

## Separatist takeover of Yemen's Aden

### What is the issue?

- The southern separatists had takeover Aden which is the interim seat of Yemen's government.
- This could leave Saudi Arabia struggling to hold together a military coalition fighting the Iran-aligned Houthis.
- It also risks fragmenting southern Yemen as the United Nations (UN) struggles to restart talks to end the war.

### What has happened in Yemen?

- On 10<sup>th</sup> August 2019, United **Arab Emirates (UAE) backed separatists** (who want to split from the north) effectively seized Aden by taking over the government's military bases.
- On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019, the **Saudi-led coalition backed Yemen government** hit back, saying it attacked one target, after threatening to act if southern forces do not cease fighting.
- Both the sides had been nominally allied in the coalition fighting the Houthis, who overthrew Hadi's government from the capital Sanaa in 2014, but they have rival agendas.

### What does this mean for the coalition?

- It makes it harder for Saudi Arabia to weaken the grip of the Houthis, who hold Sanaa and most urban centres.
- In 2015, the Western-backed Sunni Muslim coalition intervened in Yemen against the Houthis. This is seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- The Houthis have no traction in the south, where the UAE has armed and trained Yemeni troops there.
- But the Southern Transitional Council that leads the separatists may not have broad support outside Aden.
- Its move risks igniting infighting in the south and emboldening militant groups among Yemen's many destabilising forces.

### How did it reach this point?

- There is no love lost between the separatists and Hadi's government, which

they accuse of mismanagement and corruption.

- The war has revived old strains between north and south Yemen, formerly separate countries that united into a single state in 1990.
- This is not the first separatist uprising. They seized Aden in January 2018 and, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi helped end that standoff.
- The UAE has asked UN to exert pressure on both sides. Riyadh said it would host an emergency summit of the parties to restore order.

### Is the Saudi-UAE alliance in Yemen broken?

- The coalition is fractured but not broken. The UAE is unlikely to recommit troops but will support Riyadh, so it can contain Shi'ite Iran.
- The UAE said it scaled down its presence in Yemen due to a holding truce in the main port of Hodeidah, which became the focus of the war when the coalition tried to seize it.
- Diplomats say as the UAE accepted, there could be no military solution due to global criticism of coalition air strikes and the humanitarian crisis.
- Western pressure to end the war and heightened U.S.-Iran tensions, which risk triggering a war in the Gulf, added impetus to the decision.

### What can the UN do?

- For now **shuttle diplomacy**. UN Envoy had been trying to save a stalled troop withdrawal deal agreed by the Houthis and Hadi's government at December peace talks in Sweden.
- The Envoy is also trying to **calm tension between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia** after the movement stepped up missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities in recent months.
- But if any broader political talks on a transitional ruling body materialise, they would have to include more of Yemen's restless parties, including southern separatists.

**Source: The Indian Express**

### Quick Facts

#### Shuttle diplomacy

In diplomacy and international relations, it is the action of an outside party in serving as an intermediary between principals in a dispute, without direct principal-to-principal contact.



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