



# After Aden: Navigating Yemen's New Political Landscape

---

**Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°71**  
Aden/New York/Brussels, 30 August 2019

---

**What's new?** The anti-Huthi alliance in Yemen has reached a breaking point with southern secessionist forces taking over the interim capital, Aden, from the internationally recognised government. The government calls the move a coup and accuses the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of complicity. Saudi Arabia is trying to broker a truce.

**Why does it matter?** If allowed to fester, the intra-alliance discord in the south could tip the country into a civil war within a civil war. That development almost certainly would lengthen the wider conflict, deepening Yemen's humanitarian emergency and making a political settlement harder to achieve.

**What should be done?** Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE and UN special envoy, should mediate an end to intra-alliance violence and address its causes by expanding the number of groups representing the anti-Huthi bloc in UN-led talks, placing the southern question on the agenda and laying the foundation for a durable peace.

## I. Overview

---

The past eight years of uprisings and war have redrawn Yemen's political map almost entirely. UN-led attempts first to prevent and then to end the country's bloody civil war have failed, often because they lag behind the rapidly changing facts on the ground. The latest political rupture came in August 2019, when the secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC), a self-styled government-in-waiting led by Aydrous al-Zubaidi, seized the southern port city of Aden, the country's interim capital, from the internationally recognised government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. As of this writing, the situation is in flux: the government is mounting an offensive in hopes of retaking Aden; both sides are preparing for renewed battle; and their respective external allies appear to be stepping in.

This turn of events brings longstanding but partially hidden tensions within the anti-Huthi coalition into the open – and could prolong the war. Backers of the opposing sides in the south should, with the UN's help, mediate an end to the fighting and negotiate a more inclusive power-sharing arrangement. That deal, in turn, could lay the foundation for a pan-Yemeni peace process that comprises all the primary stakeholders.

There is considerable debate over how the STC's takeover of Aden came about, in particular whether it was premeditated or spontaneous. What can be said with

certainty is that the sequence of events started with the death of a senior southern security official aligned with the STC, Munir “Abu al-Yamama” al-Mashali (also known as al-Yafei). Mashali died in a Huthi-claimed missile strike on 1 August. Nine days later, STC-affiliated forces trained and equipped by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were in complete control of Aden’s military bases and government institutions. In the interim, they exchanged fire and recriminations with Saudi-funded units, their ostensible allies under Hadi government command. Government officials say they hold the UAE, which has cooperated closely with the separatists since 2015, responsible for the STC’s actions. Since then, the two have become to blows with the UAE launching airstrikes against government-aligned fighters, which they say were terrorist militias seeking to attack the Arab coalition, as they moved to Aden in an attempt to re-take the city.

If left unaddressed, fighting in the south could spark a civil war within a civil war. It could thus prolong the overall conflict, worsen Yemen’s humanitarian crisis, and drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

But there is a better way. The Aden takeover provides a chance for international stakeholders in Yemen to revive and recalibrate a peace process that is increasingly removed from facts on the ground. This process has long been constrained by UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (passed in 2015) that effectively – and unrealistically – called for Huthi surrender to the Hadi government. Most have interpreted the resolution to limit the UN’s mandate to negotiations between the government and the Huthis, leaving out other critical stakeholders, notably southern secessionists. Ideally, events in the south would prompt the Security Council to pass a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and renewed UN-led talks that include southern separatists to end the war and establish a transition period. Yet this outcome is highly improbable, given Saudi Arabia’s opposition to any new resolution and a likely U.S. veto.

A more practical approach would be for the Saudis and Emiratis, with UN help, to work with their Yemeni allies to reshuffle the anti-Huthi coalition deck in a way that tamps down the immediate potential for more violence and lays the foundation for more inclusive and sustainable UN-led negotiations. They could, for example, negotiate formation of a government based on a new power-sharing arrangement, including southern separatists. This arrangement could then act as the basis for the selection of an inclusive delegation to future UN-led talks to end the war, which would also need to encompass discussion of the southern issue. Such an approach would allow a much-needed course change, while allowing the Saudis and Hadi government to avoid upending 2216.

---

## **II. Showdown in Aden**

---

The STC and Hadi government are on the same side in the war against the Huthis, as are their respective Gulf backers – the UAE and Saudi Arabia. But the Yemenis’ marriage of convenience, brokered in the early days of the war, is strained by the weight of history. When, in March 2015, the Huthis (also known as Ansar Allah) pushed south into Aden in pursuit of President Hadi, who had escaped house arrest in Sanaa, the conventional military and security services that did not join the northern rebels largely

collapsed. Hadi subsequently fled Aden for Riyadh, leaving defence of the south to locals, many of them drawn from the loose secessionist movement known as the Hirak, who increasingly attracted support from the UAE.<sup>1</sup> The ensuing successful campaign to oust the Huthis from the south, backed by the UAE, led to an uneasy, UAE-brokered alliance between the Hadi government and pro-independence southerners.

Hadi is also a southerner (he was born in Abyan, a province to Aden's immediate east) but a proponent of unity with the north. The northern Arab nationalist Yemen Arab Republic and southern socialist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) unified in 1990 as the Cold War drew to a close and the countries' leaders calculated that they would be better off working together as a single entity. But southerners soon attempted to back out of the merger. President Ali Abdullah Saleh named Hadi his defence minister during a brief north-south war in 1994 in which the north prevailed. The 1994 civil war is a pivotal moment in the southern secessionists' narrative, which many of them see as marking the transition from unequal north-south unity to northern occupation.<sup>2</sup> Hadi later became vice president. In 2012, following a popular uprising and diplomatic intervention from Gulf Cooperation Council members, he replaced Saleh as Yemen's president.

Many of the tensions in the south are internally generated and predate unification even as outside powers may have stoked others. Southerners often characterise the 1986 civil war between rival factions in the PDRY as a fight between forces from Abyan and neighbouring Shebwa province on the one hand, and adversaries from al-Dhale and Lahj provinces to Aden's north west, on the other. From the start of the current civil war in 2015, locals predicted a split between "Bedouin" from Abyan and Shebwa, and "tribesmen" from Lahj and al-Dhale, as the two PDRY-era groups are often called.<sup>3</sup> Many locals see the STC takeover of Aden as yet another iteration of this old rivalry, with the STC representing the al-Dhale-Lahj axis and the government Abyan-Shebwa.<sup>4</sup>

In parallel came the Saudi-led coalition's military intervention. In 2016, the UAE and Saudi Arabia reportedly agreed to a de facto division of labour in Yemen, with Abu Dhabi overseeing coalition operations in the south and Red Sea coast and Riyadh in the north.<sup>5</sup> This segregation of operations came about in part because of the UAE's reluctance to work with groups linked to Islah, Yemen's main Sunni Islamist political party, which Abu Dhabi and the secessionists revile in equal measure, albeit for somewhat different reasons.<sup>6</sup> Though it has loyalists in the south, Islah's main sup-

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Salisbury, "To win its war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia may have to split the country in two", *Vice News*, 10 April 2019.

<sup>2</sup> See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°114, *Breaking Point? Yemen's Southern Question*, 20 October 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Hadi government officials and Hirak supporters, Aden, March 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Hirak members, Hadi government officials and locals, Aden, February 2018, March 2019. While there are pro-secession factions in Abyan, those close to President Hadi have become vocal advocates of a federal system, which they argue would resolve most southern grievances.

<sup>5</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Western defence official, April 2019; Hadi government official, June 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior Hadi government official, June 2016. Both the UAE and secessionists view Islah as an extremist group on a spectrum with al-Qaeda, but secessionists also view Islah as part of a northern tribal-military structure that seeks to subjugate the south. Crisis Group interviews, STC supporters, Aden, March 2016; senior UAE official, Washington, March 2016.

port base is in Yemen's northern highlands and in the central provinces of al-Jawf and Mareb, both of which are part of the pre-1990 north. The STC's relationship with Abu Dhabi strengthened its already strong anti-Islah stance, which has its roots in Islah's support for the northern campaign in 1994.<sup>7</sup>

The secessionists grew in power and prominence over the course of 2016. Amid widespread insecurity driven by infighting among the plethora of militias and military units that controlled Aden and the south as well as the local al-Qaeda franchise, Munir al-Mashali, the security official who would go on to be killed in the August 2019 missile strike, played a major role in forming a UAE-trained and equipped paramilitary force, later known as the Security Belts.<sup>8</sup> Aden's governor, Aydrous al-Zubaidi, who subsequently became STC president, and many other UAE-backed government officials in the south openly acknowledged their secessionist agenda.<sup>9</sup>

Hadi was displeased: not only does he publicly oppose southern independence, but he also had named Aden Yemen's transitional capital in February 2015 and now saw a challenge to his authority there. His loyalists clashed with the Security Belts around Aden's airport in April 2017 after the latter prevented one of his senior military commanders from disembarking from a plane. Hadi later fired a number of local officials, including Zubaidi and Hani bin Breik – a Salafi cleric who played a leading role in recruiting for the Security Belts and who served as government minister of state at the time – citing poor performance and other infractions.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Zubaidi announced formation of the STC under his leadership. The separatist group claims the loyalty of the main military-security forces in the south, all of which the UAE formed, trained and equipped: the Security Belts, Hadrami Elite Forces and Shebwani Elite Forces.<sup>11</sup> Technically, all fall under the Hadi government's authority; in practice, their relations with the government have ranged from indifferent to hostile, and government officials have long acknowledged that they are really under the UAE's and STC's command.<sup>12</sup> In January 2018, STC-affiliated forces battled the Presidential Guard and other Hadi loyalists across Aden. Saudi intervention was necessary to prevent them from seizing the presidential

---

<sup>7</sup> Islah was founded in northern Yemen and was an important component of the Saleh regime. Its leaders raised tribal militias to help with the north's war effort in 1994. Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, an Islamist general associated with Islah and known as Saleh's "enforcer", led the campaign. As foot soldiers he recruited jihadists returned from fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. These "Afghan Arabs" allegedly sacked parts of Aden and the south after the war. Crisis Group Report, *Breaking Point? Yemen's Southern Question*, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior STC officials, local security officials, Aden, March 2019. Crisis Group telephone interviews, STC members and other informed local observers, 8-20 August 2019.

<sup>9</sup> On 5 March 2016, Zubaidi argued that once the south was secure it should have the right to determine its future. He said he would support secession. Crisis Group interview, Aden.

<sup>10</sup> "Yemen's president fires minister, Aden governor", Associated Press, 28 April 2017.

<sup>11</sup> STC leaders also claim the loyalty of the UAE-backed Giants Brigade, which operates on the Red Sea coast. While the Giants Brigade has not declared itself part of the STC, it issued a statement on 26 August calling for a ceasefire in Shebwa province, demanding that "Islah" fight the Huthis rather than the secessionists, and declaring that the STC represented the southern people, "of which the Giants Brigade is a part", in a signal of its broader loyalties.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Hadi government officials, Aden, February 2018, March 2019.

palace.<sup>13</sup> The fighting laid bare the divisions within the coalition. Hadi government officials accused the UAE of “acting like occupiers”.<sup>14</sup>

The security and economic situation in Aden had improved somewhat between the January 2018 battle and the latest bout of fighting, largely thanks to coordination among the UAE, STC-aligned forces and the government’s interior minister, Ahmed al-Maysari. There also were some improvements in service delivery, credited to a new Aden-based prime minister, Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, who replaced the unpopular Ahmed bin Dagher in October 2018.<sup>15</sup>

The détente froze the conflict but did not resolve it. Developments elsewhere in the country were to help restart it. In December 2018, the UN brokered a deal to avert a battle for the Red Sea coastal city of Hodeida. This deal may have changed the STC’s – and the UAE’s – calculus regarding the war’s trajectory: the UAE announced that it was drawing down its presence in western and southern Yemen and prioritising a political solution to the war while the STC sensed that, as prospects of a nationwide peace process improved, it could find itself sidelined given the government’s stance that it would deal with the southern question only after resolution of the conflict with the Huthis.<sup>16</sup> In early 2019, intense battles between STC and Huthi forces in al-Dhale, which the STC accused Hadi-aligned fighters of provoking by pulling out of the area, further strained the relationship. So, too, did STC rhetoric about Islah’s role in the Hadi government and the need to “liberate” the rest of the south, including Seyoun, a city in Hadramawt province controlled by units aligned with Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, Hadi’s Islah-linked vice president.<sup>17</sup>

The Hadi government and STC offer starkly different narratives about what happened in early August. The Hadi government claims that the STC, believing it could shore up its flagging popularity among secessionists by launching a coup against the government, used Mashali’s killing – which the government denounced as a “terrorist act” and for which it blamed the Huthis – as a pretext. The STC’s idea, government officials say, was to provoke a fight with Hadi loyalist forces and then seize the

---

<sup>13</sup> The conflict may also have halted as a result of tensions among UAE-backed forces. Hiraq leaders, STC supporters and senior military figures claim that some Security Belt commanders and members of the Giants Brigade – the principal UAE-backed force fighting the Huthis on the Red Sea coast – refused to engage in battle for Aden and even threatened to intervene to end it. If these forces, mainly made up of apolitical Salafi fighters, had entered the battle on the government’s side, the push toward Hodeida that took place later that year would not have been possible and the STC might have lost the fight for Aden. Crisis Group interviews, Aden, February 2018 and March 2019. Tareq Saleh, nephew of the former president, has been working to build a unified Red Sea coast command with UAE support since the Emiratis announced their drawdown, potentially creating yet another, albeit somewhat limited, power centre.

<sup>14</sup> “Saudi-UAE divided over southern Yemen”, *Middle East Monitor*, 20 May 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Salisbury, “Picturing Aden’s Fragile Recovery”, Crisis Group Commentary, 16 April 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, senior government official, 14 August 2019. An STC member close to the leadership said, “When it became clear that there would not be a fight in Hodeida because the international community would not allow it, and that it would be politics next for the UAE [and that there was no place for the STC in negotiations], it became clear we would have to act soon”. Crisis Group telephone interview, 12 August 2019.

<sup>17</sup> “Al Zubaidi Delivers a Historic Speech to the People of Hadhramout”, video, Southern Transitional Council, 26 October 2017.

city just before the holiday of Eid al-Adha, when few senior government officials were likely to be at their posts.<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, the STC claims that “Islah elements” inside the government planned Mashali’s assassination with the Huthis, and that the STC’s allies responded to an attack by the Hadi-aligned Presidential Guard on Mashali’s funeral procession.<sup>19</sup> In turn, government officials claim that during and after the funeral – which was held at a location close to the presidential palace – STC followers deliberately marched toward Presidential Guard positions near the palace entrance. They also say it is inaccurate to depict local forces as “Islah” simply because of their association with the government.<sup>20</sup>

On 6 August, shortly after the alleged funeral shooting, bin Breik signalled that the STC would oust Islah – by which he meant all government forces – from the city.<sup>21</sup> Clashes broke out around the presidential palace, known as Ma’shiq, which is built on the south-eastern tip of the Aden peninsula, before spreading to the neighbouring Crater district and nearby Jebel Hadid area, a base for both STC and Hadi government-aligned forces. Zubaidi returned from Abu Dhabi to Aden on 8 August, raising hopes of de-escalation, given that all see him as more pragmatic than bin Breik, his vice president. But the hopes were dashed. Here, too, explanations differ. STC officials claim that, as Zubaidi landed in Aden, Presidential Guards in Jebel Hadid began shelling a nearby military camp controlled by STC loyalists. In the STC’s account, they then had no choice but to take control of the city, given the depth of Islahi infiltration of the government and attacks by Islah/government forces on STC supporters.<sup>22</sup> The government claims that it was simply defending its position.<sup>23</sup>

Over the next two days, fighting spread across Aden. Particularly intense battles took place around Hadi loyalists’ military bases in Crater and Jebel Hadid; at bases near the international airport; and in the Dar Saad neighbourhood, the main gateway to the city. STC fighters also encircled the residence of Ahmed al-Maysari, Hadi’s interior minister and the main leader of government forces in Aden. Repeated mediation attempts by Riyadh failed, and on 10 August Saudi forces reportedly entered Maysari’s compound and evacuated him to Riyadh. Maysari conceded defeat on 12 August, citing the superior firepower provided to the STC by the UAE.<sup>24</sup> The STC declared victory in Aden on 11 August and moved into government military bases and institutions, including the interim Central Bank of Yemen headquarters.<sup>25</sup>

The STC then moved to consolidate its control over most of Abyan and launched an attempt to take over Shebwa, the province to Abyan’s east. But government forces conducted a swift counter-attack, securing Shebwa province for Hadi before pushing

---

<sup>18</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, senior Hadi government official, 14 August 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Senior STC officials reiterated this claim in multiple Crisis Group interviews between 6 and 20 August 2019. See also, “Sheikh Hani reveals details of terrorist plot in Aden”, *Aden Press*, 6 August 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Hadi government official, 8 August 2019.

<sup>21</sup> “Aden attack exposes splits in Yemen’s anti-Houthi alliance”, Reuters, 6 August 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior STC officials, 12 and 20 August 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Hadi government official, 8 August 2019.

<sup>24</sup> “Al-Maysari concedes defeat and says the silence of the presidency was ‘suspicious’”, *Almasdar Online*, 12 August 2019.

<sup>25</sup> “Yemen separatists say they’ve seized the key port of Aden”, CNN, 12 August 2019.

along the coast to the eastern edge of Aden. Clashes were reported between the STC and Hadi loyalists inside Aden on 28 August but the secessionists had largely restored their control over the city, as well as the capital of Abyan governorate, by the following day.<sup>26</sup> In this seesaw battle, both sides are reportedly assembling reinforcements in preparation for a renewed fight for the city.<sup>27</sup> On 29 August, in the latest twist, the government accused the UAE of airstrikes on its troops as they moved along the road from Abyan to Aden to face the STC.<sup>28</sup> In response, the UAE said that it had acted in self-defence against “terrorist militias” who were planning to attack Arab Coalition forces.<sup>29</sup>

The STC’s takeover in early August was likely part of a pre-existing plan to seize the city, albeit one executed sooner than the STC expected.<sup>30</sup> The group has long harboured the ambition to control Aden and the wider south. Internal dynamics likely played a role in the timing: Mashali’s death came as a shock to the STC leadership, and hardliners within the group probably seized the opportunity to press for an aggressive response.<sup>31</sup> News of the UAE’s drawdown from western and southern Yemen and its decision to refocus its operations on counter-terrorism may have fuelled local perceptions of a power vacuum that either the government or the STC eventually would fill.

Emirati officials insist that while they urged their allies to de-escalate, STC vice president bin Breik, who made most operational decisions during this period in Zubaidi’s absence, acted impulsively.<sup>32</sup> That said, they argue that the STC’s response was warranted insofar as the Presidential Guard and other Hadi-aligned forces played an equal if not greater role in provoking the fight.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, STC members, Aden-based observer and Hadi government official, 29 August 2019. See also, Declan Walsh and Saeed al-Batati, “Ally Attacks Ally in Yemen’s War Within a War”, *New York Times*, 29 August 2019.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> “Yemen colonel: Airstrikes kill at least 30 troops near Aden”, Associated Press, 29 August 2019.

<sup>29</sup> “UAE issues statement on developments in Yemen”, Emirates News Agency, 30 August 2019.

<sup>30</sup> STC supporters close to the group’s leadership claim that a takeover plan had been under development since the failed attempt in January 2018, including training sessions for individuals who would oversee service delivery once the government had been ousted. This plan purportedly was not due to be carried out until October 2019 at the earliest. Crisis Group telephone interviews, 12, 14 and 20 August 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Mashali was leader of his own Mashala tribe and a senior member of the Yafa tribal confederation. He also belonged to the original secessionist militant group, Hatem, formed by Zubaidi in 1998. Hardliners among the Yafais and Hatemis, some of whom are also commanders in the Security Belts and other STC-affiliated forces, demanded revenge for Mashali’s killing and questioned the STC’s commitment to secession. They also called for all northerners to be “deported” from the south. Bin Breik – the senior STC leader present in Aden in the attack’s aftermath – was likewise angered by Mashali’s death. He reportedly saw no choice but to take retaliatory action against Islah if he was to keep the STC intact. Crisis Group telephone interviews, STC members close to the leadership, 10-16 August 2019. According to an STC member, “There was a plan in place already, but he decided to enact it early”. Crisis Group telephone interview 17, August 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Crisis Group interviews, UAE official, August 2019, and Western defence official, August 2019.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

### III. What It All Means

---

The STC takeover of Aden complicates the Yemen war for several actors. To begin, it appears to have deeply embarrassed Saudi Arabia.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Riyadh had predicated its intervention on Hadi's legitimacy as president, proclaiming from March 2015 onward that its primary goals were to defeat the Huthis, end Iranian influence in the country and secure Hadi's return to Sanaa.<sup>35</sup> It can claim little progress. The Huthis have the same stranglehold over north-western Yemen they have enjoyed since the war began. From there, they launch regular missile and drone strikes on Saudi Arabian airports and industrial facilities.<sup>36</sup> As Saudi officials have noted, southern infighting can only benefit the Huthis by further easing the pressure they began to feel when UAE-led forces advanced on Hodeida in mid-2018.<sup>37</sup> Today, the rebels are increasingly confident in their position, thanks in part to the UN-brokered deal to prevent a battle for Hodeida and the subsequent drawdown of Emirati forces in the Red Sea theatre.<sup>38</sup> Huthi leaders believe that their cross-border attacks will force Riyadh to cut a deal.<sup>39</sup>

The Aden takeover has also dented Hadi's already questionable credibility as Yemen's leader, though the counteroffensive has helped restore some faith in Hadi's – and Mohsen's – abilities. Diplomats expect no movement in either implementing the partially fulfilled Hodeida agreement or convening wider peace negotiations until the dust settles in the south.<sup>40</sup>

Events in the south also have the potential to drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and the UAE – a stark illustration of the two allies' increasingly diverging priorities and tactics in Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East.<sup>41</sup> Riyadh has been clear that

---

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Western diplomats, 14 August 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°45, *Yemen at War*, 28 March 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Caleb Weiss, "Analysis: Houthi drone strikes in Saudi Arabia and Yemen", *Long War Journal*, 7 August 2019.

<sup>37</sup> "The only beneficiaries of what is happening in Aden are the Iranian-backed terrorist Huthi militias, the terrorist organisations that targeted the martyr Abu al-Yamama and the martyr heroes at al-Jalaa camp and the police station, which were destroyed by aggression and prostitution in 2015. Aden will remain safe and stable with the wisdom of the wise and the support of the coalition". Tweet by Mohammed Al Jabir, @mohdsalj, Saudi ambassador to Yemen, 12:56pm, 7 August 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group Middle East Report N°203, *Saving the Stockholm Agreement and Averting a Regional Conflagration in Yemen*, 18 July 2019. See also Robert Malley, "America should talk to the Houthis", *The New York Times*, 5 August 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Huthi officials, Sanaa, July 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Western diplomats, UN official, 14-18 August 2019.

<sup>41</sup> There are several early indications of an Emirati effort to slightly recalibrate its regional stance. Notably, UAE officials met Iranian counterparts in Tehran to discuss maritime affairs in July, despite the sharp uptick in regional tensions. "6<sup>th</sup> UAE-Iran joint maritime meeting results satisfying: MoFAIC official", Emirates News Agency, 31 July 2019. Unlike the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, the UAE has refused to blame Iran for the attack on a commercial vessel in UAE waters in May 2019. As a senior Emirati official put it, when asked why they had not attributed the attack to Iran: "They are our neighbours, after all. We need to live with them". Crisis Group interview, European capital, June 2019. Its decision to announce a drawdown of forces in Yemen in June and subsequent statements calling for a political solution to the war also appear to be at odds with Saudi preferences. Riyadh insists that military victory remains possible. Crisis Group interviews, UAE officials, Abu Dhabi, May, June and July 2019.

it will not countenance a breakup of Yemen, yet the STC – closely aligned with the UAE – has declared that secession remains its ultimate, non-negotiable goal.<sup>42</sup> In a 15 August statement, the STC reiterated that its proximate goal is southern autonomy and its long-term plan restoration of the independence that the south enjoyed from 1967 to 1990.<sup>43</sup> In response, the Hadi government is trying to reassert its authority via the Saudi-led coalition, demanding that the UAE halt all support for the STC, and suggesting that it may request the UAE's ouster from the coalition.<sup>44</sup> Abu Dhabi flatly rejected the government's stance, calling it "inappropriate for the Yemeni government to lay blame for its political and administrative failure on the UAE".<sup>45</sup>

Prior to the government's military counterattack, Hadi moved against key UAE-affiliated security officials. On 16 August, the president's interior ministry dismissed a number of officials, including the head of security in Aden, and announced their replacement with government loyalists, though as yet there has been no change in the chain of command and there is unlikely to be one as long as the STC controls Aden.<sup>46</sup> The STC has instructed government officials to return to work, and day-to-day management of state institutions appears to have continued with local officials working autonomously for the Hadi government under STC oversight.<sup>47</sup>

UAE airstrikes on Hadi-aligned troops outside of Aden will only heighten tensions, placing Saudi Arabia squarely in the middle of feuding ostensible allies. The Yemeni government's information minister called the attacks "treacherous". On 29 August, Hadi called on Saudi Arabia to reign in its Emirati ally, who he accused of supporting separation, and for the UN Security Council to condemn the strikes.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> A senior Saudi official said, "The legacy of this war is not going to be a separation of Yemen". Crisis Group interview, Riyadh, March 2019.

<sup>43</sup> "The Southern Transitional Council Issues an Important Political Statement", Southern Transitional Council, 15 August 2019.

<sup>44</sup> "Yemen demands U.A.E.'s expulsion from Saudi-led coalition", *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 August 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Yemen's permanent representative to the UN said during a 19 August 2019 Security Council open session, "We would like to underscore that without the support provided by the UAE to implement this rebellion, it would not have occurred. We condemn the support provided by the UAE to the STC which goes out with the law and we call on them to halt this support as soon as possible". Crisis Group transcription of live feed provided by UN Web TV. For the UAE's response, see "UAE categorically rejects allegations on its stance towards Aden developments", Emirates News Agency, 21 August 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Documents circulated on social media and provided to Crisis Group announced the removal of Shelal Ali Shayea, the STC-aligned Aden security chief, and several other officials, and their replacement with pro-Hadi Hirak leaders. Crisis Group has verified the documents as authentic. That said, Shayea continues to oversee Aden police and counterterrorism forces, while the man Hadi named to replace him, Nasser al-Shoaiti, has reportedly announced his alignment with the STC. Two other new officials named by Hadi have chosen to remain at home. Crisis Group telephone interviews, observers close to local security services, 16 and 18 August 2019; local Hirak supporter in contact with Hadi appointees, 18 August 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, STC official, 18 August 2019.

<sup>48</sup> Declan Walsh and Saeed al-Batati, "Ally Attacks Ally in Yemen's War Within a War", *New York Times*, 29 August 2019. In this statement, Hadi also said that he had withdrawn forces from Aden to spare the city from destruction. Ibid.

The UAE for its part is not backing down, taking credit for the airstrikes against what it calls terrorist militias threatening coalition troops at Aden's airport.<sup>49</sup>

Saudi Arabia finds itself in a quandary. Aggressive Saudi action to rein in the STC could trigger a civil war within a civil war in which Riyadh's allies are far from sure to prevail. Conversely, failure to act or offering what the government considers overly generous concessions to the STC (including over-representation in government or even autonomy) could sow dissent within the Hadi government and Islahi ranks.<sup>50</sup>

Simply putting a lid on the problem, as happened in 2018, is unlikely to succeed either, as events on the ground are moving fast. On 18 August, STC fighters seized a special forces base from Hadi loyalists in Abyan, to the east of Aden; two days later, they moved on Ataq, a town in Shebwa governorate, before being pushed out and subsequently losing control of all their bases in the province to Hadi-aligned forces.<sup>51</sup> Government forces subsequently restored their control over Zinjibar, the capital of Abyan. As of this writing, troop build-ups were being reported in and around Aden after heavy clashes on the eastern outskirts of the city and around the airport on 28 August. STC officials have vowed to continue their campaign to control the south, while the Hadi government now appears to believe it can crush the STC rebellion.<sup>52</sup>

A battle for the south could have other knock-on effects. If there is another battle for Aden, the ensuing fighting will be bloody and likely inconclusive, encouraging a Huthi move on its two rivals. If the STC were able to consolidate control over the entire south, it would then also be in a position to strike a deal with the Huthis that allowed each to maintain spheres of influence while excluding their mutual adversary. Though STC officials maintain an aggressively anti-Huthi stance in public, they privately acknowledge the need for a deal with the northern rebels at some point in the future.<sup>53</sup> STC insiders and Huthi officials say they have already opened informal lines of communication.<sup>54</sup> Islah fears an STC-Huthi entente and could decide to pre-empt it by negotiating separately with the Huthis. The Islamists are wary of the Saudi-led coalition's intentions – given the UAE's strong anti-Muslim Brotherhood stance and suspicions that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shares this outlook.<sup>55</sup> A Hadi government win in Aden, meanwhile, could result in a bloody insurgency directed from al-Dhale and a possible collapse of major battlefronts, including the Red

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> An Islah member said, "The government has failed, the coalition has failed and the Saudis have failed". Crisis Group telephone interview, 12 August 2019.

<sup>51</sup> A senior UAE official claimed that the STC's push into Abyan came in response to attacks by Hadi loyalist special forces. Crisis Group interview, 20 August 2019. Even before the fighting began, however, STC members had predicted that they would soon move to consolidate their control over Abyan and Shebwa. Crisis Group telephone interviews, STC officials, 18-22 August.

<sup>52</sup> On Twitter, a senior STC official wrote: "What happened in Shebwa is not the end of the matter. ... Victory is looming on the horizon". Tweet by Adnan al-Kaff, @Adnanalkaff66, member of STC's presidential council, 12:05pm, 26 August 2019. According to a Hadi government official, plans are being developed to make a push toward Aden if the STC does not hand over all government bases and buildings. Crisis Group telephone interview, 27 August 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior STC official, Aden, March 2019; STC member close to senior leadership, New York, 20 August 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group interviews, STC member close to leadership, New York, 20 August 2019; senior Huthi official, Sanaa, July 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, Islah supporter close to leadership, 12 August 2019.

Sea coast where STC-aligned forces are important contributors to the anti-Huthi campaign.

Any of these developments would fly in the face of Saudi interests: a Huthi-STC deal would almost certainly ensure the south's secession; a Huthi-Islah deal would deepen southern resolve to achieve independence; and either would leave a strengthened Huthi canton on the kingdom's border. The two scenarios also would be inherently volatile, with one group excluded from a new alliance built on mutual mistrust. A solution that forestalls more infighting on the anti-Huthi side and ensures that a peace deal is broadly equitable is a far better way forward.

Riyadh seems to have grasped this reality. It announced plans to mediate between the STC and the government, though the gaps between the parties are significant and early omens are hardly auspicious. The government refused to attend talks scheduled for 22 August in Jeddah, citing the STC's failure to withdraw from government buildings in Aden.<sup>56</sup> Fighting then intensified in Shebwa, with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi announcing a government-STC ceasefire and making fresh calls for mediation, even as government forces advanced on Aden.<sup>57</sup> In the wake of the STC takeover of Aden, government officials had said they would consider appointing STC leaders to cabinet positions only after the group handed over those institutions and allowed Hadi-linked officials to return to the city.<sup>58</sup> The government now appears intent on defeating the STC militarily.

For its part, the STC claims that facts on the ground are irreversible: no matter what happens, it expects to govern Aden and the south and to join future UN peace talks as representatives of pro-independence southerners.<sup>59</sup> Though STC officials assert that they continue to regard Hadi as the legitimate president, they insist that he push Islah out of his government. Some STC members call this "restructuring the legitimacy".<sup>60</sup> Hadi can either bring the STC into the government as a senior coalition partner and allow for autonomous self-rule in the south, STC officials say, or accept exile from the south.<sup>61</sup> In practical terms, the STC is telling Saudi Arabia that it can either stick with Islah – which the STC says barely participated in the fight against the Huthis and cooperates with jihadists such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – or work with the STC, whose affiliates have scored major battlefield successes against the Huthis.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, some STC officials say they have offered to take over the fight against the Huthis in the north from Islah if the Saudis choose them as their partner.<sup>63</sup>

But such an outcome likely would be unpalatable for Hadi and almost certainly inconceivable to Islah. Even some members of Hirak, the historical separatist movement, many of whose members are not part of the STC, worry about a deal that gives the STC unfettered control of the south, fearing it would lead to one-party rule in the

---

<sup>56</sup> "Yemen government refuses to engage in Jeddah talks before STC pullout from Aden", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 22 August 2019. The STC allowed a limited number of Presidential Guards to enter key buildings under coalition supervision from 18 August onward, but only with small arms.

<sup>57</sup> "Saudi Arabia, UAE renew call for Yemen peace talks", *Saudi Gazette*, 26 August 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, senior Hadi government official, 14 August 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group interviews, STC supporter, 18 August 2019; STC officials, 20 and 22 August 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interviews, STC supporter, 18 August 2019; STC officials, 20 and 22 August 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Crisis Group interviews, STC officials and advisers, New York, 15-18 August 2019.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

style of the former socialist southern state.<sup>64</sup> Riyadh, meanwhile, appears to have chosen to back the government, reportedly supporting it with airstrikes on 28 August as Hadi loyalist forces moved toward Aden.<sup>65</sup>

Immediately following the STC takeover of Aden, Riyadh was reportedly working on a compromise: the STC would be integrated into the government and a new military structure would be established encompassing various forces in southern Yemen, to be overseen by the coalition.<sup>66</sup> The exact details of the deal remain opaque, and it is not clear that either side will be keen to proceed down this road, or if the renewed fighting for the city will alter Riyadh's position. While the STC publicly says it is open to negotiation, privately some members believe it is better for them to consolidate control over the south before entering into talks with the government. On the issue of inclusion in UN negotiations, the STC's official position is that it should be represented separately, as opposed to being part of a government delegation – a proviso that the government and, probably, the Saudis will reject.<sup>67</sup> At the moment, both Yemeni sides appear to be betting that they can improve their bargaining position by taking territory. The government's decision not to participate in the Jeddah talks and its push toward Aden only increase the likelihood of continued fighting and reduce the chances of compromise.

#### **IV. A Path Forward**

---

The impasse over Aden and the south adds a new twist to an already bafflingly complex conflict. Yet it also presents an opportunity to shake up a peace process whose focus on bilateral Huthi-Hadi talks is out of keeping with realities on the ground.

The current approach, informed by UN Security Council Resolution 2216, passed on 14 April 2015, has long been an obstacle to peace. The Hadi government and Saudi-led coalition view the resolution as endorsing their war aims, since it demands that the Huthis withdraw and disarm. Putting aside the lack of realism in a resolution predicated on the Huthis' surrender, the other serious problem is that the war is not merely a two-sided affair pitting the government against the Huthis. It is a multi-layered conflict. Any peace deal, if it is to succeed, will require buy-in from a wide range of Yemeni stakeholders. In particular, as developments in Aden have made

---

<sup>64</sup> Some Hirak members took the Hadi government's side in the August fighting in Aden, fearing "domination" by what they said was an al-Dhale-Lahj interest group. The STC have sought to reassure the Hirak and other southern factions about their intentions. As signs of good faith, STC officials point to their decision to allow Presidential Guards and other pro-government fighters to leave their positions in Aden and Abyan with their personal weapons; offers to include other southern groups in future negotiations; and public statements calling for a federal southern state. Crisis Group interviews, senior STC officials and STC members close to leadership, 14-20 August 2019. An STC official said, "We do not want to rule the whole south just for us". Crisis Group telephone interview, 18 August 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group telephone interviews, STC supporters and politically independent Adeni resident, 28 August 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior Western diplomats, 18, 19 and 20 August 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Crisis Group interviews, STC members close to senior leadership; Western diplomats, 22 and 23 August 2019.

clear, negotiations must include pro-secession southern voices – and not just the STC's – if a peace deal is to ward off a subsequent north-south conflict.

Rethinking 2216 is essential, not only for ending the war but also for effectively addressing Riyadh's security interests, particularly with respect to the border, the Huthis' access to heavy weapons and their relationship with Iran. As noted, the resolution is unrealistic in the demands it makes of the Huthis and thus paradoxically stands as an obstacle to seriously grappling with Saudi concerns. And yet, Riyadh says the resolution is not up for discussion, strongly resists any attempt to present the kingdom as a party to the war, and publicly dismisses the idea of serious back-channel talks with the Huthis (despite having engaged in such talks in the past and maintaining means of communication).<sup>68</sup>

The current context suggests a possible way to overcome these twin obstacles – ie, altering the current bilateral format and sidestepping the problems created by 2216: to start with, Saudi mediation between the government and STC, and then pivot to more inclusive, UN-led intra-Yemeni talks. The Saudis and Emiratis could, for instance, encourage Hadi and the STC to form a new government that includes the STC and other southern groups, the General People's Congress – Yemen's historical ruling party – and Islah, factions of which are already represented in the government. Ideally, this formula would comprise allies of Tareq Saleh, the former president's nephew who is leading battles on the Red Sea coast against the Huthis and whose UAE-backed forces are part of the old ruling-party network.<sup>69</sup> While not as militarily powerful as the STC, elements of this network could prove a disruptive force in the future if not included in negotiations.

Once negotiators reach a formula for a more representative government, they could then use the same quotas as the basis for forming a peace delegation to UN-led talks with the Huthis and their allies. In parallel, as Crisis Group has argued previously, the Saudis should engage directly and discretely with the Huthis – not as a replacement for Yemeni-Yemeni talks, but as an important parallel and supporting track to them.<sup>70</sup> Such an arrangement would help make the peace process more inclusive and representative, without necessarily upending 2216 – an outcome Saudi Arabia appears determined to avoid. Of course, a new coalition government of this kind would likely be brittle, requiring constant monitoring by international and especially regional stakeholders, given the rivalry between the STC, on one side, and Hadi and Islah, on the other.

Midwifing an understanding among Hadi, the STC and other anti-Huthi forces and broadening the peace process so as to make it more representative of the redrawn Yemeni political map are critical next steps. Saudi Arabia could take the lead, with the UAE's help and the UN's support. Such a strategy is not incompatible with flexible interpretations of 2216. Though the Hadi government and Saudis claim that 2216 is sacrosanct and support a narrow interpretation of its content, diplomats and UN officials in New York believe that the resolution contains wiggle room.<sup>71</sup> It men-

---

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior Saudi official, New York, 14 August 2019.

<sup>69</sup> The General People's Congress has fragmented along factional lines, with some members aligned with the Huthis, others with the Hadi government and others remaining neutral.

<sup>70</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Saving the Stockholm Agreement and Averting a Regional Conflagration in Yemen*, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Crisis Group interviews, UN official and Western diplomats, New York, 14-16 August 2019.

tions Hadi in its preamble but in its operating paragraphs – generally seen as the binding clauses – it calls on “all Yemeni parties”, rather than just the Huthis and Hadi government, to “adhere to resolving their differences through dialogue and consultation”.<sup>72</sup> On this basis, the UN-led political process could be expanded to include other stakeholders and issues, including southern separatists and the southern question, without amending or undermining the letter of 2216.

If the Hadi government and its Saudi backers stick to a narrow interpretation of 2216 – ie, reading it to mean that talks must be between the Hadi government and Huthis alone – they run the risk of making the resolution obsolete. The way would then be open for the Security Council to pass a new resolution that they may not like. Indeed, should STC-government talks in the south fail, resulting in a civil war within a civil war or a new political alignment of anti-Huthi forces that further weakens the government, the Security Council may conclude sooner or later that it has little choice but to draft a new resolution if it seriously wishes to end the war.

Equally important, addressing the southern question cannot wait until negotiations over the wider conflict have progressed. Southern separatist forces have now taken over large parts of the south, including Aden, the Hadi government's temporary capital. They are well armed and appear determined to fight on if their case is not addressed through negotiations. Even if the Hadi government were to succeed in retaking Aden, it would not settle the issue – indeed, it would likely lead to a messy insurgency by separatist forces. Resolving the question of the south and its relationship with the north is complicated. Yemenis in both north and south remain deeply divided on this question, and it could take years of talks to reach a resolution. But the issue can no longer be separated from discussions about a ceasefire and transitional arrangements to end the wider conflict.

## V. Conclusion

---

The STC takeover of Aden and the looming battle for control of the city are part of a new phase of the Yemen war, one of consolidation and bargaining – through both political and military means – along the lines of the country's altered political map. The major power centres are clear: the Huthis, with growing Iranian support, in the north; the UAE-backed STC in the south; and the Saudi-backed alliance of tribal and military forces, many of whom fall under the banner of Islah and are Hadi's most important allies, in the centre. UAE-backed forces aligned with Ali Abdullah Saleh's nephew, Tareq Saleh, are also seeking to create a base in southern Hodeida governorate and could become an important factor in Yemen's fractured politics. Recent events demonstrate the complex and interconnected nature of Yemen's multiple, overlapping conflicts: the Huthi/anti-Huthi military stalemate perhaps partly explains the STC's aggressive move to introduce facts on the ground and assert both its own claim to authority and its right to be included in peace talks, while pressing for southern separation.

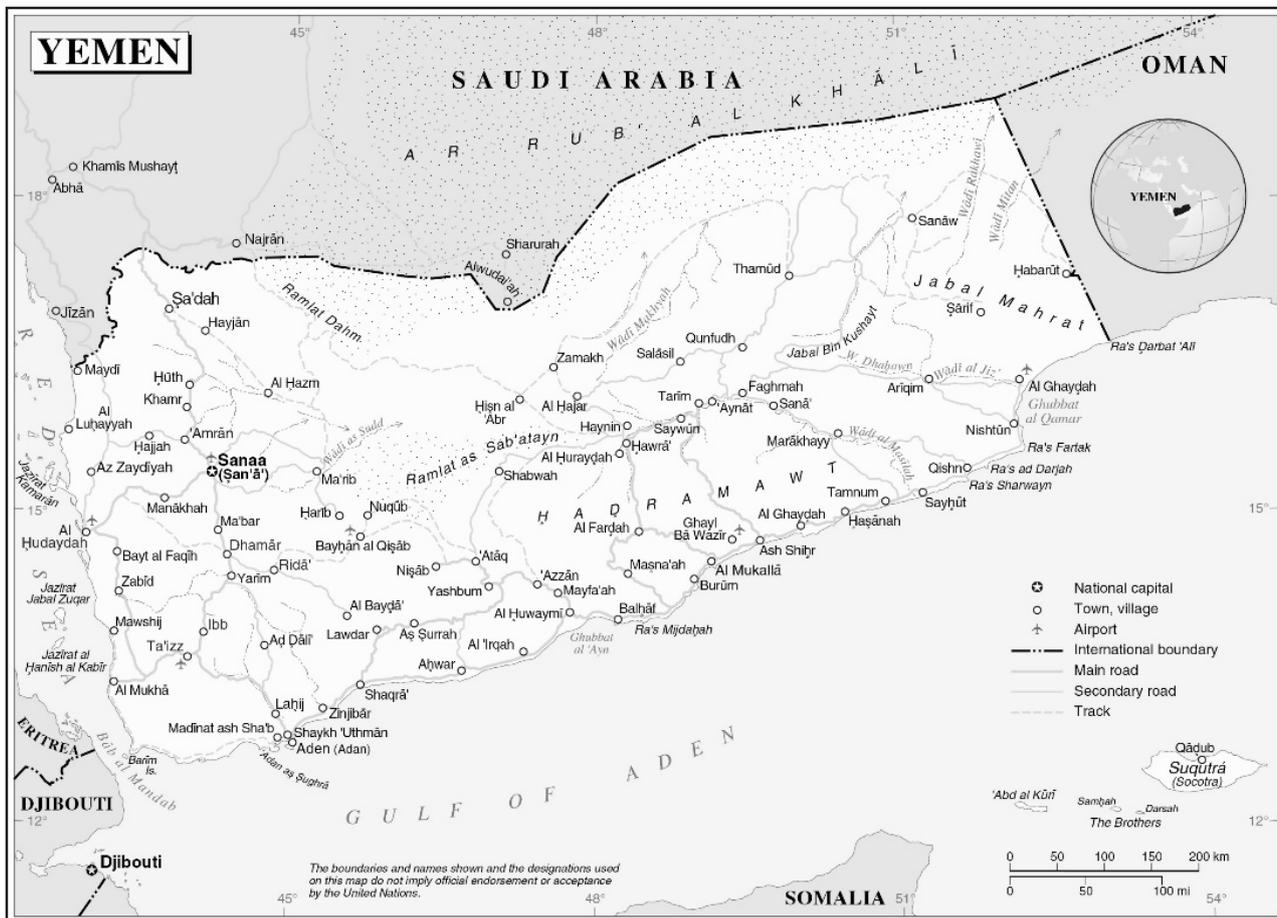
---

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216 (2015), Adopted by the Security Council at its 7426th meeting, on 14 April 2015, UN, 14 April 2015.

The priority now for international stakeholders ought to be to prevent the outbreak of a full-fledged civil war within a civil war. To that end, they ought to steer the STC, Hadi government and their allies away from conflict and push them toward compromise and bargaining – first with one another, next with the Huthis. Riyadh and its Western backers can either seize the moment, participate and encourage an inclusive bargaining process or, as in the past, attempt to apply a band-aid that freezes rather than resolves the conflict. If they allow the fighting to worsen, as seems likely to happen, they may be powerless to stop it. Such an outcome would postpone indefinitely any prospect of putting Yemen back on a path toward a durable peace.

**Aden/New York/Brussels, 30 August 2019**

Appendix A: Map of Yemen



Map No. 3847 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
 January 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
 Cartographic Section

---

## Appendix B: Reports and Briefings on the Middle East and North Africa since 2016

---

### Special Reports and Briefings

*Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

*Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

*Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy*, Special Briefing N°1, 30 April 2019.

### Israel/Palestine

*How to Preserve the Fragile Calm at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade*, Middle East Briefing N°48, 7 April 2016 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

*Israel/Palestine: Parameters for a Two-State Settlement*, Middle East Report N°172, 28 November 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Israel, Hizbollah and Iran: Preventing Another War in Syria*, Middle East Report N°182, 8 February 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Averting War in Gaza*, Middle East Briefing N°60, 20 July 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Rebuilding the Gaza Ceasefire*, Middle East Report N°191, 16 November 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Defusing the Crisis at Jerusalem's Gate of Mercy*, Middle East Briefing N°67, 3 April 2019 (also available in Arabic).

*Reversing Israel's Deepening Annexation of Occupied East Jerusalem*, Middle East Report N°202, 12 June 2019.

### Iraq/Syria/Lebanon

*Arsal in the Crosshairs: The Predicament of a Small Lebanese Border Town*, Middle East Briefing N°46, 23 February 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Russia's Choice in Syria*, Middle East Briefing N°47, 29 March 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Steps Toward Stabilising Syria's Northern Border*, Middle East Briefing N°49, 8 April 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's "Generation 2000"*, Middle East Report N°169, 8 August 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Hizbollah's Syria Conundrum*, Middle East Report N°175, 14 March 2017 (also available in Arabic and Farsi).

*Fighting ISIS: The Road to and beyond Raqqa*, Middle East Briefing N°53, 28 April 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*The PKK's Fateful Choice in Northern Syria*, Middle East Report N°176, 4 May 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*Oil and Borders: How to Fix Iraq's Kurdish Crisis*, Middle East Briefing N°55, 17 October 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*Averting Disaster in Syria's Idlib Province*, Middle East Briefing N°56, 9 February 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Winning the Post-ISIS Battle for Iraq in Sinjar*, Middle East Report N°183, 20 February 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Saudi Arabia: Back to Baghdad*, Middle East Report N°186, 22 May 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Keeping the Calm in Southern Syria*, Middle East Report N°187, 21 June 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Iraq's Paramilitary Groups: The Challenge of Rebuilding a Functioning State*, Middle East Report N°188, 30 July 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*How to Cope with Iraq's Summer Brushfire*, Middle East Briefing N°61, 31 July 2018.

*Saving Idlib from Destruction*, Middle East Briefing N°63, 3 September 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Prospects for a Deal to Stabilise Syria's North East*, Middle East Report N°190, 5 September 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Reviving UN Mediation on Iraq's Disputed Internal Boundaries*, Middle East Report N°194, 14 December 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Avoiding a Free-for-all in Syria's North East*, Middle East Briefing N°66, 21 December 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Lessons from the Syrian State's Return to the South*, Middle East Report N°196, 25 February 2019.

*The Best of Bad Options for Syria's Idlib*, Middle East Report N°197, 14 March 2019 (also available in Arabic).

*After Iraqi Kurdistan's Thwarted Independence Bid*, Middle East Report N°199, 27 March 2019 (also available in Arabic and Kurdish).

*Squaring the Circles in Syria's North East*, Middle East Report N°204, 31 July 2019 (also available in Arabic).

*Iraq: Evading the Gathering Storm*, Middle East Briefing N°70, 29 August 2019.

## North Africa

*Tunisia: Transitional Justice and the Fight Against Corruption*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°168, 3 May 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Jihadist Violence in Tunisia: The Urgent Need for a National Strategy*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°50, 22 June 2016 (also available in French and Arabic).

*The Libyan Political Agreement: Time for a Reset*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°170, 4 November 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Algeria's South: Trouble's Bellwether*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°171, 21 November 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Blocked Transition: Corruption and Regionalism in Tunisia*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°177, 10 May 2017 (only available in French and Arabic).

*How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°178, 24 July 2017 (also available in Arabic and French).

*How Libya's Fezzan Became Europe's New Border*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°179, 31 July 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*Stemming Tunisia's Authoritarian Drift*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°180, 11 January 2018 (also available in French and Arabic).

*Libya's Unhealthy Focus on Personalities*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°57, 8 May 2018.

*Making the Best of France's Libya Summit*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°58, 28 May 2018 (also available in French).

*Restoring Public Confidence in Tunisia's Political System*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°62, 2 August 2018 (also available in French and Arabic).

*After the Showdown in Libya's Oil Crescent*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°189, 9 August 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*Breaking Algeria's Economic Paralysis*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°192, 19 November 2018 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Decentralisation in Tunisia: Consolidating Democracy without Weakening the State*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°198, 26 March 2019 (only available in French).

*Addressing the Rise of Libya's Madkhali-Salafis*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°200, 25 April 2019 (also available in Arabic).

*Post-Bouteflika Algeria: Growing Protests, Signs of Repression*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°68, 26 April 2019 (also available in French and Arabic).

*Of Tanks and Banks: Stopping a Dangerous Escalation in Libya*, Middle East and North Africa Report N°201, 20 May 2019.

*Stopping the War for Tripoli*, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°69, 23 May 2019 (also available in Arabic).

## Iran/Yemen/Gulf

*Yemen: Is Peace Possible?*, Middle East Report N°167, 9 February 2016 (also available in Arabic).

*Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends, Bosom Rivals*, Middle East Briefing N°51, 13 December 2016 (also available in Farsi).

*Implementing the Iran Nuclear Deal: A Status Report*, Middle East Report N°173, 16 January 2017 (also available in Farsi).

*Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base*, Middle East Report N°174, 2 February 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*Instruments of Pain (I): Conflict and Famine in Yemen*, Middle East Briefing N°52, 13 April 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*Discord in Yemen's North Could Be a Chance for Peace*, Middle East Briefing N°54, 11 October 2017 (also available in Arabic).

*The Iran Nuclear Deal at Two: A Status Report*, Middle East Report N°181, 16 January 2018 (also available in Arabic and Farsi).

*Iran's Priorities in a Turbulent Middle East*, Middle East Report N°184, 13 April 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*How Europe Can Save the Iran Nuclear Deal*, Middle East Report N°185, 2 May 2018 (also available in Persian and Arabic).

*Yemen: Averting a Destructive Battle for Hodeida*, Middle East Briefing N°59, 11 June 2018.

*The Illogic of the U.S. Sanctions Snapback on Iran*, Middle East Briefing N°64, 2 November 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*The United Arab Emirates in the Horn of Africa*, Middle East Briefing N°65, 6 November 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*How to Halt Yemen's Slide into Famine*, Middle East Report N°193, 21 November 2018 (also available in Arabic).

*On Thin Ice: The Iran Nuclear Deal at Three*, Middle East Report N°195, 16 January 2019 (also available in Farsi and Arabic).

*Saving the Stockholm Agreement and Averting a Regional Conflagration in Yemen*, Middle East Report N°203, 18 July 2019 (also available in Arabic).

*Averting the Middle East's 1914 Moment*, Middle East Report N°205, 1 August 2019 (also available in Farsi and Arabic).



International Crisis Group

**Headquarters**

Avenue Louise 149, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 502 90 38. Fax: +32 2 502 50 38

[brussels@crisisgroup.org](mailto:brussels@crisisgroup.org)

**New York Office**

[newyork@crisisgroup.org](mailto:newyork@crisisgroup.org)

**Washington Office**

[washington@crisisgroup.org](mailto:washington@crisisgroup.org)

**London Office**

[london@crisisgroup.org](mailto:london@crisisgroup.org)

**Regional Offices and Field Representation**

Crisis Group also operates out of over 25 locations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

**See [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org) for details**

*PREVENTING WAR. SHAPING PEACE.*