



Russia: Risk and Opportunity in Yemen

OE Watch Commentary: In the wake of the Beirut Port explosion, Yemenis worried about unattended explosive materials in their own coastal storage facilities. The editor of the prominent Southern Yemeni news website *Aden Ghad*, for instance, claimed to have evidence that large amounts of ammonium nitrate had been neglectfully stored in the port of Aden for several years. Port authorities denied this, and a subsequent investigation found the material in question to be non-explosive urea. A more volatile case is that of the FSO Safer, a rusting oil tanker that has been moored for several years off Houthi-controlled territory on Yemen's Red Sea coastline. As its engines and machinery increasingly fall into disrepair, the risk of a massive explosion grows. The Saudi-led coalition blames the Houthis, who in turn attribute the dangerous stalemate to British and American obstruction and intransigence. Per a Houthi leader's tweet, when it comes to securing the FSO Safer, they will only deal with countries outside of the Saudi-led coalition. Russia in particular appears to be in a position to mediate a solution.

Russia maintains fairly good relations with Yemen's three competing authorities: the Hadi government, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the Houthi-controlled government in Sana'a. Yemen was a key component of Soviet Middle East power projection during the Cold War, and the accompanying passage from *Aden Ghad* argues that Russia is primed to play a greater role in the country. According to the Houthi Movement's spokesman, "the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years. We have exceptional private contacts with the Russian side, and we exchange many ideas related to the Yemeni issue. If Russia's position continues developing in this way, it will be a positive thing that will serve stability and peace in the region." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...We believe that the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years..."

Source: حمري - الكشف عن وجود 140 حاوية محملة بنترات الامونيوم مبناء عدن محتجزة منذ 3 سنوات
 "Exclusive: Discovery of 140 Containers Filled with Ammonium Nitrate in Aden Port for 3 Years," *Aden Ghad*, 7 August 2020. <https://adenghd.net/news/481828/>

Aden Al-Ghad learned from its sources of 140 40-foot containers that have been in the port of Aden for 3 years and contain ammonium nitrate, the same substance that exploded in Beirut port a few days ago. An informed shipping source told the newspaper that an estimated 4,900 tons of ammonium nitrate was brought to the port 3 years ago but was seized for being a material that the Arab coalition prevented from entering Yemen...

Source: "تفاصيل أزمة السفينة "صافر": ابتزاز دولي يواجه الحقائق بـ "الضجيج"
 "Details on the Safer Ship Crisis: International 'Extortion' Confronts Facts," *ansarollah.com*, 11 August 2020. <https://www.ansarollah.com/archives/363436>

The coalition of aggression has once again focused on the "Safer" floating tanker, this time on the international arena by Britain and the United States, who clearly seem to be engineering a new escalation that is still in its political stage and may yet develop. This is meant to compensate for the disastrous failure of their regional tools in Yemen, but it is an escalation that is entirely centered on lies and depends primarily on intensifying the noise, according to the rule that facts can be changed and reversed simply by means of a statement by the Security Council or a UN official. This is what is being done by the aggression coalition and its international sponsors when they talk of a "catastrophe" that they have helped create for over five years, with blatant determination, and which they now using for blackmail....

Source: هل تستطيع روسيا وقف الحرب في اليمن؟
 "Can Russia End the War in Yemen?" *Aden Ghad*, 30 July 2020. <http://adengad.net/news/480606/>

[Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen] Abdul Malik expressed his "hopes for a decisive role for Russia, the permanent members of the Security Council and the international community in general in [the Safer tanker] file," stressing "the need for the international community to take a firm stance to avoid the largest environmental disaster in the world"... Muhammad Ali Al-Houthi, a member of the Supreme Political Council formed by the group in Sana'a, said through his Twitter account that... "To avoid continuing a futile debate, we demand the intervention of an international third party that is not involved in the aggression, to prevent any disaster or obstructionism"...

It seems that any Russian intervention to solve the Safer crisis will be acceptable to the Houthis. "Russia can play a positive role in the Yemeni file, but we believe there may be a problem on the Russian side regarding its understanding of what is happening in Yemen and how this affects it," said the group's spokesman, Muhammad Abdul Salam. He added, "We believe that the Russian position has improved, especially in the last two years. We have exceptional private contacts with the Russian side, and we exchange many ideas related to the Yemeni issue. If Russia's position continues developing in this way, it will be a positive thing that will serve stability and peace in the region."