



مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث  
Abaad Studies & Research Center

# Open War in Southern Yemen

Case Analysis  
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## Introduction

A document of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference in 2013 included a new vision for Yemen so that there would be a state made up of several regions. The document contained all the grievances of the past two decades. The southern issue had the best ever popular consensus that resulted in the best solutions. Accordingly, the southern issue was one of the main axes of the months-long National Dialogue Conference which came as a result of the Gulf Initiative to organize the transition process in Yemen after the departure of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh from power.

Yemen was two countries before 1990, when the two regimes decided to reintegrate the country's historical unity, an integral unity. The two states needed to complete this outstanding plan since the liberation of southern Yemen from the British occupation, and the northern Yemen got rid of the tyrannical Imamate rule. But soon, the 1994 war broke out, which stopped the re-division of the united country. The regime of "Ali Abdullah Saleh" was accused of injustice and excluding the southern provinces from military and security jobs. The grievances involved all the sons of Yemen. After the 2011 revolution, Ali Abdullah Saleh allied himself with his old rivals in northern Yemen, the armed Houthi group, which overthrew the regime and the state in 2014.

In 2015, a Saudi-led Arab coalition intervened to confront the Houthis and in support of the internationally recognized government (the legitimate government). The UAE was part of this coalition. Most of southern areas were liberated from the Houthis and Abu Dhabi established local militias up to 90,000 fighters in addition to establishing political bodies. Instead of supporting the legitimate government, the influence of the UAE in the southern provinces has shifted to confrontations with the government.

With support from UAE, two southern officials, who were dismissed by Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi (transitional president), announced the establishment of the so-called Southern Transitional Council (STC) in 2017 to represent the new political interface competing with the legitimate government.

This study examines the situation in southern Yemen, particularly in Aden, after clashes between the government forces and anti-government forces that seem to be preparation for a long internal war. The study also reads the impact of the withdrawal of most of UAE forces on the situation in the south.

## South Yemen actors

After 2011, a number of local political actors emerged in Yemen, including supporters of secession and those demanding the survival of unity. After 2014, the project of "regions" or a federal state appeared. Following the intervention of the Arab Coalition in Yemen (2015), Saudi Arabia and the UAE undertook extensive arming and recruiting operations in the southern governorates in order to confront the Houthis who controlled most of the city of Aden (the country's temporary capital). Everyone fought against the Houthis who were driven out. Troops arrived at borders with the north and stopped there without any movement, except a simple move on the west coast.

### First actor: The Southern Movement

considered the most prominent and oldest actor that demands the return of the southern state before 1990 and still, but rejects the UAE and Saudi interventions in the south. The leader of the movement Hassan Ba-oum has already considered the UAE presence in southern Yemen as occupation.<sup>[1]</sup> There are ongoing demonstrations in Aden and other governorates call for peaceful struggle until gaining independence.

### Second actor: the Southern Transitional Council

backed by the UAE, was announced in May 2017. It includes former officials who were dismissed from Hadi government, and 90,000 paramilitary militias, established by the UAE, most notably the security belt in Aden. This Council plays a parallel role to the legitimate authority / government in Yemen. The legitimate government does not recognize the "transitional council" and says it "targets the country's interests, future and social order."

The Council has a special parliament where members have been appointed. It is called the “General Assembly.” The council is headed by Aidarous al-Zubaidi <sup>[2]</sup>, from al-Dale governorate. During his tenure as governor of Aden (2015-2017), a-Zubaidi faced charges of corruption and mismanagement of services, and the city's conditions remained extremely poor and suffered constant assassinations.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Southern Transitional Council established local councils and correspondent offices in the eight southern governorates. The National Assembly of the Council held several meetings, and the local councils held similar meetings. Al-Zubaidi toured the southern governorates. Prominent leaders appeared to be responsible for military and security mobilization such as Abu al-Yamamah, who used to lead several armed groups within the security belt. Leaders in the STC have often vowed to attack government soldiers, expel northern families, and carried out campaigns of forced displacement between 2016 and 2018. The government was toppled and they declared the STC to be equivalent to the government in all provinces.<sup>[4]</sup> In August 2018, a Yemeni soldier was killed during a graduation ceremony in Aden for raising the Yemeni national flag. He was shot dead by fighters affiliated to military commander Muneer al-Yafei (Abu al-Yamamah) <sup>[5]</sup>. Hadi ordered the arrest of Abu al-Yamamah and another leader in the security belt, but his orders were not implemented. The Yemeni president has no authority to implement it.

### **Third actor: Southerners abroad**

They are leaders outside the country that fled after the war in 1994, and include Ali Salem al-Baid, Ali Nasser Mohammed, and other leaders who stays in Cairo, Abu Dhabi and London. After 2015, with the emergence of the young leaders who call for secession, the influence of the elderly faded, but they gain an international acceptance.

### **Fourth actor: Those who agree to the vision of the six regions**

including Yemeni President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi (southerner), former Prime Minister Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr (southerner) and the Islah Party, which used to be influential in the south before the war and has been attacked and liquidated since the beginning of the war by separatists, and other political parties,

except the Yemeni Socialist Party, which stands in the middle between the Southern Transitional Council and the legitimate government and seems to be closer to the "Southern Transitional". This trend has grown due to mistakes made by the security belt forces in Aden and the "paramilitary militias" in other southern governorates. But they do not have enough power to counter the UAE-backed Transitional Council and paramilitary militias. The vision of President Hadi and his supporters have a little support from Saudi Arabia as Saudi is always silent and its silence rarely changes into actions against pro-Emirati militias.

## Armed forces and organizations

The transitional situation and war against the Houthi armed group represented a good opportunity for the emergence of armed forces with external support and large armament capabilities and ability of recruitment and fighting. But these military and paramilitary militias, now have a large weapons cache, and the elements have become more experienced and well trained representing a big problem for the southern governorates liberated from the Houthis.

### The security belt and its attachments:

The security belt belongs to the UAE and receives funds and trainings from the UAE leadership. The exact number of troops is unknown, but it is estimated at more than 30,000 fighters in Aden alone.

The UAE has security belt forces in "al-Dalei, Lahj and Abyan" and other forces under another name such as the elite forces in "Shabwa and Hadramout."

There are several personalities who are associated with the security belt forces as follows:

**Waddah Omar Abdulaziz:** the leader of the security belt. He rarely shows up, but information says that he is an academic working in the UAE. He studied law and then worked in the National Security Apparatus under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. He is outstanding as the leader of the security belt.

**Muneer Mohammed Ali Yafei**, known as Abu al-Yamamah, is the second person in the security belt and remained the most present of local figures until his death in Houthi ballistic shelling in early August 2019. No other person was appointed to replace him. He was in charge of securing the areas surrounding the UAE base in Buraiqa, and he was considered the closest to its leaders.

**Hani Binbrek**: former minister of state who was a hardliner Salafi. He is considered the second man in the Southern Transitional Council (STC), as vice president of the STC. He is one of the leaders who are the closest to the leaders in Abu Dhabi, and one of the founders of the "Security Belt." He is responsible for recruiting members of al-Qaeda in the "security belt" forces.<sup>[6]</sup>

The UAE also has other loyal forces such as a faction calling itself the Southern Resistance, led by Abdul Nasser Rajeh al-Bawah (Abu Hamam) and Camp 20, led by Imam al-Nubi, an extremist Salafist who is accused of assassinating human rights activists whom he accused of "atheism."<sup>[7]</sup>

## **The Presidential Protection Brigades forces:**

They were established in 2012 by President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Currently, these forces have eight military brigades. The number of soldiers in each brigade is between 1200 and 1500. During the period 2018 and 2019, after the clashes in Aden, thousands were recruited, mostly from the province of Abyan, the birthplace of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

They are deployed in several camps, along with the military police force. Brigadier Sanad Abdullah al-Rahwa, 1st Brigade, Presidential Protection (Crater), Brigadier Ibrahim Haidan Al-Sbari, 3rd Brigade, Presidential Protection (Khor Maksar), Brigadier-General Mehran Qubati, 4th Brigade, Presidential Protection (Dar Saad), and Major General Nasser Al-Nuba, Commander of Military Police.

Between January 2018 and mid-2019, these brigades increased their military strength and recruitment<sup>[8]</sup>, as pro-Emirati forces did.

## The fourth military region:

a force deployed in 24 important military sites. They are supposed to be under the Yemeni General Staff, but more than half of the military forces are included in the security belt, while the leadership is believed to be loyal to President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. This force is deployed in Aden among several military brigades (39th Armored Brigade - Badr Camp), 31st Armored Brigade in Bir Ahmed, Tawahi Naval Base, 120th Air Defense Brigade, and Central Command. The rest of military brigades are deployed in (Abyan, Taiz, Lahj, al-Dhale). These brigades are responsible for the largest military base in Yemen, "Al-Anad base."<sup>[9]</sup>

## The Southern Resistance:

Multi-loyalty forces, but most of them fought to drive the Houthis out of the southern provinces and are not included within the army or security forces. It is a strong weighting factor in the political and military work in Aden and surrounding governorates. Most of these leaders reject the Southern Transitional Council.

## The security forces and counter-terrorism forces:

hey are forces that support the security belt forces in Aden, namely the General Security Forces, led by Shalal Ali Shaya, along with the counter-terrorism forces, led by Yousran al-Maqtari. Security forces are deployed in most of Aden, which include 5,000 troops along with more than 1000 counter-terrorism forces. The forces led by Yousran al-Maqtari are accused of human rights violations in Aden, including murder, arrest, torture and assassinations.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Aden on volcanic crater

Tensions in Aden, Yemen's interim capital, between government forces and those loyal to the UAE are rising up. The situation has continued to escalate since 2017 following the establishment of the Southern Transitional Council, which tries to gain legitimacy on the ground through presenting the legitimate government as a weak variable factor causing instability.



## The situation has recently escalated for several reasons:

- The partial withdrawal of the UAE forces- UAE describes it as the redeployment of forces in Yemen - and the UAE forces have already withdrawn from the country's "west coast" and from "Serwah" area in Marib (east), and other fronts against the Houthis. But at the same time, it has stepped up support for its armed militias in the southern provinces. It pushed nearly 400 men to Socotra as part of a force it has formed and trained in Aden under the name of the security belt forces. This step has provoked the population in Socotra.
- The rise of anti-Emirati voices from within the legitimate government demanding re-reading of the Arab Coalition and correcting its course. Minister of Interior Ahmed al-Maisari, Minister of Transportation Saleh al-Gabwani and the president's advisor AbulAziz Jubari <sup>[11]</sup> had statements against the role of the UAE in the country. This pushes the Gulf state to impose its presence by force amid the rise of bad reputation of the UAE locally and internationally.
- The United Nations has repeatedly refused to involve the Southern Transitional Council in anticipated peace consultations, and wants to get a stake in the government in the consultations. The legitimate government does not recognize its existence as an entity. Therefore, the STC believes that it must be established by force and to be a fait accompli, as the Houthis did in Sana'a. In 30 July 2019, a senior Emirati military delegation, headed by the Coast Guard Commander Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Musleh Al-Ahbabi arrived in Tehran in a visit during which he met with Commander of the Iranian Border Guards Brigadier General Qasem Rezaei, and signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance border security between the two countries. This included the regulation of the entry of fishermen to the border water territories. Iran has been talking about a change in Abu Dhabi's stance on Yemen, leaving Saudi Arabia alone in a war against the Iranian-backed Houthis. It is believed that understandings on the southern Yemeni provinces - where the UAE has influence - were present on the table of Iranian-UAE talks to secure the region from attacks. As the situation explodes in Aden, this will certainly affect the rest of the southern governorates, such as Shabwa, Hadramout and Abyan. But Aden remains the main axis where the administration of the southern regions.

The deployment areas and influential figures in the leadership of both sides can be distributed as follows:

- **Khor Maksar:** where Aden International Airport is located. In February 2017, clashes were erupted between the Presidential Protection Forces and the UAE-backed President's Protection Department after the officer of his protection department at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Saleh Al-Omairi, rejected a decision by President Hadi to dismiss him. However, Emirati warplanes intervened to stop the government forces. The crisis was solved after Saudi intervention.<sup>[12]</sup> The two parties agreed that the Arab Coalition appoints a figure other than al-Khader Kardah, whom President Hadi had appointed. The airport protection is currently managed by Mohammed Hussein al-Khalili, who was appointed by the coalition in March 2018 as commander of emergency and security support forces in Aden.<sup>[13]</sup> Prior to his appointment to protect the airport, al-Khalili was commander of the security belt forces in Mualla, Al-Tawahi and Khor Maksar. Loyalists of President Hadi, in Khor Maksar include commander of the Popular Southern Resistance in Khormaksr, Colonel Suleiman Nasser al-Zamki, who returned from abroad after the airport clashes. Al-Zamki had a prominent role in fighting the Houthis and the liberation of the airport. His name was repeatedly mentioned during the battles for liberating the coastal city of Aden and now he is an adviser to Minister of Interior.<sup>[14]</sup> There is also the 39th Armored Brigade, which takes the Badr Military Camp as its headquarters. The commander of the Brigade is Brigadier-General Abdullah Subaihi, a prominent loyalist to President AbdRabbu Mansour Hadi and a prominent commander in the battle to liberate Aden from the Houthis.
- **Sheikh Othman:** it is under the full control by the United Arab Emirates, its presence there is led by commander of the security belt forces, Waddah Omar Abdulaziz, who was named in a report by the UN Human Rights Investigation Team as one of figures who practice atrocious violations against the city's residents.

- **Dar Saad:** it is supposedly under the full control of the government forces, where it pushed a battalion of the elite forces, led by Brigadier General Amjad Khalid Zubair to station in the directorate along with the 4th Brigade Presidential Protection forces, led by Brigadier Mehran Qubati. But it could come under attacks from both sides, from the north and south that borders Lahj, where the Southern Transitional Council trained several military brigades, in addition to al-Dhale, last year. They will also be confined in with supplies for the "security belt" from Buraiqa and Khor Maksar.
- **Mansoura:** Emirati and government forces share influence in the region along with groups affiliated to the Southern Movement, including supporters of President Hadi and others to the UAE. There is a camp in the Textile Factory and other camps for recruitment. These camps were subjected to terrorist attacks, most notably the suicide bombing that targeted a recruitment camp in August 2016, where 71 recruits were killed.<sup>[15]</sup>
- **Mualla and Tawahi:** In these two areas, there is an armed militia from al-Dhale governorate, which came after the appointment of Aidarous al-Zubaidi as governor of Aden in December 2015. It controls the two areas where the strategic port of Aden is located. Although al-Zubaidi was changed and removed from the post of governor of Aden, these militias still control the two areas with support from the security belt forces and the General Security Forces, led by Shalal Ali Shaye.
- **Crater (Sira):** The UAE and government forces share influence in the region, where the security belt (UAE) and the 1st Brigade (presidential) are located. In addition to militants from the Southern Movement (not affiliated with either side). Although they reject the "Southern Transitional Council," they refuse to fight within the ranks of the legitimate government.
- **Maashik:** where the residence of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Presidential Palace of Maashik. It was besieged in January 2018. The existing forces are affiliated to President Hadi.

- **Burairqah:** it is the headquarters of the UAE government and a huge military base where there are hundreds of Emirati soldiers - perhaps foreigners - and in terms of security, there is a force from the security belt under the leadership of "Abu Yamamah." There is a major dominant force in Burairqah, the Emirati forces and their military base in the directorate. Burairqah is a semi-peninsula in the Gulf of Aden, 15 km far from the city of Aden. The UAE forces in Burairqah is periodically replaced. The task of this force is to carry out special operations at the request of its command. Most of the force is Emirati soldiers, estimated at 1,500. But hundreds of them are allegedly mercenaries who were recruited as members of the UAE Presidential Guard to fight alongside with them and take on major operations as well as running prisons. Emirati forces and / or loyalists are accused of building secret prisons in Aden. One of the prisons is in a ground floor at the UAE forces' headquarters, in which all tools and means of torture are practiced as war crimes.

## War preparations:

After the events of January 2018, both sides were mobilizing in preparation for a new war, in Aden and neighboring provinces. The UAE forces and their allies failed to gain a foothold for the export of oil from Hadramout and Shabwa, so they began to blow up oil pipes or preventing oil exports.<sup>[16]</sup>

At the same time, the Southern Transitional Council and the security belt forces continued preparations for war under the eyes of the government forces. Reports by intelligence services of President Hadi <sup>[17]</sup>reveals some of such preparations:

## Military Preparations:

A) The Southern Transitional Council (NTC) revived the former "Southern Army" and returned recruits and officers who were dismissed from service and gave them new military cards and permanent salaries.

A) The Southern Transitional Council (NTC) revived the former "Southern Army" and returned recruits and officers who were dismissed from service and gave them new military cards and permanent salaries.

B) Focusing on the rehabilitation and trainings outside the country, either at the port of Assab in Eritrea or in Abu Dhabi. Most of trainings targeted what is described as the "storm" forces in Jabal Hadid in Aden. The "Transitional Council" asked soldiers to get passports in order to leave for training. Most of the trainees returned to Aden after several months.

C) The beginning of recruitment: Aidrous al-Zubaidi met with leaders loyal to the Southern Transitional Council at the end of April 2019 and discussed with them the opening of training camps in Yafi, al-Dhali and Lahj with funding from the UAE.

D) Aidarous al-Zubaidi directed imam al-Nubi to recruit five new battalions at the end of April 2019.

- The Southern Transitional Council focuses on controlling the interim capital of Aden believing that controlling on Aden is controlling on the decision-making in other provinces. Recruits from the countryside of al-Dhalei and Lahj are being brought to Aden for training as part of the "security belt".

The Presidential Protection forces are also recruited from rural areas of other provinces, on the top of which is Abyan, the birthplace of President Hadi, and trained in Aden.

## **The UAE Role:**

In May 2019, Aidarous al-Zubaidi and leaders of the Transitional Council and the security belt met with the UAE leadership in the house of Muneer al-Yafei (Abu al-Yamamah). Some leaders of the southern resistance who agree with the movements of the Transitional Council attended the meeting. The meeting was followed by a meeting between Aidrous al-Zubaidi and loyalist leaders of the southern resistance. They announced the start of combat mobilization and the establishment of combat axes to invade the valley of Hadramout and Aden. <sup>[18]</sup>

The UAE has sponsored combat trainings at the security belt camps in Aden, including a two-month course (March through April 2019) at Ras Abbas Military Camp in Buraiqah. A training course for officers from Yafe and al-Dalei areas was conducted by Emirati officers, and a special battalion was formed to be led by Ramzi al-Qas'ani, known as Abu al-Khattab, who was a bodyguard of Aidarous al-Zubaidi.

- The Southern Transitional Council patrols and armored vehicles have been deployed in Aden since May 2019 reinforcing the presence of its elements in several camps. Imam al-Nubi sent 300 emergency fighters to the 20 Military Camp in Crater.

## The coup plot:

At the end of May 2019, Aidarous al-Zubaidi met with leaders of the Southern Transitional Council, and it was decided to send military battalions to control Sayoun, the center of Hadramout valley, and to besiege military camps in Khor Maksar, Dar Saad and to cut the road leading to Maashik as well as besieging the homes of security and military leaders who are loyal to the legitimate government. According to the plan, this step would have been followed by the declaration of a “mini-government” and a “military council”. The figures suggested to the military council include Mohamed Nasser (Abyan), Salem bin Awad al-Awlaki (Shabwa), and other names were referred to as the first name only: Brigadier General Qasim (Yafe), and Dr. Taha (Hadramout). The report adds that not all names are agreed on.

## Training camps:

**The report refers to new training camps established in al-Dhale, Shabwa and Lahj:**

**a) Al-Dhale:** All those who performed military service before (unit) were summoned and given military cards. They received training courses in special camps and sent home until they are called. A military brigade was established under the name of (Burkan Brigade) in a camp of the security belt in the area of "Hakoula". The brigade is led by Brigadier General Salem al-Khaili. A military body belongs to the Transitional Council held a meeting in al-Dhale in April 2019 to consult in order to form a major border guard force with “Yemen”!

New training centers have been opened in al-Dhale since the beginning of 2019 in the regions (Al-Awail, Al-Wedi, Al-Qazaa, Al-Nujood and Rabat).

**B) Shabwah:** In March 2019, the so-called Shabwani elite force, led by Mohamed al-Buhar, began moving in the city of Ataq with 25 Emirati armored vehicles, 8 ambulances, and 8 crews, towards the Martyrs Camp. At the same time, the training camps in Shabwa were increasing, a training camp west Ataq, led by Anas Al-Subaihi, a training camp in the "White Mountain" and a training camp in "Osailan".

The Shabwani elite force established a military brigade in Beihan in an attempt to control the oil and gas pipelines passing through the province. Five military battalions were also recruited from Baihan, Ataq, Jordan and Arma.

## Events of 7 August 2019

Clashes erupted between the Presidential Protection Forces and the Security Belt in Khor Maksar and Crater killing one officer and wounding 10 others on August 7, 2019. The day after, clashes expanded to include most districts of Aden. This is not the first time that clashes have taken place in Aden, the country's interim capital, but preceded by frictions between the two forces. This was the second coup attempt against the legitimate government - the first coup attempt was in January 2018 and the intervention of Saudi Arabia, which led to the return of the situation before the clashes. In both attempts, it was pro-Emirati forces that moved to seize the Yemeni government headquarters at the Presidential Palace in Maashik.

### **These clashes have some indications:**

The demonstrating of military power is the task of the Southern Transitional Council to create a domestic and international view that it is parallel to the legitimate government. The government has an option to thwart this proof, but this policy of pressure is dangerous for two things:

First: it may lead to a major war that will last for months leading to the destruction of "Aden".

Second: the postponing of the war once again to produce compromises under Saudi-international mediation that provides the Transitional Council with the political conditions that ensure its survival as an influential factor in the decision-making of the legitimate government and the balance of power, according to the desire of Abu Dhabi,

against the parties and entities which reject its influence in southern Yemen.

- Friction between the government forces in Shabwa, Abyan and Socotra between May and June 2019 as the Shabwani elite force attempted to dominate the city of Ataq (Shabwa governorate), but were unable due to the existence of the joint forces (from military and security). Despite clashes and attempts to provoke the government forces, the Shabwani elite force could not take control. In Abyan, the situation was about to explode between the security belt forces and security forces following the refusal of the provincial police director Brigadier General al-Khader al-Nub, to hand over his position to Ali al-Theeb, known as Abu Mashal al-Kazimi.<sup>[19]</sup> In Socotra, security forces clashed with the "security belt" after the local authority refused to allow the download of Emirati military equipment to the island's port.<sup>[20]</sup> Yemen's parliament session was held for the first time in Wadi Hadramout under the protection of Saudi forces in April 2019, the second constitutional legitimacy in addition to the legitimacy of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The Parliament is active in trying to meet again in Aden, or Mukalla, making the Southern Transitional Council unable to present itself as a fait accompli, despite threats to prevent the Parliament from the meeting.
- The clashes preceded a campaign of incitement against the "legitimate government" by leaders of the Transitional Council. The government was accused of participating in the killing of "Abu Yamamah" during a military parade, where he was killed by a ballistic missile and the Houthis claimed responsibility for the operation. Abu Dhabi and the Southern Transitional Council wanted to use the attack as an opportunity to prove their presence in Aden.
- The "Security Belt" launched a campaign against citizens from northern governorates in Aden on charges of "espionage" for the Houthi group. The Security Belt forces deported hundreds of northerners, assaulted them and looted their money, properties and trades. This hostility has angered all Yemenis.<sup>[21]</sup>



- Clashes in Aden have been inevitable because of ongoing recruitments and mobilization since early 2018, and because all parties could not find “durable solution” after clashes in January 2018.

The friction between the two parties (the legitimate government and the Southern Transitional Council) came to its peak after an announcement by "Hani Bin Buraik" calling for the general mobilization and the invasion of Maashik.<sup>[22]</sup>

Recent developments (August 7-10, 2019) suggest that things are drifting towards an escalation that could plunge southern Yemen into a civil and regional war for years:

- The UAE insists that its loyal forces in Aden control the city, including the Presidential Palace, while Saudi Arabia attempts to balance the power by enabling the Southern Transitional Council to control some areas in Aden, and the legitimate government to keep other areas, its camps and the Presidential Palace. It seems that Saudi tries to contain the Saudi-Emirati dispute, which increased after the UAE partially withdrew from some fighting fronts with the Houthis, through fulfilling the UAE wishes in Aden.
- These disputes were preceded by sending large Saudi military reinforcements during July and August to Aden to cover the vacuum left by the UAE and to protect the Maashik Palace, the symbol of the government and the legitimacy of the president that offers the cover to the Saudi-led coalition to move in Yemen.
- Difference in military capabilities as the government forces show greater readiness comparing to its situation during the clashes in January 2018. This military preparedness was evident in 'Ataq' when the UAE-backed 'elite' force attempted to take control of the city but received heavy blows.

On August 7, the "security belt" attempted to target the 1st Brigade of Presidential Protection force in Maashik and received an unexpected heavy and violent blow,<sup>[23]</sup> but the anti-government forces receive significant logistical support from Emirati forces that appear more dynamic than Saudi forces.

## Conclusion:

The return of clashes and internal warfare in Aden is a “natural” consequence as the legitimate government and the Saudi-led coalition have ignored the urgent need to find durable and comprehensive solutions to the causes of clashes that erupted in January 2018, and before that it is an expected result of the government's volatility and its disability to impose a specific policy and framework in dealing with the coalition's presence in Yemen, following it and stopping any excesses.

The political map and local and international actions in Aden show how fragmented the legitimate government that seems to be fragile and unable to defend its power positions while its rivals receive greater support from Abu Dhabi. If the war, which began in August 2019, continues towards a full victory for the government forces, or the "Southern Transitional Council," that could lead to the destruction of large parts of the city, which will push Saudi Arabia to pressure to return the situation to before the clashes.

At the same time, the Transitional Council is weak in several respects:

A) Its military power relies on UAE support and funding: If Abu Dhabi stops support and moves troops away, the Transitional Council will be without a stick, and may seek another supporter and financier, and Iran will return to the south.

B) The lack of cohesion of his leadership: In previous clashes, leaders in the "Council" gave up standing with "Aidarous al-Zubaidi" and "Hani Bin Buraik", any military shock affects the leadership.

C) Internal Popularity: Secret prisons, assassinations, racial discrimination campaigns by the Transitional Council and paramilitary militias of the UAE have contributed to the discontent of the population in the southern governorates. So the presence of state institutions which are capable to impose their influence and power, will make these organizations vanish.

The Transitional Council is attempting to impose a new de facto authority in Aden and the southern governorates that is somewhat similar to the Houthis' way of gaining power.

However, the council's goal of imposing military force is to be balanced with the legitimate government and enter the negotiation table as an independent third party alongside with the government and the Houthis.

## Expected scenarios

With successive developments indicating military dominance achieved by the Transitional Council in the last round of war between August 8 and 10, 2019 with the support of the UAE and Saudi tolerance, the war scenarios remain open in the south in the coming years. But some scenarios are expected to occur soon, and each scenario will have repercussions on the ground.

**Scenario 1:** A Saudi truce resembles that of January 2018 and the military situation is restored.

This scenario has become difficult to be achieved after the deaths and injuries in the fighting between the forces of the legitimate government and the forces of the Transitional Council and the insistence of the United Arab Emirates to complete the full control, but if it is done, the power in Aden will remain fragmented and war will still possible from time to time.

**Scenario 2:** A new UAE-Saudi consensus to work with the Transitional Council as a key partner in the south and to give up the legitimacy of President Hadi as a prelude to secession.

This scenario has many dangers to the Saudi-led Arab coalition before it is a threat to the government of the internationally recognized legitimate president, who gave the coalition the legitimacy of its military intervention in Yemen. The secession means lifting that legal cover, which means that the coalition's military presence in Yemen will be considered as occupation, or the departure of the coalition and so it will declare its failure to achieve its objectives in supporting the restoration of the Yemeni state.

The danger of this scenario to Yemen is the declaration of rupture and fragmentation of the country and the emergence of cantons under different names, multiple states, sultanates and rival emirates. Iran will of course exploit the situation to penetrate and fill the vacuum in the south and impose more control in the north.

**Scenario 3:** The implication of the UAE and the South Transitional Council in a process of rebellion through a Saudi-Yemeni move in an attempt to weaken the UAE and STC in the south through including the latest events under the terms of sanctions imposed by the Security Council resolution 2216 against leaders of the Houthi movement and the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh over their rebellion against the legitimacy in Yemen.

This scenario is weak due to the Saudi's need for the UAE in many files in the region other than Yemen. The UAE presence in the south has become a strategic process and has been strengthened after the UAE announced its simulated withdrawal, so the inclusion of the UAE and the UAE-supported troops in the international sanctions will lead to a public clash with Saudi Arabia.

## Summary:

All scenarios are difficult and have risks for Yemen and its allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, so it seems that Riyadh has decided to support negotiations between the Houthis, who control Sana'a and some northern governorates, and the Transitional Council, that controls Aden, and the legitimacy under President Hadi in order to end the war and accept the reality of parallel forces of the state and recognize their authority. In return, Saudi forces will remain in Hadramout and Al-Mahra, and the UAE forces will remain in Aden and Socotra to achieve strategic goals for both countries<sup>[24]</sup> and to control the money coming from oil. Marib and al-Jawf are not excluded from danger. The two governorates may be targeted under the name of fighting terrorism.

Whatever scenario happens after the rebellion in Aden, the door is open for widely regional war in the south. If it happens, it will continue for a long time.

## Margins:

[1] Leader of Southern Movement wars UAE: Do not examine our will

<https://alkhaleejonline.net/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%B2%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%83-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%B0%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%A7>

[2] Al-Zubaidi joined the Special Forces until the summer war of 1994. He participated in the fighting within what was known as the army of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the Dofes Front / Abyan. He left Aden to Djibouti after the forces of former Ali Abdullah Saleh invaded Aden in July 1994. He secretly returned to Aden where he formed a movement called (HATM), which is an abbreviation of "The Right of Self-determination". The movement began its activities secretly through assassinations targeting symbols of the Yemeni regime in the period 1997-1998. In 1997, he was convicted in by a court and sentenced to death. The movement disappeared after 2002. <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/EXERES/B3EA2055-D16A-43F5-8BDB-F6870D1693C3.html>

[3] Documents reveal the corruption of al-Zubaidi .. How did he hire a tourist resort in Aden to the son of his sister for a small amount for 33 years? <https://almawqeaqpost.net/news/31794>

Facts about Aidroos al-Zubaidi's corruption process that lasted nearly two years

<https://hunaaden.net/news43870.html>

[4] Break all the Borders: Separatism and the Reshaping of the Middle East

By: Ariel I. Ahram Print publication date: 2019// Published : Oxford

[5] Abu al-Yamamah was killed in Houthis shelling on a military parade in early August 2019

[6] AP Investigation: US allies, al-Qaida battle rebels in Yemen <https://apnews.com/f38788a561d74ca78c77cb43612d50da>

[7] Amjad's killers are still at large under the protection of Abu Dhabi .. The promises of al-Zubaidi and Bin Buraik were deceptive to obliterate the crimes of Imam al-Nubian <https://theyemen.net/%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B8>

British human rights organization talking about murders, torture and demolition of mosques done by "al-Nubi" in his camp in Crater (Report) <https://shabwaah-press.info/news/58160>

[8] According to two military commanders familiar with the deployment and strength of the forces.

[9] Al-Anad base, the largest military base in Yemen, is located in the governorate of Lahj and has been used since its liberation from the Houthis as a training base for new recruits within the Yemeni army

[10] Aden's Counter-Terrorism Commander admits killing witness of Moalla's child crime <https://yeniyeemen.com/4320199/>

Mustakbal Watan/ Assassination crimes in Aden, who stands behind them? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exH7Vd5Nljw>

[11] Al-Maysari accuses UAE of preventing President Hadi from returning to Yemen and fabricating January battles in Aden <http://www.salmashhad.com/news/32278>

UAE withdrawal from Yemen for fear of retaliation <https://meemmagazine.net/2019/07/06/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AE%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86/>

[12] Conflict of military wings and formations in Aden .. What happened (report reveals hidden? <http://www.aljanoobalyoum.com/?p=2579>

[13] Appointment of Mohammed Hussein al-Khaili as commander of emergency forces and security support in Aden  
<http://www.almashhadalaraby.com/news/24004>

[14] Advisor to the Minister of Interior "al-Zamki" congratulates the southern people and political leadership on Eid al-Adha  
<http://alwattan.net/news/25179>

[15] Suicide Attack Kills Scores of Military Recruits in Aden, Yemen <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/30/world/middleeast/yemen-suicide-attack-aden.html>

[16] Yemen exports 38 thousand barrels during the second quarter of 2019, according to various economic bulletins, and sold 400 thousand barrels to "China" and "Austria" during the beginning of the same year

[17] Abaad cited involved senior officials in Hadi government

[18] His remarks appeared to the public in the meeting through the media Zubaidi announces the establishment of combat axes and public mobilization in the southern provinces <https://www.newsyyemen.net/news41638.html>

[19] UAE moves conflict with 'legitimacy' to Abyan, southern Yemen .. Possible confrontations and government preparations <https://theyemen.net/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b1% d8% a7% d8% aa-% d8% aa% d9% 86% d9% 82% d9% 84-% d8% a7% d9% 84% d8% b5% d8% b1% d8% a7% d8% b9-% d9% 85% d8% b9-% d8% a7% d9% 84% d8% b4% d8% b1% d8% b9% d9% 8a% d8% a9-% d8% a5% d9% 84% d9% 89 -% d8% a3/>

[20] Port clashes .. Do you explode the situation in Socotra? <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/politics/2019/6/21/%D8%B3%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA>

[21] Press briefing note on Yemen/ Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Ravina Shamdasani

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24871&LangID=E>

[22] Bin Buraik threatens the legitimate government and demands its departure from Aden <https://arabi21.com/story/1199389>

[23]

[24] A military commander in Aden spoke to Abaad on Thursday, August 8, 2019



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