**Yemen crisis**

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Yemen borders with Saudi Arabia in the North, Oman to the North-East and shares maritime borders with Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. Yemen is important for the flow of oil since it is located next to the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandab which control access to the Suez Canal. It has been in the news for the last four decades due to civil war, tribal feuds, Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.
In 1918, after the fall of the Ottomans, a Zaidi Kingdom was founded in North Yemen called the Mutawakkilib Kingdom with its capital at Taiz.
A Zaidi republican government was formed under Ali Akbar Saleh in 1978 who ruled Yemen for 33 years and united North and South Yemen in 1990. The Zaidis also started resistance against Saleh’s government in the 90s under Hussain al Houthi who also led an anti-US protest after the US’ invasion of Iraq in 2003. He was killed by Saleh’s forces in 2003 and his followers thereafter are known as Houthis. This killing led to insurgency. In 1978, Saleh took power in North Yemen.
In 2000, Saleh signed a border demarcation agreement with the Saudis. This was not well received by Houthis and a civil war started against Saleh. After the Arab spring there was a wide uprising against him and in 2011, he was replaced by Mansur al Hadi. In 2014, Houthis again joined hands with Saleh against Mansur and in 2015, Hadi fled to the Saudi Arab where he is running an exiled government. It was in 2015 that a Saudi led coalition intervened in Yemen after Houthis aligned themselves with Iran. Today parties to the crisis are the Houthis who are based in the North West and the Shababal Muminin, also referred to as Ansar Allah.
Between 2004 and 2010, the Houthis fought 6 wars against Yemen’s government and battled Saudi Arab in 2009-2010. Another part of the conflict involves Southern separatists who are also struggling for more rights and economic and political powers. In 2007, the Southern Movement started for greater autonomy. Southern Transactional Council (STC), who are against the Houthis but are struggling for independent South Yemen, remained independent from 1967 until unification in 1990. The Southern Resistance is reportedly supported and trained by the UAE. After Saudi involvement, the UAE pulled out its support due to an understanding.
The fourth party is the Saudi-led coalition which has enforced a blockade of Yemen’s port since 2016 and Sanaa airport is only open for UN and humanitarian cargo flights. It launched attacks in March 2015, when Houthis became stronger with Iranian support and training and inspiration from Hezbollah.
The Houthis were considered a threat to Saudi Arab and the Gulf States since Saudi Arab wants stability in its South and therefore its security is linked with that of Yemen’s. The Saudi-led coalition was prompted by the fear of Iranian expansion based on a sectarian war. Saudi Arab has deployed its troops along its border with Yemen however it mostly relies on air strikes against Houthi targets.
Another party to the conflict is Iran and the Saudi-led coalition accuses Iran and Hezbollah for helping Houthis to launch missile and drone strikes against Saudi and UAE targets. The Iranian support comes through the smuggling of components which are re-assembled later. The US is also party to the crisis; the Trump administration declared Houthis as a terrorist group and in 2019, passed a resolution after which it retracted support.
The Houthis are demanding the opening of the Sanaa airport which according to them still blocked by the coalition. With the Iranian support, the Houthis have challenged the Saudi led coalition. They are also now claiming that the south of Saudi Arabia including Jizan, Asir and Nayran historically belong to Yemen.
If the situation cannot be controlled, then there is a possibility of a sectarian revolution. The civil war and lawlessness could facilitate the terrorist attacks not only by AQAP but also by ISIS. The war could also stop the supply of world oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandab strait which controls access to the Suez Canal. This may lead to hike in oil prices across the globe if the supply routes are blocked or disturbed. Yemen has been wrecked by civil war since 2014 leading to the deaths of over 3 lac people. 20 million people don’t have access to health facilities and the country is facing the worst humanitarian crisis. The situation in Yemen is worsening after every passing day. There is a requirement for immediate intervention by the UN.