

The Gaza War: Projected Repercussions and Impact on Yemen

Situation Assessment
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Introduction

While it is difficult to predict the exact impact of the onslaught on Gaza on the Yemeni scene, it is certain that the war on Gaza will cast shadow in various ways on the situation in Yemen. Such impact may be the result of the probable decline in regional and international interest in the Yemeni issue, and diverting efforts and material resources away from Yemen, as well as the result of any impact on the global economy and regional dynamics of the conflict in Yemen. The outcomes and repercussions of the war will be determined for the most part by the developments of the war itself. The longer the war continues and takes an escalatory trend, the less interest in Yemen by regional and international actors, the greater impact it has on the global economy and regional relations. The impact of the war will reach its climax if the scope of the war widens to a regional conflict and the Houthi group decides to enter the war. The more escalatory the events, the more severe the repercussions on the Yemeni scene and the more dire consequences of the war on the political, economic and humanitarian conditions in Yemen. The doctrinal and emotional national dimensions of this war make it more dangerous and exacerbate its influence on the region.

The Conflict: Perpetuating a state of neither peace nor war

Through creating a situation conducive to a decline in the momentum of peace efforts and curtailing the causes of escalation on the ground, the war in Gaza contributes to perpetuating a state of neither peace nor war that the country has been experiencing since April 2022.

1. Waning of the peace efforts

This war comes at a critical stage of the political process when peace efforts and negotiations have begun to achieve some progress. Regardless of the nature of this progress, this war is likely to affect peace efforts and negotiations as a result of diverting regional and international interest and reorienting diplomatic resources away from the Yemeni situation. Moreover, the war will push the Houthis, and by extension their Iranian backers, to slow down negotiations with Saudi Arabia or to freeze them altogether until the trajectory of events becomes clear. In such circumstances,

the value of the card represented by the conflict in Yemen for them and for the resistance axis more broadly and slowing down or freezing the pace of the negotiation process prolongs the possibility of using it for bargaining, if necessary, in as much as it conveys some messages and warnings to the supposed enemies.

2. Stalemate

This war reduces the chances of military escalation in Yemen in various ways:

- It creates a local, regional and international mood opposed to escalation, so that any escalation or tendency in this direction will be faced with major opposition.
- The national and religious dimension of this war will curb any inclination or impulsion towards escalation by the local and regional parties implicated in the Yemeni conflict, given that any escalation will be a distraction of the efforts of the war with Israel and diverting attention from a "sacred war."
- Chances of logistical support and supplying the local parties to the conflict with weapons and ammunition may be affected as a result of the pressures and challenges imposed by the war on Gaza on the regional parties implicated in the Yemeni conflict. These latter will be forced by the war to be careful and to preserve their military resources or re-channel some of them.
- Some foreign fighters and experts in the ranks of the Houthi group may be withdrawn, and Houthi fighters may be sent to Lebanon and Syria.
- So far, The Houthi group's joining the ranks of the resistance in its battle against Israel is still likely, but it is conditional on Iran's decision. Houthi involvement in the war is certain if Iran or Hezbollah entered the war. The group's leader had expressed his willingness to join the war against Israel if the United States intervened directly.
- The country will witness more external military interventions if the war widens to a regional conflict that encompasses Iran and its allies, including the Houthi group, which will be targeted by Israel and its allies.

Political repercussions

1. Challenges to and pressures on both parties to the conflict

Both the legitimate authority and the Houthi group will be subjected to additional pressure as a result of any damages to economic activity and as a result of decline of external support and the weakening of regional and international efforts and contributions to address the effects of conflict and economic instability.

They will have to make up for any deficits in public revenues and external funds to secure official operating expenses and run the necessary public services. Their failure to do so will aggravate public discontent.

However, the legitimate government will be under greater pressure and will face more challenges, as its financial position, for example— by virtue of the continued suspension of oil exports and its modest non-oil revenues— will be greatly affected, especially if Riyadh stops its financial aid. Unlike the case with the Houthi group, a persistent state of neither war nor peace is not in the interest of the Aden-based government. The persistence of such a state of affairs for a long time threatens to widen its internal differences and schisms.

Because it is part of the "axis of resistance," the Houthi group is more concerned than others with this development since it is in its interest. For the Houthis, it represents an opportunity of a development that can be manipulated. The group and its supporters even showed a remarkable celebration of Al-Aqsa Flood operation. The group even regarded and dealt with this operation as a victory for the group itself. The war in Gaza is still an opportunity to reduce the pressures imposed by the Yemeni public on the group today for various reasons, the most important of which is demanding the payment of salaries. It also helps repair the damage of its image and its relationship with the people. Moreover, it is also an opportunity to mobilize, recruit and raise funds on the pretext of supporting the Palestinian people.

However, a war like this constitutes a challenge and a litmus test to the group in more than one way. It tests its position on the Palestinian issue, reveals how authentic its slogan of "death to Israel" is, especially as this slogan has been theoretically chanted and raised by the group since its inception. It is a test of its permanent vow to attack Israel, as well as to its allegations of possessing long-range missiles that can reach as far afield as Israel. The Yemeni and Arab peoples have high expectations in this regard. The group has been content with organizing pro-Palestinian, and by extension anti-Israel and anti-West, demonstrations in various areas of its control, launched a fundraising campaign, called for volunteering and training to fight. Above all, the Houthi leader voiced the threats of his intentions to enter the war if the United States intervened directly. And that was all! These reactions fell short of public expectations and seemed to betray the ambitious roofs revealed by the slogans raised by the group. Therefore, the group became simply an object of mockery and sarcasm in the Yemeni and Arab street. Its supporters were also frustrated and embarrassed. For their part, the group's opponents found in this situation a rich material to discredit the group, accusing it of "opportunism" and "manipulative rhetoric about the Palestinian issue." They also found in that a proof of "its dependency on Iran."

Accordingly, the group is the most affected by this war on the political and popular level, but this may be true up to this moment only. There is still an opportunity for the group to reverse this image and to invest current events. This will happen specifically if it enters the war and launches attacks on Israeli territory and interests or targets the interests of Israel's allies.

2. Additional reasons of tension

Yemenis seldom adopt a unanimous position on any issue, but this does not apply to the Palestinian issue. Yemenis have shown exceptional united position towards the Palestinian cause. Today, they share a supportive and sympathetic position with the Palestinians. However, in as much as it is supposed to be a reason for calm, the onslaught on Gaza adds other reasons for tension in the Yemeni scene through the following:

- The political controversies it incites and the incentives it secures push towards adopting positions that create tension and division. So far, it has provided the parties with an opportunity to attack political opponents. Opponents of the Houthi group have invested recent developments and relevant positions to attack the group and raise questions on its moral, doctrinal and political positions in light of the modest reaction that falls short of the high and constant rhetoric of the group's intentions and ability to target Israel. For its part, the group found an opportunity to tighten its iron grip in its areas of control and also to attack and threaten its opponents whom it describes as supporters of normalization—from the Houthi vantage point Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the forces associated with them and whoever supports these forces or sympathizes with them. For example, group leader and deputy foreign minister, Hussein Al-Ezzi, [commented](#): "Sure. Unequivocally and relentlessly, we will crush every invader and normalizer, and every mercenary and agent of the Zionists on our blessed land." As much as it emphasizes the non-compromising authoritarian militia spirit of the Houthi group, this manipulative approach to current events further intensifies official and popular political relations.
- Pushing towards more militarization of society: Religious groups of all kinds view this war as an opportunity to recruit more Yemenis under the pretext of jihad. The Houthi group has [opened](#) the door for recruitment of fighters who would supposedly fight in Palestine and [started](#) to open training camps for young people. It hopes that a million people will enroll at these camps. Such recruitment is also confirmed by extremist groups that always try to attract more recruits.

- Through the above results and the possible deterioration of economic and humanitarian conditions in the country, this war will contribute to more tension in political relations, security and peace. It creates an environment conducive to turmoil and growing anti-government protests.

Security repercussions

The war will exacerbate instability by feeding its root causes. The resulting effects may spread throughout the region and cause damage to stability and trade routes. Some of the key manifestations of such effects are as follows:

- Increasing the risks of terrorism: The war will strengthen extremist groups that will be emboldened by the successes of Hamas in Al-Aqsa Flood operation. These groups, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), will take advantage of the situation to enhance their popular and financial position (fundraising). Extremists will also take advantage of the war in Gaza to promote terrorist ideology and recruit new elements. Radical groups may take the war as a pretext to carry out terrorist attacks inside or outside Yemen. Terrorist groups might target ships in international waters off Yemeni coasts. Cooperation between these groups and the Houthi group is likely to increase on grounds of fighting one battle and confronting a common enemy.
- Creating an environment friendly to acts of piracy and illegal smuggling of weapons and drugs.
- Security challenges will reach a climax if fighting expands to a regional war, especially because of the deterioration of the economic and humanitarian conditions that will result from the war, and the decline of resources that will be reflected in security assets and capabilities.
- Increase of border challenges and tensions as a result of the transient flow of fighters and the smuggling of weapons and terrorists, which will place additional burdens on border security. Security and military measures may be strengthened on the borders with Yemen, which may cause tension in these areas.
- It goes without saying that Yemen will be affected by any regional security repercussions caused by the war.

Exacerbation of the economic crisis

The war is expected to exacerbate the economic crisis in the country and to lead to further economic deterioration as a result of the collapse of the country's economy and banking system.

Most importantly, this will be the result of any impact of this war on the global economy, especially if the war [expands](#) into a regional conflict. The global economy will be impacted due to threats to international navigation and the concomitant increase in transportation and insurance costs, as well as due to the fluctuations of oil supplies and prices, either as a result of the impact on international navigation or due to cuts and decline in the production capacities of countries in the region. Such projected developments would lead to a deterioration of the overall economic environment and [push](#) the global economy towards recession. The most important projected economic repercussions of this war are likely to be as follows:

- Disrupting supply chains and the flow of imports and exports to and from the country as a result of the decline of commercial activity and exchanges in and through the region, impacting international trade and navigation, and global rise of prices in general.
- Decline of external economic support provided to Yemen, whether in the form of humanitarian aid or development support.
- Downturn of expatriate transfers, which is a major source of foreign currency in the country as a result of fears that the war will lead to more unrest in Yemen.
- As a result of all the above, there will be decline in commercial activity, deterioration of the financial sectors and the banking system, which will, in turn, lead to a decrease in the movement of capital and investment activity. Such a situation will contribute further to economic recession, inflation and the depreciation of the national currency. In this case, the authorities will have to secure additional financial resources to deal with the increasing humanitarian, economic and security challenges. Such measures, however, may lead to increase in public debt and inflation. In the medium and long term, all the above points will negatively affect Yemen's ability to recover, especially as the effect of these repercussions may long outlast the war.

Deterioration of humanitarian conditions

This war will likely constitute a setback in the efforts to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and further exacerbate this crisis. It may lead to intensifying the food insecurity issue and the risks of starvation and disease.

Such projected outcomes are likely to be caused by the following:

- the decrease of humanitarian efforts and funds. So far, the war has created an additional humanitarian crisis in the region; i.e., in Gaza. Therefore, states and humanitarian organizations will face additional pressure, and this will weaken and divert attention away from Yemen.
- the economic repercussions of this war, including affecting supply chains, high oil prices and commercial transportation, and consequently the rise of prices of basic commodities and the deficient food and medicine supplies in the country.



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