the sky-high tensions pressed the latter to [accuse](#) UAE of backing a "coup" after new skirmishes flared in August 2019. Following that, Abu Dhabi had to relinquish some key [positions](#) in Aden to Riyadh to pave the way for a dialogue between the government and separatists.

Talking about the legitimacy of the Hadi government, Head of the Yemen Department at the London-based Next Century Foundation Catherine Shakdam [said](#) "There was an understanding that if he wasn't supported by the international community, then de facto

sovereignty would fall onto the Houthi movement.”

It is hence in the best interest of all the stakeholders to put a stop to this deadly conflict – which has [swiped](#) the lives of more than 100,000 human lives and pushed millions to the brink of famine – and settle their disputes through consultation and political dialogue.

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