

Yemen: From Blitzkrieg to “Dragged-out War”

Foreign Policy Diary

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The Yemen war planned as a blitzkrieg by the Arab coalition has turned into a dragged-out war drawing resources from the coalition and directly Saudi Arabia. Mostly, the intervention has been induced by Saudi Arabias concerns over the strengthening of Iran in the region and will to control a major regional logistical point, the port of Aden.

The coalition Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan and Sudan has created 150,000-strong ground military grouping used for intervention in Yemen. The coalitions air grouping includes over 100 war planes and helicopters.

The interesting fact is Egypt has been actively participates in the Yemeni military campaign on the Saudi Arabias side. On the other hand, Egypt has a neutral position over the Syrian conflict. It clearly shows how tenuous and inconstant Middle East alliances.

The Saudi-led coalition uses modern military equipment and has an advantage in the man power. But the practice shows that it isnt enough. Numerous air raids which target civilians and socially significant facilities dont conduct a support of the Yemeni citizens. Arab media state over 25 000 people mostly civilians have been killed in this conflict.

So, the coalition is involving more and more resources in this intervention. On October 16, a battalion of Sudanese troops arrived in Yemen’s southern port city of Aden. Sudan forces are armed by Chinese armaments and equipment; small arms: rifles Type-51, Type-95, CQ, precision rifles M99, machine guns QJZ-89, automatic grenade launchers QLZ-87 and other military systems as antitank guided missiles Hongjian-8, battle tanks Type-96, MLRS WS-2. Also, Sudan military could use aviation Chengdu J-7, Nanchang Q-5 and Hongdu JL-8. According to reports, Sudan military could send one more battalion to Yemen in the nearest future.

Despite this, its hard to estimate the real military balance of pro-Houthi and anti-Houthi forces. There are lots of ground reports about the coalitions losses on the ground. The coalition forces dont have battle experience.

Houthi forces use skilfully the ground relief, local facilities and a concealment practice to inflict damage to ground and air forces of the Arab coalition. Experts believe that the coalition forces wont be able to act successfully in mountainous area and fight local guerilla. Furthermore, Saudi Arabias expectations that Iran wont support Houthis in Yemen have been a mistake.

At the moment, Saudi Arabia and its allies aren't ready to participate in the negotiations aimed on a real way to solve the conflict. So, there are 2 main possibilities: First is ground and air forces of the Arab coalition will cut Houthis from the external support, gain enough battle experience and inflict defeat to the Houthi forces. But it's unlikely. It's much more possible that the coalition forces won't be able to defeat decisively Houthis. It will conduct jitters among coalition members. Separately, almost all of them have own disagreed interests in Yemen.

Nonetheless, many major world powers are interested in a normal work of the Adens port because of its logistical importance and a stable situation on the main oil trade maritime routes. So, we could expect that the global players will be more and more involved in the conflict. The local conflicts in the Middle East has been turning to a big regional conflict.

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