

Yemen Trapped Between Internal Fires and External Ambitions



Hani Al-Ansi / Picture Alliance / AP

Since the eruption of the Gaza war, Yemen's political landscape has undergone significant shifts on both regional and international fronts. The reverberations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have disrupted efforts toward a political settlement in Yemen, directly impacting a peace process that was already faltering due to a complex web of internal and regional dynamics. No longer seen as merely a domestic battleground, Yemen has become

entangled in a broader geopolitical chessboard where the interests of global powers intersect with the strategic calculations of regional actors in the Middle East.

As events in Gaza escalate, international and regional priorities have pivoted toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sidelining the Yemeni file and easing the pressure on local factions to advance the peace process.

This shift has led to a decline in international coverage and effective political pressure on Yemeni actors, allowing some armed groups to expand their influence and strengthen their foothold both inside the country and beyond its borders.

In this context, the Egyptian Center for Political and Strategic Studies notes that the absence of a unified national project and the inability of any UN-backed political framework to enforce implementation severely limit the chances for a comprehensive settlement particularly as the Houthis expand their regional engagements and exploit shifting dynamics to bolster their position domestically and regionally.

The Center argues that the Yemeni crisis is now deeply intertwined with regional entanglements. The Houthis have emerged as a key regional player across the Red Sea, while the international community remains more preoccupied with managing the fallout from the Gaza conflict and securing economic interests tied to maritime routes than with earnestly pursuing viable solutions for Yemen.

Between Internal Conflict and External Tensions

Throughout his tenure, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg has remained engaged in mediating between Yemen's warring parties and their regional and international backers, striving to broker a lasting truce and push the political process forward.

Yet despite his continued efforts, the challenges facing the peace process appear more complex than ever an assessment underscored in his latest briefing to the UN Security Council, which was laced with stark warnings and sober reflections on Yemen's bleak trajectory.

Grundberg offered a precise reading of the current state of affairs, stressing that stability in Yemen cannot be isolated from broader regional dynamics. He described the conflict as a "fault line" whose tremors are spilling across borders, magnified by the regional power struggle.

He noted that the ongoing war in Gaza has cast a heavy shadow over Yemen. Escalating tit-for-tat attacks between the Houthis and Israel have deepened instability.

The Houthis have ramped up their drone and missile strikes on Israeli territory, while Israel has responded with a series of airstrikes targeting Sana'a and other Houthi-controlled areas, leaving dozens dead including individuals directly connected to Grundberg's office.

The envoy cautioned that focusing solely on regional rivalries risks marginalizing Yemeni voices and ignoring the people's real needs and aspirations. He warned that this approach is driving the country further away from a political resolution and delaying any prospect of lasting peace or sustainable development.

As regional tensions widen and foreign interventions intensify in neighboring conflicts, Yemen remains a critical nexus where the interests of global powers converge. Its internal strife is increasingly a mirror of regional rivalries.

In this vein, international relations scholar Adel Al-Musani argues that Yemen's situation has become extraordinarily complex due to the rapid pace of regional developments. He noted that repeated Israeli strikes on Houthi positions have broadened the zone of regional tension, embedding Yemen deeper into the strategic calculus of major powers.

Speaking to Noon Post, Al-Musani highlighted that regional power dynamics are shifting rapidly, especially after the recent Arab-Islamic Summit labeled Israel an "enemy"—a clear departure from the previous stance of some Gulf states that had viewed it as a "moderate ally."

He added that developments in the Red Sea, increased involvement from major powers like China and Russia, and the Houthis' inflammatory rhetoric are all factors that further complicate the landscape and obstruct any possible political resolution.

Al-Musani concluded by stating that the Yemeni crisis now sits open-ended, with no clear indicators of either a military breakthrough or a political settlement. This underscores the fragility of Yemen's position amid relentless regional and global upheavals.

From "Al-Aqsa Flood" to the Red Sea

In recent years and especially since the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation in 2023 Yemen's crisis has taken a distinctly different turn. No longer merely a local conflict among rival Yemeni factions, the crisis has become inseparable from broader regional and international considerations.

As global attention has shifted to other, more urgent regional conflicts, Yemen has slipped down the list of priorities for major powers. This has created space for armed actors to entrench themselves further, both domestically and regionally, by capitalizing on political turbulence.

In this context, the Houthis have visibly emerged as a regional actor along the Red Sea coast, leveraging escalating regional tensions to cement their position and expand their popularity both at home and abroad. At the same time, Saudi Arabia has taken on a mediating role, seeking to act as a regional broker rather than an active party in the conflict.

Meanwhile, the United States has focused on managing the crisis in ways that safeguard its interests and Israel's security, rather than enforcing a standalone political solution for Yemen.

The internationally recognized Yemeni government remains largely incapable of asserting control or implementing political strategies, either on the ground or diplomatically. As a result, the crisis has become increasingly tied to shifting regional and international tides far removed from the real needs and future aspirations of the Yemeni people. The possibility of a stable political settlement or sustainable solution appears increasingly elusive.

Commenting on this, writer and researcher Abdul Sattar Saif Al-Shamiri told Noon Post that the expanding front from Gaza to Yemen reflects a war of attrition between Iran's regional project, Israel, and the United States. Yemen, he said, has become yet another arena for this power struggle.

Al-Shamiri noted that the Houthis have capitalized on the ineffectiveness of Israeli and American strikes to bolster their political standing domestically and internationally. Meanwhile, the Palestinian issue has suffered from growing international neglect, allowing Israel to tighten its control over the conflict's trajectory.

He added that the recent international meeting in Saudi Arabia on securing Red Sea navigation routes illustrates that global priorities now revolve around trade and maritime security, rather than promoting a comprehensive political settlement in Yemen.

Still, Al-Shamiri observed that Yemen's internal situation remains relatively stable. The recognized government retains its positions, while the Houthis face external pressures that could eventually erode their strength though there is no clear horizon for a military or political breakthrough.

Yemen on the Margins

As political and regional actors exchange messages across Gaza and the Red Sea, it is the Yemeni people who bear the greatest burden of marginalization. For ordinary Yemenis, the crisis is no longer just a political file it is a daily struggle largely ignored by the international community.

Activist Mansour Al-Shaddadi points out that Yemen has suffered from clear

neglect both regionally and globally. He emphasized that international media and humanitarian support have failed to offer adequate attention both before and after the Gaza war.

Speaking to Noon Post, Al-Shaddadi said that since the war began in 2014, Yemen has never received fair coverage of its humanitarian catastrophe. He attributed this to the country's lack of strategic value to major powers and to the weakness of the Yemeni diaspora, which might otherwise have helped bring attention to the crisis.

He added that the war in Gaza has only deepened this neglect, as regional developments have dominated media and public discourse. As a result, coverage of Yemen has dwindled—even as famine continues, salaries go unpaid, and humanitarian aid declines.

This erosion of international concern has had devastating consequences for millions of Yemenis, effectively rendering Yemen a forgotten conflict that surfaces only when global powers deem it relevant to their interests not in response to the humanitarian reality on the ground.

Thus, Yemen remains in a precarious position its crisis managed according to the priorities of powerful nations, while civilians shoulder the steep cost of political stagnation and rising tensions. The current landscape reflects the fragility of political pathways, the waning of international attention, and the opportunistic expansion of armed groups exploiting power vacuums at home and abroad.

In light of these dynamics, the question remains: Will Yemen once again rise to the top of the global agenda, offering its people a path toward sustainable peace and meaningful development? Or will it remain trapped in an unending cycle of conflict, a daily tragedy for a nation exhausted by more than a decade of war?