

ENDLESS WAR: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON WHY SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD END ITS YEMEN BLOCKADE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The Biden administration's decision to [end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's Yemen war](#) is a signal to Riyadh that the Trump-era open support it had enjoyed is a matter of the past. The U.S. offered support to Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthi rebels in Yemen when Barack Obama was the President. Donald Trump continued that policy, overlooking the disastrous effects of the war that has turned Yemen, one of the poorest Arab countries, into a humanitarian catastrophe. In its last hours, the Trump State Department designated the Houthis, who are backed by Iran, as a terrorist organisation. Rights groups have condemned the move, saying that the designation would complicate aid efforts as the Houthis control a sizeable part of Yemen, including the capital. Mr. Biden has now taken a different line, initiating steps [to remove the Houthis from the terror list](#), among other actions. This is part of his larger attempts to rewrite the U.S.'s West Asia policy which, under Mr. Trump, was almost entirely focused on containing Iran. The administration's message seems to have reached Riyadh. Saudi Arabia ended a nearly four-year-long blockade of Qatar, another American ally, after Mr. Biden was elected President. It has also signalled that it would carry out domestic reforms keeping human rights in focus. But it is yet to make any definite moves to wrap up the Yemen conflict.

Yemen is a case study for a war that has gone wrong on all fronts. When the Saudis started bombing the country in March 2015, their plan was to oust the Houthis from Sana'a and restore a pro-Riyadh government. Despite the Saudi-led attacks, the Houthis held on to the territories they captured, while the Saudi-backed government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was teetering on the brink of collapse. After five years of fighting, the United Arab Emirates pulled out of the war last year. And the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council wants southern Yemen to be an independent entity. While these multiple factions continued to fight, more than 10,000 people were killed in attacks and tens of thousands more died of preventable diseases. Yemen also stares at famine. It is a lose-lose war for everyone. Saudi Arabia has failed to oust the Houthis from Sana'a and is now facing frequent rocket and drone attacks by the rebels. The Houthis are living in permanent war, unable to provide even basic services to the people in the territories they control. Yemen's internationally recognised government practically lacks any power and legitimacy at home as the war is being fought by other players. Ending the war is in the best interest of all parties. Mr. Biden should push Saudi Arabia and its allies to end their blockade of Yemen and initiate talks with the country's multiple rebel factions.

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