

US Flounders as Chaos Erupts in Red Sea

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): So we want to move just a little bit away from the focus on Israel to what is happening in the Red Sea and in Yemen, even though it's very related to the Israeli conflict and everything we just discussed, because it's incredibly significant what's going on. Yemen is a country that has been divided for a long time. The Houthis are a minority in Yemen, but have become increasingly powerful and increasingly populous. And the government of Yemen that was recognised as a puppet of the United States has been rendered basically powerless by the Houthis, who have built a militia and who have become very powerful in this country. It's why the Saudis were obsessed with attacking the Houthis and bombing Yemen for all those years under the Obama administration, both because they felt threatened by the Houthis and because they viewed the Houthis as an extension of Iranian power. And the Saudis and the Iranians are rivals in that region. And so the Saudis elicited the support of the United States and the British to help them bomb Yemen and Yemenis relentlessly. This is 2013, 2014, 2015, and those teenagers are now adults, and those little children are now teenagers. And they remember that. For a long time, Yemen was by far the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet. Mass starvation. And they're also looking at what the Israelis and the Americans are doing in Gaza to Palestinians with whom they empathise as Muslims. And they're armed, and they have decided that they are going to use their proximity to the Red Sea, a very important shipping lane - one of great economic importance to the Israelis and to the world - to target those countries they perceive as being responsible for what's taking place in Gaza and for what was done to them. So they're not targeting Brazilian ships or Korean ships or Japanese ships or Swiss ships, what they are doing is targeting Israeli ships and American ships and French ships and EU ships. Yet another example of what the CIA calls blowback. That if you want to go around the world doing things like what the United States is doing in Gaza, there are going to be some people who want to bring violence to you. And it's becoming an increasingly serious threat economically, but also to the ability to have commercial shipping through this region.

Here from The New York Times this week: *The Houthi militia in Yemen has gained clout with ship attacks in the Red Sea.* Quote, "Across the Middle East, people have hailed the Houthis as one of the few regional forces willing to challenge Israel with more than harsh

words." It is interesting. There's Hezbollah that has a stockpile of 150,000 very precise missiles aimed at Israeli cities that could do enormous damage to Israeli civilian infrastructure if they wanted. That has done very little. They've had some pin prick attacks against the Israelis. Israelis have done it back, but nothing else. It's really the Houthis who have stepped up in launching these attacks in retaliation for what's being done in Gaza. Quote, "Shooting missiles toward Israel and attacking ships sailing through the Red Sea, Yemen's Houthi militia has been gaining popularity across the Middle East and building regional clout that could help expand its power at home, analysts say. Now that the most intense fighting in Yemen's civil war has largely died down, the armed group has increasingly functioned as a de facto government. They have described the recent attacks as a campaign in solidarity with the 2.2 million Palestinians living under Israel's siege and bombardment of Gaza, which was launched in response to the October 7th attacks by Hamas." Now, note that their attacks on shipping have caused a great rise in popularity in the region. People in that region are applauding it. Why? Because they hate the United States and the Israelis because of the interference in that region over many, many decades and because of what they're doing in Gaza. Yet another cost to the United States of standing by Israel. Now, they hate the Americans for their own separate reason - that the United States bombed Yemen continuously. But do you see the politics here? In the United States, elite political discourse so often talks about what Arab governments want. They'll say even Arab governments hate Hamas. Even Arab governments are fed up with Hamas. And what they really mean by "even Arab governments", are not representative governments that were elected by the people of those countries and therefore have any standing to speak for the people of those countries. What they mean are the dictators that had been imposed by the United States and Europe and propped up in power by the United States and the EU precisely to ensure that popular opinion in those countries never has expression. Those dictators are there to suppress the views and beliefs and values of the people of those countries. Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain - these are all the countries that are dictatorships propped up by the United States. So when American elites say even the Arabs have had enough of Hamas, what they mean are these dictators. But the people in these countries are utterly anti-Israeli, pro-Palestinian and anti-American. And that's why the Houthis are gaining popularity among the actual people, not the dictators that have been imposed on them by the United States.

Here was The Economist with a background piece on what's happening. And it's very important what's going on in the Red Sea. It's causing a huge amount of economic instability and seems to be escalating. The Economist on December 12th: *Who are the Houthis, the group attacking ships in the Red Sea?* "The Yemeni rebel group is operating on the fringes of the Israel-Hamas war. Since the bombardment of Gaza began, the Houthis, a Yemeni rebel group, have launched a series of attacks on cargo ships. The insurgents, who are backed by Iran say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians. They have threatened to attack any ship bound for or leaving Israel without delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. In 2014, the Houthis swept out of their northern stronghold and took control of Sana'a, Yemen's capital.

With the support of Iran, they seized most of western Yemen. The country's then-president fled to Saudi Arabia. In 2015, at his request, the Saudis launched a campaign against the Houthis: in the years that followed around 25,000 airstrikes killed more than 19,000 civilians. The UN said in early 2023 that it was still the world's worst humanitarian crisis.". So you had a figurehead government in Yemen that was supported by the United States, but that had no popular support among the people and once the Yemenis got enough arms to fight back against their government, they forced the government that they never wanted to flee to Saudi Arabia and essentially took over a otherwise ungovernable Yemen.

Here from The Wall Street Journal, December 19th: *The US leads bid to secure the Red Sea, but shipping firms remain on edge.* Now, the US tried to put together a coalition to go and secure the Red Sea and to prevent the Houthis from continuing to attack ships linked to Israel and the United States. And they got basically nobody in the region to join them. Because those countries don't want to make enemies of the Houthis and because they know that their populations are so intensely pro-Palestinian that any appearance that they're siding with the United States or Israel at this point would be very threatening, even to these well-entrenched dictators. We saw in the Arab Spring how well-entrenched ones like Hosni Mubarak, who was in power in Egypt for 30 years, were unseated. So they're scared of their populations oftentimes. And the United States has no soft power anymore. It could only get Bahrain, I think, is the one country in the region that has no military. "Regional politics and well armed Houthi adversaries in Yemen are among the challenges facing a US-led naval force. The rising threat has prompted many of the world's biggest shipping companies to find alternative routes. Fearing widespread disruption to trade flows that could reignite inflation by boosting prices for goods and energy, the US said this week that its navy would lead a force involving almost a dozen countries to deter the Houthi strikes. The sliver of water, separating the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean, is bookended by the Suez Canal to the north and by Bab el-Mandeb to the south. The two straits, along with an Egyptian pipeline, carry about 12% of the world's seaborne oil and 8% of its liquefied natural gas. More than 20% of the world's container trade passes through the Suez, according to shipbroker Clarksons. Gregory Brew, an analyst at geopolitical consulting firm Eurasia Group, said that reflects the difficulty that the US faces in juggling its support for Israel in the war against Hamas alongside its commercial interests in the region.". Do you see how much the United States sacrifices of its own interest to fund and arm Israel? It's been going on like this for decades. You've had generals come forth like David Petraeus and others and say, the reason we're so hated in the region, the reason why our forces are constantly attacked, is because we're supporting Israel. And they've had to apologise for it, they've had to withdraw it, but everyone in Washington knows that's true.

Here is a video from the spokesman of Yemen's armed forces, the Houthis, spewing his contempt for the idea that they're going to be deterred by this little force that the United States has put together. "If we look at the crimes being committed in Gaza", he says "they're similar to ones that were committed against us in the past nine years. Bombarding hospitals?

They bombarded our hospitals. Bombing markets? They bombarded our markets. Bombarding roads, people while they're soundly sleeping in their homes, just like it happened to us. It's the same aggression, the same American bombs being poured on Gaza are the same ones being poured on us in Yemen. The aggressor is one, the aggression is one, the leader of it is one. America. The one who has led the aggression in Yemen is the same one who is leading it in Palestine. Majorities were saying, quote, 'Strike Israel, we dare you'. Well, we did strike them. They said, 'seize a ship, we dare you'. We seized one and took it to our port. It greatly honours us that we mobilised against the enemy. That we are confronting the Zionist enemy who is aggressing on Palestine and our homeland. We will continue to confront the American-Israeli enemy until the aggression on Gaza stops. As for the battle in our homeland, we are, God willing, fully prepared and ready for anything from the enemy. If Saudi and Emirates even think of leading an aggression on us commanded by Israel and USA, we are present and ready. They've tried us for nine years. If they want to do it again, we're here and we're ready. As for America and Israel, if they attack our homeland, they will commit foolishness they've never committed before. The response will be fierce from the people and the armed forces. We are with our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon in facing Israel, because they're our greatest enemy. We didn't say 'Death to America' with our heads turned. We are serious about it." Now, they've demonstrated that's not bluffing. And you see they threaten the Saudis and the Emiratis. And then the Saudis and the Emiratis pointedly refuse to join the American coalition to confront the Houthis in trying to protect these ships. Look at everything we're risking for the Israelis to destroy Gaza. How is it in our interest to do this? Is Hamas remotely a threat to the American way of life?

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