



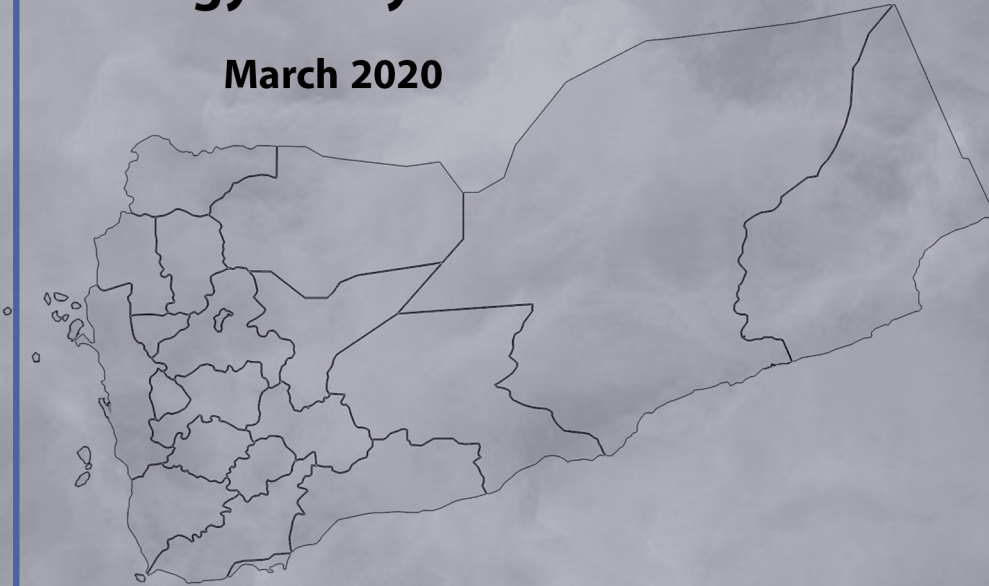
مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث
Abaad Studies & Research Center

Russia's return to Yemen

Geopolitics

Strategy Analysis Unit

March 2020



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Introduction:

The Yemeni-Russian relations go back to 1928. The Kingdom of Yemen (Mutawakkilite Kingdom) was one of the first Middle East countries to establish relations with the Soviet Union. That relationship passed through the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a delegate of Imam Yahya Mohamed Hamidaddin to Jeddah met with Russian delegate and delivered him a letter on the basis of which a cooperation treaty between the two countries was signed. But diplomatic relations were not established between the two countries until 1955.

Relations between Russia and Yemen are based on treaties of friendship and economic cooperation with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in southern Yemen in 1979, and with the Yemen Arab Republic in northern Yemen in 1984. The southern Yemen was ruled by a socialist regime, close to the Moscow axis, but the support from the Soviet Union to the regime was minimal, compared to other countries. Moscow was not looking for a "Marxist" presence in southern Yemen, but it was interested in using the naval and air facilities of the regime in Aden. In 1990, northern Yemen and southern Yemen were unified, and Moscow built relations with the new "Republic of Yemen" as a country that became closer to the western axis.

At the end of the Cold War, Moscow abandoned its bases in southern Yemen and lost the geopolitical influence in the region in favor of the United States of America. This Russian background helps the Russian influence returns to the region while the American influence is declining, not only because of a Russian desire to confront the West, but also to restore its military and geopolitical strength in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The Russian desire to return to Yemen emerged in 2009 when a Russian military official spoke of his country's desire to establish a military base in the vicinity of the strategically important Strait of Bab al-Mandab,^[1] which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, and through which 18% of Gulf oil passes. The decision-making circles and research centers in Russia pointed to plans to establishment such base over the past five years.

Yemen has been plagued by unrest since 2011, when a popular revolution overthrew President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled the country for 33 years.

This unrest developed into a war with the Houthis who took control of Sana'a in September 2014. A Saudi-led Arab coalition, backed by the United States, intervened in March 2015 and launched a war against the Houthis. The war continues to cause the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, according to the United Nations, as the war pushed most of the country's population (nearly thirty million) to the brink of starvation. During the past years of war, Moscow was observing the situation in Yemen with caution. It kept itself at the same distance from all Yemeni sides, while it had firmly supported the regime of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria.

In March 2020, the conflict on oil broke out between Saudi Arabia and Russia. It does not seem that the Russian- Saudi obstinacy will soon reach an agreement to end the crisis. Therefore, each one may try to impose its own influence in order to deepen the losses of each other. Moscow may find it a good choice to support the Houthis to control the Bab al-Mandab Strait in order to impose impact on Saudi's oil exports, as the Houthis group previously announced that it had targeted the Saudi oil company, Aramco, with missiles. But these expectations are not stronger than the possible communication that became direct with the southern transitional council, supported by Emirates.



In March, the oil war broke out between Saudi Arabia and Russia, and it does not seem that they will soon reach an agreement ending the crisis, so the crisis may turn into mutual attempts to have influence in the domination areas to deepen the losses

Motives of Russian policy in Yemen

Yemen's strategic location on the Bab al-Mandab Strait is the main motive behind the Russian policy in the region. There are some motives that make Russia an expected actor in Yemen in the coming period:

- **Russian geopolitical concerns:** Yemen is an indispensable component of the Kremlin's growing ambitions in the Red Sea region. The return of Russia to the Yemeni Socotra Island is based on the possibility of establishing a naval base in Sudan. The establishing of the base was discussed in a meeting between former Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and the Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2017. This strengthens Russia's power not only in the Gulf of Aden but in the entire Red Sea region. In coincidence with its efforts to generate energy in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Russia works on expanding its control significantly in the Red Sea as well as increasing the Russian operational capabilities in the Indian Ocean.
- **Yemen was one of Moscow's main priorities in the Middle East during the Cold War.** Beginning in 1962, at an invitation from Egypt, which supported the Republicans in Yemen, the Soviet Union sent military "advisers" and equipment to Yemen. This presence was expanded after 1968, when Russia had a presence in the south of the country. Moscow was allowed to specifically establish a naval base on Socotra. The base received 120 Soviet ships during its duration. The base in the Gulf of Aden enabled the Soviet Union to conduct continuous operations in the Indian Ocean until 1985.^[2] Moreover, during the period 1968-1991, at least 5,245 Soviet military specialists served in Yemen.^[3]

There is no doubt that the Kremlin's current strategy to rebuild Russian influence in the Middle East - a policy strongly influenced by the ideas of former Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov - will not be implemented until Moscow regains its former position in Yemen.

[4]

- **In the middle of 2019, Russia resubmitted its vision of collective security in the Arab Gulf region,** as stability in the Persian Gulf is crucial to Russian strategic interests. Yemen plays a role in Russia's collective security plan. Yemen is considered as a conflict area in the region between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Tensions between Saudi and Iran increased after the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran (the Iranian nuclear agreement). Therefore, Russia believes that its presence in the region enables it to play a role in solving global problems that affect its interests

The collective security plan in the Gulf region enables Russia to be permanently present in the region, as well as to influence the important international shipping lines.

- **Most of major countries have military bases near the Bab al-Mandab Strait, on the other side of Yemen in the Horn of Africa,** including China, the United States, France, Turkey, Britain and other countries. Multiple attempts by Moscow to obtain a military base in the Horn of Africa have failed. So Yemen seems to be a strategic region for Russia, if it can get that military base to join other Western powers.
- **At the regional level, Russia managed to achieve a balance in the Gulf after 2015.** It strengthened its alliance with Iran and established a very good relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE at the same time. This comes despite Moscow's standing with the Syrian regime, tearing apart its relationship with the Arab Gulf states. But after the year 2015, Russia kept silent towards the Security Council resolutions regarding the military campaign against the Houthis. This Russian position improved its relations with the Gulf countries, in addition to its support to the "legitimacy" of the existing authority in Yemen - from the Russian point of view. But Russia has been highly critical of the war in Yemen and Saudi air strikes. It has often exploited the war in Yemen to justify its strikes against civilians in Syria, although there is a big difference between what Russia is doing in Syria and the Arab coalition's operations in Yemen. The Russian endeavor in Yemen is also an attempt to improve the bad image of Russia among the Arab peoples due to its support to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.



In March, the oil war broke out between Saudi Arabia and Russia, and it does not seem that they will soon reach an agreement ending the crisis, so the crisis may turn into mutual attempts to have influence in the domination areas to deepen the losses

Russian strategy in Yemen

Moscow maintains a good relationship with the two main conflicting parties in Yemen. Until the assassination of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh by the Houthis in December 2017, Moscow maintained diplomatic corps in both Sana'a and Aden. It believes that the Saudi-led coalition operations are escalating the war in Yemen. To understand more, this study touches on the nature of the Russian strategy and its relationship with local and international implications related to war and peace in Yemen.

First: local actors

- **The legitimate government:** Moscow recognizes the legitimacy of the government, led by President AbdRabboh Mansour Hadi. In July 2018, Yemeni President AbdRabboh Mansour Hadi appointed the first Yemeni ambassador to Russia since the fall of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011.

The appointment of Al-Wahaishi changed Moscow's strategy about Yemen from negative rhetorical criticism of the ongoing conflict that Moscow continued to indoctrinate to the world through the United Nations, into active efforts to reach a ceasefire in Yemen through diplomatic means.

In 2019, former Foreign Minister, Abdulmalik al-Mikhlaifi, visited Moscow and ask for Russian support to pressure on Iran to stop supporting the Houthis. The relationship between Moscow and Tehran is characterized to be good in many files, mostly in terms of Syria and the Iranian nuclear agreement, especially after the United States withdrew from the agreement.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2216 on Yemen was the first test of the Russian intent. The text urged the Houthis to withdraw from all the areas that were seized immediately, and reaffirmed the legitimate authority of President Hadi's government in Yemen." Moscow abstained from the vote, saying that "the text was not entirely in line with the terms of a political solution" and called on all parties to cease fire. Russia has used veto a number of times since then to amend the official resolutions and statements of the United Nations and opposed any attempts to withdraw the issue outside the framework of the United Nations, pointing to the establishment of the International Quartet, which includes (the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).^[5]

- **The Houthi Group:** On December 4, 2017, the Houthis killed their ally, former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh's violent death and the military defeat of his loyalists in Sana'a was a result of months of growing tensions between Saleh's General People's Congress party and the Houthis. The Russian Embassy in Sana'a was still a place for meetings with Ali Abdullah Saleh and a place to enhance the Houthi presence as well. But the murder of Ali Abdullah Saleh pushed the Russian diplomats to leave Sana'a. The relationship remained tense between the Houthis and the Russians, despite the Iranian mediation that asked Moscow officials to meet with the Houthis- that at least did not happen publicly until the end of 2018.^[6] After that there were several meetings with the Houthis in Moscow and Muscat, where the Houthi delegation to negotiations currently stay.^[7]

In 2016, Russia supported the "Supreme Political Council", formed by the Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh, due to several reasons: the United Nations and the UN Security Council abandoned its responsibility to end the region's files, and the strong Iranian arm inside Russia that pressured for the recognition of the Houthi-Saleh council, in addition to good relationship between "Saleh" and Russian officials. Saleh spoke to the Russian government's TV channel "Russia 24" in August 2016, saying, "In our fight against terrorism, we will provide all facilities, and we are ready to provide our airports and ports to the Russian Federation."

This means that "Saleh" made his promises to Russia to establish a military base in Yemen. This offer did not provoke the Russians at the time due to the permanent Russian drowning in Syria. But later in August 2017, the former commander of the Russian Navy, Feliks Gromov, called for the establishment of a Russian naval base close to the commercial passages in the Gulf of Aden, and the Institute of the Oriental Studies in Moscow described Socotra as the ideal place to build a Russian base in Yemen.

In 2018, the Supreme Political Council, led by the Houthi leader Mahdi al-Mashat, sent a letter to the Russian president.^[8] The letter referred to the Yemeni war and a request from Russia to help confront the Americans and the western intervention in the country. The Houthis letter is based on the assumption that Moscow, along with Tehran, faces the western expansion in the Middle East, and they consider this as a good point for the Russian return to Yemen.

- **The Southern Transitional Council:** In March 2019, the Russian Foreign Ministry was the first to invite officials in the Southern Transitional Council to an official visit to Moscow, in reference to the growing relationship between the Emirates, which supports the Southern Transitional Council, and the Kremlin. The Russian ambassador to Yemen also visited the headquarters of the Southern Transitional Council in Aden in the same period.^[9] This was reinforced in a statement issued on August 10, 2019, when the Russian deputy ambassador to the United Nations, Dmitriy Polyanskiy, refused to condemn the "Southern Transitional Council's control on Aden. Russia also did not confirm the importance of the Yemeni unity as usual.

At the same time, Russia is not likely to support the independence of the southern Yemen directly, because this move will cause serious differences with Saudi Arabia. Moscow considers facilitating the "Southern Transitional Council's engagement in peace negotiations, brokered by the United Nations, as a way to keep the interests of the UAE, without jeopardizing the Russian strategy of "regional balance". It is also a way for Russia to gain presence in southern Yemen that the UAE has previously promised.

Russia has good relations with the two parties of conflict in Yemen - the legitimate government and the Houthis - in an attempt to stop the war, and it has opened relations with the transitional council forces in the south to gain a presence there

Second: regional actors

- **The United Arab Emirates:** The Russian increasing engagement in the Middle East is one of the positive developments from the viewpoint of the UAE that seeks to become a strong regional factor. Moscow believes that its relations with the UAE will support its interests in the region, while the UAE believes that its relations with the Kremlin will support its ambitions in Yemen and in the region. During the past three years, Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, visited Moscow four times (2016-2019). In June 2018, Mohammed bin Zayed and President Vladimir Putin signed the declaration of strategic partnership between the two countries, which also includes consultations on regional issues.^[10] By the end of 2018, the UAE started returning to Syria through reopening its embassy after closure since 2012, as the UAE supported groups opposing to the Syrian regime.^[11] Russia has recently become involved in the Libyan war in favor of retired Major General Khalifa Haftar, the UAE's main ally.^[12]

The UAE believes that Russia can support it to establish its presence in Yemen and help its local allies get an international recognition as well as pressure to enable its allies in Yemen, including the Southern Transitional Council and Saleh's family, to be represented in any upcoming UN-sponsored consultations.

Russia has been supporting the party of Ali Abdullah Saleh, the UAE ally in Yemen. Saleh's son, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, stays in Abu Dhabi since 2014, when the Security Council resolution 2216 imposed sanctions on him.

The UAE prefers to help the "Saleh's family" regain power in Yemen – in north of Yemen in particular - rather than forces generated by the Arab Spring in 2011, because the decision-makers in Abu Dhabi have strong rivalry position against the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen and the UAE phobia against the Islamists, whom it put on its terrorist lists. This UAE position targets the Yemeni Islamic Islah party, which has repeatedly denied its association with the Muslim Brotherhood. In February 2020, the UAE officially stated, for the first time, that it was fighting the "Muslim Brotherhood of Yemen," in reference to the Islah party, even though "Islah" is fighting alongside with the Emirates forces against the Houthis. Unlike Abu Dhabi, Moscow may not see a problem with the Yemeni Islah party as long as it does not disturb its interests in the region.

In 2017, Mohamed bin Zayed visited Moscow and met with Putin. Information sources say that Abu Dhabi offered Moscow a space to dock its ships in Aden, giving Russia the fourth "stop station" from the Suez Canal in the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea - the other stop stations are Alexandria, Aqaba and Fujairah. Russia also plans to become a light and fast naval force in warm waters, and this requires maintenance and repair stations for Russian naval operations during its presence in the Middle East.^[13] Countries, such as Djibouti, have repeatedly rejected a Russian request to set up a naval military base on their soils because of fears of tension with US and Chinese bases on their soils. On the other hand, Moscow supports an Emirati plan of a political process that includes holding presidential elections in Yemen and handing over the Ministry of Defense to a member of the "Saleh's family."^[14] The UAE has already hold meetings that brought together Russian officials with Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, in 2016 and 2017 in order to defend his father and stop the international sanctions imposed on them, according to the UN resolution issued in November 2014.^[15] Meetings were also hold with Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh after his father was killed by the Houthis. These meetings took place in Abu Dhabi, the residence of Ahmed Ali, after the UN resolution prevented him from travelling.

Unlike the UAE, which considers its presence in Yemen as fateful, Moscow is adopting a "mercury" approach to serve its interests. Therefore, when Ali Abdullah Saleh made his offers to Russia to give it a foothold on the Yemeni lands, Russia was optimistic about the possibility of reaching that ambition, but at the same time it did not want to sink in supporting the "Saleh's family" and "Houthis" as it did in Syria. It wanted to make its ambitions without any cost.

The Russian conciliatory gestures towards the "Southern Transitional Council" also aim to strengthen Moscow's relationship with the UAE. Russia's association with the "Southern Transitional Council" reflects the increasing importance of the UAE as a partner. Reports talk about the possibility of establishing Emirati-Russian security and military companies in southern Yemen, similar to those in Libya.

The Abaad Center acquired information stating that Abu Dhabi had offered Moscow a naval base in “Aden, Socotra, or Al-Shahr Port in Hadramawt or in the Mukha Port of Taiz,^[16] west of the country” in exchange for moving forward with the Emirati plan on the ground, and supporting the "Southern Transitional Council" and the "Saleh's family" that is stationed on the western coast of Yemen. Russia urgently needs this presence, especially with the recent “oil price war”, announced by Saudi Arabia to force Moscow to curb oil production restrictions, and the reduction of battles in Syria after the empowerment of the Bashar Al-Assad regime.

- **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:** The relationship between the Kingdom and Russia is volatile, as Saudi Arabia relies on the American protection. The Russian position in Syria has led to an increase in tension between the two vital countries in the region and the world, as they control the oil market inside and outside OPEC. One of the reasons for Saudi rapprochement with Riyadh was the Russian position in the issue of Yemen, when it did not object the Security Council resolution 2216, in addition to tension between US and Saudi Arabia during the term of former President Obama.

In October 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Saudi Arabia after a visit by King Salman bin AbdulAziz to Russia in 2017. The Yemeni file was certainly present in these discussions between the leaders of the two countries. The visits confirmed the emergence of Russia as one of the main geopolitical stakeholders in the Arabian Peninsula, and gave Moscow an opportunity to consolidate its partnership with Saudi Arabia on various issues, including the safety of energy and instability in North Africa. This partnership was broken in one of the sides of the agreement, resulting in reduction of oil production and decreasing in oil price to less than \$ 25 for a barrel.

However, this visit comes at a time when the Saudi-Emirati coalition suffers some tensions, as the two countries compete over different goals in Yemen.

Unlike the United States of America, which hopes that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE will resolve their differences and be a united front against Iran, Russia considers the growing divergence between Saudi and Emirati foreign policy agendas as a geopolitical opportunity.

Given that the Emirati policies towards Yemen, Syria, and Iran are not supported by Riyadh and Washington, Russia is trying to use the common points between it and the UAE on these fronts to enhance the strategic partnership between Moscow and Abu Dhabi. Russia's courtship with the UAE goes in parallel with conciliatory signals towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to guarantee good relations between Moscow and Riyadh and to keep the possibility of benefiting from any rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the future.^[17]

Russia hopes that the UAE can influence the Saudi policies as that will be in the interest of Russia at the end. It hopes that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi will rearrange their policies. It can be said that Russia's belief in the possibility of achieving this scenario stems from the way Moscow looks at dynamics of the total power in the Gulf. Andrey Kortunov, director general of the Russian Council of International Affairs, said that the regional hegemony in the Gulf is "shared" between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, "but it is Abu Dhabi that sets the political ideology and strategic vision of that coalition."^[18]

In November 2019, Russia welcomed the signing of the Riyadh Agreement between the Yemeni legitimate government and the Southern Transitional Council. The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Moscow welcomes the signing of the document and considers it as an important step for the unification of Yemeni society, and a positive example of reaching compromises that are acceptable and necessary in the current circumstances that Yemen is going through.^[19] This position is part of the Russian strategic balance and a confirmation that Russia looks at the Southern Transitional Council as a party that can influence in the future.

- **The Islamic Republic of Iran:** The Houthis combat capabilities are based on the Iranian aid. It includes combat training, ballistic missiles, and smart marine missiles that targeted Saudi airports and ports, commercial ships, and Gulf and American warships. Iranian activity depends on cooperation with Russia, which protects the Iranian Revolutionary Guard from Security Council resolutions that condemn Iran and its support for the Houthi group.

Russia has, more than once, objected to the British-American-Saudi attempts to condemn Iran for smuggling weapons to the Houthis in Yemen, although UN reports confirm Tehran's involvement in smuggling parts of ballistic missiles and weapons to the Houthis. Thus, Russia is an important actor that has enabled Iran to extend its control and influence in Yemen, because the Iranian-Russian relationship in Syria, where they are fighting alongside with Bashar al-Assad's regime. The Houthis believe that this good relationship between Tehran and Moscow can help their goals and create an international recognition of their authority in Sana'a, but that did not happen - at least until early 2020. The legitimate government enjoys that international recognition, although its international image is being damaged by the disintegration of the coalition and the retreat of government forces from fighting fronts with the Houthis.

The compatibility of Russia and Iran is based on to what extent their partnership in Syria can continue. It does not seem that this partnership will last for long, as Iran is angry with the Russian intervention in the decision-making in Syria. But this does not mean that Moscow will leave its partial relationship with the Houthis as a local component that can achieve its ambitions and interests in Yemen.



Abu Dhabi sees that the Russians' increasing engagement in the Middle East serves that the UAE interests, and its promises to Russia of a naval base causes tension with Saudi Arabia, but it is a geopolitical opportunity for Moscow to return to Yemen

Russian military companies

In the letter sent by "Mahdi Al-Mashat, President of the Houthi Political Council, to Russian President Vladimir Putin, he said that Russia should use its political weight and influence to stop the war in Yemen. Meanwhile, al-Mashat accused Washington and Riyadh of spreading chaos in Yemen and targeting alleged Russian-led peace initiatives. Officially, the Russian government did not agree to the request, however, Russia's experience in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria certainly shows the way in which Moscow can become a stakeholder in this conflict, through Russian military companies.

Although the head of the Islamic Studies at the Institute for Innovative Development, Kirill Semenov, ruled out that the Russian private military companies are currently operating in Yemen, he nevertheless said that this may happen in future.^[20] Semenov said: "It is not [for] a strategic interest of the Kremlin, but an example of securing some commercial interests such as infrastructure projects on Socotra, or humanitarian missions related to food delivery." Semenov's speech can be viewed carefully. Contrary to what he says, the Kremlin has a strategic interest in Yemen.

The second pivot point in Semenov's statement is related to the role that Russian private military companies may play on the ground. In fact, almost all Russian sources denied the presence of Wagner Group in Yemen - as suggested by the same expert. Instead, the most likely option is PMC, called as Patriot Group, which is another Russian private military company. It is a more sophisticated company, equipped with devices of the famous "Wagner" company. It has a bad reputation. The company's activity was disclosed in the Central African Republic.^[21] These companies belong to the Kremlin.

These companies can work with the Houthis, providing advice and missile launchers. The "Wagner" Group is supporting Haftar's forces in Libya, so it may intervene to support the Houthis. The same may happen with the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. In order to verify this information, you can know the extent to which Russia wants to achieve its strategy in Yemen.

Scenarios of Russia's return to Yemen:

In light of the policy of openness and expected rapprochement with the Houthis in the north under the Iranian sponsorship and strategic cooperation with the Emirates that control the Southern Transitional Council, in addition to Russia's need to return to the areas of influence that it had lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the mutual economic pressure with Saudi Arabia, and the return to military competition with the United States, Britain and Europe, some scenarios are expected about Russia's next step to find a foothold in Yemen and in the Bab al-Mandab Strait:

- The first scenario:

Russia continues its policy of supporting plans to stop the war in Yemen, ensuring an effective role for the new Houthi partners in the north and the southern transitional council in the south, in addition to the "Saleh's family", while continuing to recognize the legitimacy of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi - the internationally recognized government and maintaining good relations with Saudi Arabia. Through its policy of "balance of powers", Russia believes it can ensure a stronger presence in Yemen, near the Bab al-Mandab Strait, to facilitate its maritime operations and to ensure the security of the region, according to its vision of "collective security" in the Gulf.

- The second scenario:

Opening the way for cooperation with Iran and the Emirates to achieve strategic goals in Yemen, but informally through private security and military companies to be present on the ground to train and arm the Houthis, Iran's allies in the north, and the Transitional Council's militants, the UAE's allies in the south. This will achieve Moscow's economic and military pressure on Riyadh mainly, and then on Washington without any significant cost. In future, Russia will be able to influence the Yemeni politics and achieve its strategy of existing near the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

- The third scenario:

Accepting the UAE's call to build military bases in former locations of the Soviet Union, near Bab al-Mandab. This scenario may force it to reach an understanding with Iran and accept the Houthis' call for a military partnership. This scenario will make the cost of achieving the strategy of presence in Yemen huge, because the direct military presence may put Moscow in confrontations with Riyadh and Washington.

Summary:

The return of the Russian influence in areas of the Soviet Union era, near the Bab al-Mandab, the Horn of Africa and near the corridors of international trade and energy transmission lines, is not just a dream, but a strategy that Moscow seeks to achieve at the lowest cost. Russia likely will move to achieve the second scenario, starting with military presence in Yemen unofficially through private security and military companies, along with the most important part of the first scenario – exerting efforts to end the war in Yemen- in preparation for achieving the third scenario, which is a full military presence. Russia hopes that its presence in the north will be achieved in coordination with Saudi Arabia, if negotiations between Riyadh and the Houthis succeed, and its presence in the south will be obtained in partnership with the United Arab Emirates.



Return to Bab al-Mandab is a Russian strategy that Russia may seek to achieve currently through informal security and military companies, with pressure to stop the war, in preparation for direct military presence

Margins:

[1] Russia plans navy bases in Libya, Syria, Yemen: report <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-01-16/russia-plans-navy-bases-in-libya-syria-yemen-report/268898>

[2] The Foundations of Russian Policy in the Middle East <https://jamestown.org/program/foundations-russian-policy-middle-east/>

[3] Ангола и другие страны, которые научил воевать СССР

https://news.rambler.ru/other/40872136/?utm_content=news_media&utm_medium=read_more&utm_source=copylink

[4] Russian PMCs in Yemen: Kremlin-Style 'Security Export' in Action? <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-pmcs-in-yemen-kremlin-style-security-export-in-action/>

[5] Russia's Multidimensional Approach to the Yemen War

<https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/russias-multidimensional-approach-yemen-war-24697>

[6] Houthi delegation meets with a Russian government official in Moscow <https://almawqeaqpost.net/news/35137>

[7] Houthi delegation meets Russian Deputy Foreign Minister in Muscat, <https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D9%88%D9%81%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%82%D8%B7-%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC/>

[8] President of the Supreme Political Council sends a message to the Russian president <https://sahafah-24.net/news/94361>

[9] The Russian Ambassador meets a number of members of the Transitional Council in Aden <https://www.almashhadalaraby.com/news/78991>

[10] Mohammed bin Zayed and Putin sign a strategic partnership declaration between the UAE and Russia <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/2018/06/01/uae-mohamed-bin-zayed-russia>

[11] Emirates reopens its embassy in Damascus after closure for seven years <https://www.france24.com/ar/20181227>

[12] Libya: Russia Plays a New Card

<https://orientxxi.info/magazine/libya-russia-plays-a-new-card,1730>

[13] Russia and the UAE: Friends with Benefits <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russia-and-the-uae-friends-with-benefits/>

[14] The UAE keeps this position for Yemen's former ambassador to UAE, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was leading the Republican Guard forces, which is the strongest army unit that was affiliated with Saleh's regime before it was dismantled by the current president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi through decisions he issued after his election in 2012.

[15] Previous source

[16] A diplomat informed about Russian-Emirati contacts regarding Yemen briefed a researcher at the Abaad Center for Studies and Research on December 5, 2019.

[17] Russia Exploits the Saudi-UAE Divergence <https://lobelog.com/russia-exploits-the-saudi-uae-divergence/>

[18] WHAT SHOULD THE GULF CRISES TEACH US? <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/what-should-the-gulf-crisis-teach-us/>

[19] Russia: The Riyadh Agreement is an important step for uniting the Yemeni community <https://www.alarabiya.net/ar/saudi-today/2019/11/07>

[20] Что потеряли в Йемене российские наёмники

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[21] Russian PMCs in Yemen: Kremlin-Style 'Security Export' in Action? <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-pmcs-in-yemen-kremlin-style-security-export-in-action/>



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