

**"SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN & THE TRUCE:  
WHAT NEXT?"  
SUMMARY OF A WEBINAR HELD BY  
ARAB GULF STATES INSTITUTE OF GULF AFFAIRS  
12 APRIL 2022**



*According to its website, the Institute for Gulf Affairs is "an independent, nonpartisan organization that disseminates solid information about the Gulf region and produces thoughtful analyses of Gulf politics and international relations. Based in Washington, DC, the Institute is at the centre of a global network of reliable individuals, some of whom, due to the closed nature of the Saudi political system, have no other outlet for their views...."*

## **OVERVIEW**

The Institute for Gulf Affairs hosted a webinar on the truce in Yemen where Yemeni, Saudi Arabian, and American panellists discussed their different perspectives on the truce as well as providing an analysis of what might be expected for the future of peace in Yemen.

### **A BRIEF SUMMARY OF SOME COMMENTS BY THE PANELLISTS**

1. **Dr. Shireen Al-Adeimi** (*Assistant Professor, Michigan State University*)
  - Roots of the current humanitarian crisis that has claimed 377,000 deaths through war and blockade goes back to 2011 and the Arab Spring.
  - At this time, the Houthis control most of North Yemen, while forces aligned with former President Hadi and others are ensconced in the South.
  - However, a temporary truce has now been reached with Omani mediation.
  - At the same time, it has been announced that President Hadi will step down and be replaced by a 'Presidential Council' (8 people) that has the backing of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and UAE.
  - This is seen as a ploy by the KSA to save face, despite the fact that the members of the new Council are essentially men of war and have nothing in common.
  - While KSA has continued with a relentless policy of bombing, the UAE which has all but annexed Socotra, has changed tactics and tried to cut its losses short.
  - The role of Iran in Yemeni affairs is highly overstated.

2. **Dr. Annelle Sheline** (*Research Fellow, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft*)

- On policy in Yemen, the US in the Obama Administration decided to support the KSA war effort, believing as MBS, who in his then capacity as Defence Minister, had said that the war would be over in a matter of weeks.
- While supporting the war, albeit with some reservations, was followed through by Trump and the Houthis were placed on list of 'Foreign Terrorist Organizations', the picture was to change somewhat with the arrival of Joe Biden in the White House.
- Biden immediately removed the Houthis from the FTO and promised to change US attitude with the conduct of the war by preventing the sale of 'offensive weapons' as well as helping with refuelling of Saudi planes.
- Nonetheless, in reality very little has changed and Saudi air raids against Yemeni targets have resumed as before even increasing by the end of 2021.
- It appears however that both the UAE and the KSA are now re-evaluating the cost of their undertakings in Yemen, mindful that the continuing conflict and the consequent humanitarian crisis is not helping their image.
- They are also concerned about the possible introduction of the 'War Power Resolution' by the US Congress to impede the hands of the Biden Administration in going along with the war- something that ordinary American citizens are at any rate unfamiliar with - as they it has since assuming office.
- Only Yemenis are capable of finding a solution that fits their purposes.
- It would be great if the truce can hold, though more important is what should come next!
- KSA wants a veneer of peace-making but in essence it is continuing with war making by using Yemeni faces.
- So far the conflict has not been a civil war, but it could very easy become a highly destructive one in the aftermath of outside interventions.
- The future does not look great and once should be hopeful that the 'War Power Resolution' is soon enacted by the US Congress.

3. **Shuaib Al-Mosawa** (*Journalist, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies*)

- Yemenis feel optimistic about recent activities – especially since there have been no air strikes.
- However, problems continue to remain about the operation of ports badly needed for the import of foodstuff to keep people going. In this respect, recent KSA attacks on the port at Hodeida has been particularly harmful
- This has led many to believe that the current truce is nothing but a break before conflict resumes once again.
- Drone attacks against the UAE and KSA have been game changers.
- The war in Ukraine has affected views concerning the war in Yemen and may have been a factor in the calculation of the Houthis to accept a cease-fire (something they had rejected before in 2020 and 2021), although not having been able to take Mareb may have been another factor.

4. **Ali Al-Ahmed** (*Founder and Director, Institute for Gulf Affairs*)

- The establishment of the “Presidential Council’ was imposed and it did not have the approval of Hadi.
- KSA want to remove itself from the mess it has created and is hopeful that the new Council will also move out of Riyadh.
- KSA must understand that it is in own interest to let Yemen go its own way and stop its pursuit of a policy of interference in Yemeni affairs – something it has done continually since 1963.
- Role of Iran should not be exaggerated. Houthis are their own masters and should not be seen as Iranian proxies.
- Even if Iran and US sign a new JCPOA, it does not follow that the Houthis will follow the lines that might then be suggested by Iran.
- With Hadi effectively gone, the role of the UN Security Council Resolution to reinstate him is now practically obsolete.

