

Why Have the Western Approaches Failed in Deterring the Houthis?

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| First- The Calculations of the Houthi Escalation in the Red Sea | 3 |
| Secondly- The Western Approaches toward the Houthi Escalation..... | 7 |
| Thirdly- The Problems of the Western approach in dealing with the Houthis | 11 |

Introduction

The range and implications of the military escalation since October 7, 2023, haven't been limited to the borders of the Palestinian territories, but have extended to include several arenas. This is considering two main scenarios, the first of which is the involvement of several non-state armed actors affiliated with Iran in this escalation. This is according to calculations based on the 'engagement rules'. The second is that the United States and Western countries have adopted some limited military or political steps which aim to deter the moves of these armed groups.

In light of this situation witnessed in the region as a manifestation of the ongoing war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, the Red Sea has become an extended theater of this escalation and a clear expression of it. This is in light of the Houthi armed attacks on ships since October 19, 2023, that exceeded 190 in number till June this year. The Iran-backed militia have basically targeted ships and tankers in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. This has led to negative ramifications on international navigation, pushing the US-led Western countries to adopt a complicated approach that combines military and political moves in dealing with the Houthi threat.

This paper highlights the main features of the security environment in the Red Sea after the Houthi involvement in the ongoing escalation in the region. It also analyzes the dimensions of the Western approach in dealing with the threat of the Houthi militia with its military and political aspects. It also points to the most prominent challenges and problems that face this Western approach. This answers a main question represented in the ability of these moves to deter the Houthi militias.

First- The Calculations of the Houthi Escalation in the Red Sea

It can be said that the Houthi militia, in light of their response to the developments of the Palestinian scene following the 'Al-Aqsa Storm' operation on October 7, 2023, and until the current escalation in the Red Sea, have adopted several moves based on some determinants and main features. These include the "gradual escalation", or what is called by the Iranian militias in the region as "the unity of squares" principle, and to employ this strategy in a very pragmatic way. In this regard, the determinants that have governed the Houthi escalation and its main trademarks can be illustrated as shown below:

1-The Gradual Involvement in Escalation: Like all groups affiliated with Iran in the region, the Houthis hailed the 'Al-Aqsa Storm' operation that was carried out by the Palestinian factions on October 7, 2023. They considered it "a great victory that would contribute to changing the balances and equations inside Palestine". On October 10, 2023, the Houthis publicly began to announce their imminent involvement in the developments following the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, when Houthi Leader, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, delivered a speech¹ in which he threatened to target Israel. In this speech, it was notable that 'Al-Houthi' linked the escalation to two main factors, the first of which is the extension and nature of the Israeli operations in Gaza, and the second is the United States' military involvement in supporting Israel.

Till October 19, 2023, the Houthi approach toward the developments was dominated by a pattern of "sending tentative warning messages of escalation" without giving any indication of its possible nature, shape, and range. This was an indication about the lack of a clear vision in the beginning of the nature of the Houthi response to the developments accompanying 'Al-Aqsa Storm'. Later, particularly on October 19, 2023, the Houthi militia moved to "gradual military escalation", launching limited operations on some Israeli areas and targets. In confirmation of this, 'The Wall Street Journal' published a report on October 24, 2023² about a big Houthi operation targeting the Israeli depth that was thwarted by the destroyer 'USS Carney' affiliated with the US Navy on October 19. The report added that "the Houthis launched five cruise missiles that they received

¹ Full text of Abdulmalik Al-Houthi speech on the "Aqsa Storm" and the Israeli response, October 11, 2023, arabiccnn.com

² Iranian-Backed Militias Mount New Wave of Attacks as U.S. Supports Israel, WSJ, Oct. 24, 2023, available at: wsj.com

from Iran. Moreover, they launched about 20 drones towards Israel in an attack larger than initially described by the Pentagon”.

From November 19, 2023, when the Houthi militia seized the commercial vessel ‘Galaxy Leader’ and until June 2024, the Pentagon announced nearly 190 Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region. The Houthi Leader, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, declared that they had targeted about 182 ships³ till August 23, 2024, in addition to launching attacks on the south and center of Israel, using ballistic missiles and drones.

However, it’s noteworthy that this Houthi escalation has adopted sharper patterns and higher military measures. This has been clear in some main indications. The first one is targeting some US destroyers deployed in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden such as ‘USS Gravelly’⁴.⁵ The second one is the announcement in May and July 2024 about targeting vessels in the Mediterranean.⁶ This revealed the Houthi’s quest to expand their maritime confrontations to include the Mediterranean, along with the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The third one is what was announced by the Houthis on June 12, 2024, about targeting a Greek commercial ship, claiming that it has links with Israel.⁷ In this attack, the Houthis used unmanned boats laden with explosives for the first time in this operation. Here, there are two main indications. The first is that the Houthis used new weapons as part of the ongoing escalation in the Red Sea. The second is that the Houthis carried out the operation against the Greek vessel as a response to Greece’s participation in the US-led Red Sea naval task force ‘Operation Prosperity Guardian’ to deter the Iran-backed group. This is in addition to its leadership ⁸of the European Union mission ‘EUNAVFOR ASPIDES’ that aims to protect ships in the Red Sea. Later, the Houthis targeted and bombed Greek oil tanker ‘MV Sounion’ in the Red Sea on August 21, leading to fires on board and fears that the 150,000 tons of crude oil on board would

³ The owner company of “Galaxy Leader” reveals the location of its detention and that two ships change their course | (alhurra.com)

⁴ The Houthi Leader: 182 ships were targeted since last November(news.cn)

⁵ The Houthis announce targeting a US destroyer in Red Sea with missiles, France 24, January 31, 2024, available at: [cutt.us](https://www.cutt.us)

⁶ The Houthis announce targeting two American destroyers and a ship in the Red Sea, Russia Today, August 7, 2024, available at: [cutt.us](https://www.cutt.us)

⁷ Yemen's Houthis target 3 ships in Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea: statement, XCHINA, Jul 16, 2024, available at: english.news.cn

⁸ Houthis say they targeted Greek-owned ship damaged in Red Sea, Reuters, Jun 12, 2024, available at: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

spill, leading to an environmental disaster⁹. “EUNAVFOR ASPIDES” carried out a ship rescue operation and towed the tanker to a safe location a week ago¹⁰.

The fourth indication of the Houthi gradual escalation and their shift toward higher levels was targeting the Israeli depth. This included a drone operation that targeted a building in Tel Aviv, close to the US Embassy premises, on July 19, 2024, that killed a person and injured 10 others, and the latest attack by a ballistic missile that landed in an open area near Tel Aviv on September 15.¹¹ The fifth indication is evident through reports¹² that talked about the arrival of Houthi fighters from Yemen to Syria, passing through Iraq, around September 15. The Houthi fighters are deployed in areas near the occupied Golan Heights which threatens a new phase of escalation against Israel.

2-Enhancing the Involvement in the Iranian Axis in the Region: The Houthi involvement in the escalation accompanying the ‘Al-Aqsa Storm Operation’ has been part of the “unity of squares” principle, used in recent years by non-state armed actors affiliated with Iran. It means that “some factions that have common visions, interests, and goals adopt field escalations in some operational active squares against one enemy. The aim behind this is to harm their enemies, prevent them from achieving their goals, and weaken them physically and morally”. It seems that the escalation by the Houthi militia has been part of the factors that govern the Iranian stance as a whole in terms of the ongoing war in Gaza. Iran adopts an approach based on relative escalation through its allies, and not to get directly involved in the ongoing conflict. This was illustrated in the Iranian limited attacks against Israel in April this year, when Iran fired a barrage of drones and missiles at Israel on April 13 but they caused very minor damage, in response to the targeting of its consulate in Damascus on April 1. This has been clear also in not responding yet to the assassination of Hamas’ political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31 till the moment of writing this research paper. On one hand, Iran doesn’t want to lose its allies in Gaza, on the other, Iran seeks to avoid the large repercussions of direct involvement in the conflict. This pattern of Houthi moves reflects the militias’ quest to achieve some strategic gains, foremost of which is consolidating their affiliation with the

⁹ After ASPIDES, Greece seeks to this role in the European Union, March 4, 2024(skynewsarabia.com)

¹⁰ EUNAVFOR ASPIDES auf X

¹¹ Houthi airstrike hits Israel; Netanyahu vows retaliation, VOA, Sep 15, 2024, available at: voanews.com

¹² The threat against the Golan Heights may come true: the Houthis have reached Syria, available at: i24news.tv

Iranian axis in the region and the resulting possible logistic, military, and financial gains. This is in addition to making use of it as a pressure tool during the Yemeni peace talks.

To express these logistic and military gains obtained by the Houthis in return for further involvement and positioning within the Iranian axis, reports by the US intelligence said in February 2024 that the Houthis had demanded more weapons to continue their attacks in the Red Sea.¹³ Moreover, some reports said that the Houthi militia received hypersonic missiles, or at least acquired the technology of manufacturing these dangerous weapons, from Iran. This was denied by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during his first press conference on September 16, 2024.¹⁴ Likewise, the Platform to track organized crime and money laundering in Yemen (P.T.O.C) revealed that the Houthis largely depend on smuggling weapons on boats through the Red Sea by African smugglers and mafia under the supervision of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The weapons reach some countries overlooking the Red Sea (Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan) before being assembled and delivered to the Houthis via the Port of Hodeidah.¹⁵

3-Linking the Escalation in the Red Sea to the Gaza war: The main observation when analyzing the Houthi escalation discourse in the Red Sea is that it is linked to the ongoing war in Gaza. The Houthi militia promote a narrative that “this escalation is part of their Arab, humanitarian, and Islamic duty”. They also stress that “the path of their operations is linked to the entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza and a ceasefire”. By the wide promotion of this narrative in the media discourse, the Houthis have sought to remarket themselves at the regional level by adopting a stance supporting the Palestinian people, making use of the centrality of the Palestinian cause in the Arab heart, regardless of the actual impact of these moves on Israel.

In confirmation of this hypothesis, some Houthi leaders stressed after the latest operation on Tel Aviv that they “will continue supporting the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza”, adding that “the latest operation confirms the

¹³ The US Intelligence Warns of Growing Iranian-Houthi Weapons Cooperation, VOA, Feb 07, 2024, available at: [voanews.com](https://www.voanews.com)

¹⁴ Iran president denies providing hypersonic missiles to Yemen's Houthis, Reuters, Sep 16, 2024, available at: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

¹⁵ Iranian networks smuggling weapons and African fighters to the Houthis in Yemen, September, 2024, available at: ptocyem.net

continuation of supporting Gaza and they won't be hesitant in targeting any Israeli location". They indicated that "the Houthis will continue developing their air and missile weapons in parallel with examining Israeli defense systems".¹⁶

4-Rebuilding Popular Bases in Yemen: The Houthi involvement in the existing regional escalation can't be separated from the Yemeni internal situation.

On one hand, the ongoing war has embarrassed the Houthis, whose ideological structure is based on the slogan "death to Israel. death to America". On the other hand, the Houthis face big popular ire, especially in their controlled areas in Yemen due to the deterioration of humanitarian and economic crises in these areas. This is seen in the continuous hike in commodity prices and the decline in the value of the local currency against the dollar as well as the failure to regularly pay salaries in these areas, in addition to the human rights and political crises. Therefore, targeting Israel and showing solidarity with the Palestinian factions are an important tool in the strategy to rebuild the Houthi popular bases in light of the central and huge position of the Palestinian cause among Yemenis and the Arab people in general.

Secondly-The Western Approaches toward the Houthi Escalation

The main criticism of the Western countries, especially the United States, during the escalation in the Red Sea, has been that their response to the Houthi attacks didn't measure up to the level needed to deter the militia. Additionally, the Western approach basically has pushed the Houthis toward more escalation. The Western response was initially limited to repelling the Houthi drone or ballistic missile attacks.

Hence, Western countries began to adopt a set of steps with an aim to "restore the missing deterrence" against the Houthis. The most prominent moves

¹⁶The Houthis: We will continue to support Gaza and develop our missile capabilities, Al Jazeera, September 15, 2024, available at: [ctut.us](https://www.ctut.us)

adopted by Western countries regarding the escalation against the Houthis can be illustrated as follows:

1-The Establishment of the 'Prosperity Guardian': Initially, the United States' dealing with the Houthis was confined to "reaction" -- or focusing on repelling the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and reducing the impact by using the US destroyers in the Red Sea. This matched the framework of the main determinant that governed the United States' approach toward the Gaza war's ramifications in the Middle East. It gave priority to limit the war inside Gaza and not expand its scope to other states and parties like Iran and its affiliated militias in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen.

However, this American approach witnessed some relative changes since December 19, 2023. This began with Washinton's announcement of establishing the 'Prosperity Guardian' coalition in the Red Sea.¹⁷ On December 21, 2023, the Pentagon announced that more than 20 countries had agreed to participate in the coalition, including Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Bahrain, Greece, Australia, and the United States. Other countries preferred not disclosing their participation.¹⁸ This coalition is under the umbrella of the US-led multinational 'Joint Maritime Forces' and the 'Combined Task Force 152' affiliated with it. The latter operates in the field of countering illegal activities in the Red Sea, piracy, and drug trafficking as well as securing the freedom of navigation and protecting the commercial ships passing through it from the Houthi attacks.

2- UN Security Council Resolution 2722 against the Houthis: On January 10, 2024, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2722 that called on the Houthis in Yemen to stop their attacks in the Red Sea and cease their violations of international law. The vote was 11 in favor, with four abstentions, including Russia and China. The resolution condemned the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, demanding that the group stop them. It called for the release of the ship 'Galaxy Leader' and its detained crew. The UNSC members stressed the importance of securing rights and navigation freedom for all vessels in the Gulf of Aden and the

¹⁷ " Prosperity Guardian" ... The US announces an international initiative to confront Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, CNN, December 19, 2024, available: arabic.cnn.com

¹⁸ What are the chances of Arab parties joining the "Prosperity Guardian", Asharq Al-Awsat, December 22, 2023, available at: 2u.pw

Red Sea, in accordance with international law. They pointed to the importance of enhancing international and regional cooperation in the face of threats to peace and security in the region.¹⁹

The resolution is seen as an attempt on one side to curb the Houthi activities and pressure the militia politically. On the other hand, it serves as a legal base for the subsequent attacks against the Houthi militia. This includes the attacks carried out by the 'Prosperity Guardian' or those adopted by countries such as the United States against the sources of the threat in the Red Sea. They can rely on it to carry out preemptive airstrikes and missile attacks against certain Houthi targets.

3-Carrying out Preemptive Attacks against the Houthis:

On January 12, 2024, two days after the UNSC Resolution 2722, a qualitative turning point happened at the level of the Western approach toward the Houthi threats in the Red Sea. Since that date, the United States began launching preemptive attacks against military targets in areas controlled by the Houthi militia. The January 12 attacks have been the most important at the level of the US operational escalation against the Houthis. On this day, Washington, along with the UK, carried out preemptive attacks against Houthi locations in five Yemeni governorates, including Sanaa, Hodeidah, Taiz, Saada, and Hajjah.²⁰ The attacks, carried out in cooperation with Britain, focused on targeting drone-manufacturing centers and warehouses. In addition to Houthi radar and air defense systems, storage and launching sites, unmanned aerial systems, and cruise and ballistic missiles. This means that the US-led operations focused on targeting the Houthi's military capabilities.

4-Redesignating Houthis as a Terrorist Group: On January 17, 2024, the United States announced redesignation of the Houthis as a terrorist group²¹. It had previously removed the Houthis from the terrorist list due to concerns regarding peace prospects and the Yemeni economy. It is remarkable that Washington

¹⁹Security Council adopts resolution condemning Houthi attacks on ships in Red Sea, UN News, January 10, 2024, available at: news.un.org

²⁰ US and Britain strike Yemen in reprisal for Houthi attacks on shipping, Reuters, January 13, 2024, available at: reuters.com

²¹ Terrorist Designation of the Houthis, U.S Department of State, JANUARY 17, 2024, available at: state.gov

designated the Houthis as a ‘Specially Designated Global Terrorist’ group pursuant to Executive Order 13224. According to the American laws, “Executive Order 13224 imposes firm sanctions on foreigners who committed terrorist acts that threaten the security of United States nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States, or pose a big threat to make similar acts”. This is contrary to the Trump administration which designated the group as a ‘Foreign Terrorist Organization’ under the Immigration and Nationality Act, in January 2021.

The redesignation of the Houthis allows the US government to freeze the assets of individuals and entities that provide support and aid to the Houthis inside the United States or by American figures and organizations. Moreover, the nature of the ‘SDGT’ designation allows the removal of the organization from the terrorist list if it stops acts that led to this.

The level of political pressure exerted on the Houthis by designating them as a terrorist group has led to some important developments. These include Australia’s declaration in May 2024 to designate the Houthis as a “terrorist group” based on recommendations²² by the country’s security agencies about “their role in the terrorist operations targeting international navigation in the Red Sea”. Likewise, reports said in July 2024 that the United States was weighing a more severe designation for the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, which would put it at the level of the Al-Qaeda.²³

5-Launching European mission ‘EUNAVFOR ASPIDES’: As part of the Western approach toward the Houthi threat in the Red Sea, the European Union announced on February 19, 2024, launching a new maritime force in the Red Sea under the name of ‘EUNAVFOR ASPIDES’. The name of the operation is derived from the Greek word meaning “shields”. According to the European Union, the “EUNAVFOR ASPIDES” will cost 8 million euros provided by the EU budget. Moreover, the operation’s plan and the engagement rules will be prepared as well as the establishment of the naval and air forces that will carry out patrols in the Red Sea.²⁴ This step came in response to the Houthi threats in the Red

²² Australia officially designates Houthis as a terrorist organization, JPOST, May 24, 2024, available at: [jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com)

²³ Red Sea tensions reach new high as US weighs terrorist designation for Houthis, ABC, July 22, 2024, available at: [bcnews.go.com](https://www.bcnews.go.com)

²⁴ Security and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea: Council launches EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, European Council, February 19, 2024(consilium.europa.eu)

Sea, especially since the European energy security system has become wholly dependent on the stability of important navigation waterways such as the Red Sea in the wake of the continuing Russian-Ukrainian war. This reveals that the main task of this new EU naval force is for protecting European ships passing through the Red Sea. This is along with organized coordination with other security missions tasked with securing navigation in the Red Sea such as 'EUNAVFOR Atlanta', the French-led 'Agenor', and US-led 'Prosperity Guardian'.

Thirdly-The Problems of the Western approach in dealing with the Houthis

Currently, the main question following these intensified Western moves in dealing with the Houthi militia is related to how they really impact the group's activities and how they contribute to weakening their military capabilities. In this regard, the ineffectiveness of these measures, whether the "limited" military or the political moves, in restoring deterrence against the Houthis can be illustrated through some main indications. The most prominent one is that the Houthis continue their attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. US President Joe Biden admitted in January 2024 while speaking to reporters that "the strikes launched by the United States haven't deterred the Houthis or stopped their attacks".²⁵ In July 2024, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States, General Charles Brown, said that the crisis in the Red Sea can't be solved by using military force alone against the Houthis.²⁶ In this regard, it can be said that there are some considerations attributed to the ineffectiveness of the Western measures in deterring the Houthi militia. They include the following points:

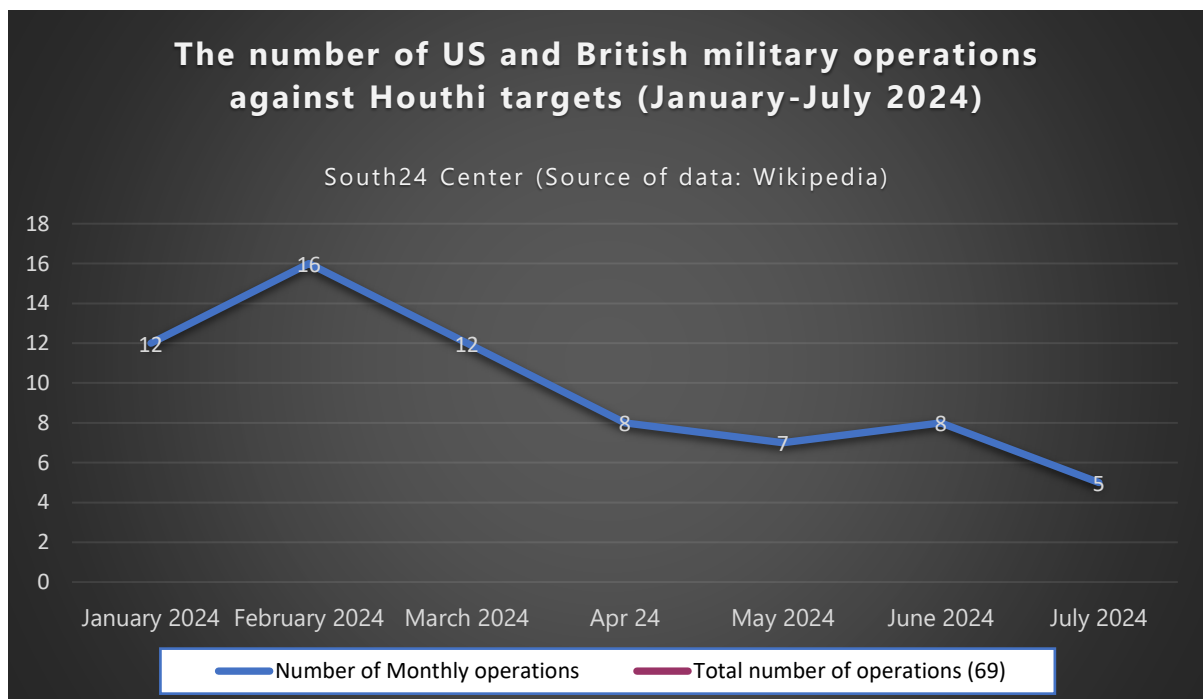
1-The new security entities are dominated by a defensive nature: It can be said that a main consideration of the ineffectiveness of Western moves against the Houthis and the failure to deter them is that the new security entities established in the Red Sea are "defensive" in nature. In the case of the 'Prosperity Guardian', it seems that this coalition has basically aimed to establish

²⁵ Biden answers a question whether the US strikes against Houthis will stop the Houthi attacks, Jan 18, 2024(CNN Arabic)

²⁶ The Pentagon Admits the impossibility of rebelling Houthis militarily, July 19, 2024(Russia Today).

a permanent American presence in the Red Sea, especially considering the international competition over asserting existence in this important strategic region. This is especially related to the Russian quest to secure its military presence in the Red Sea through Sudan. Likewise, there are similar Chinese endeavors through the gate of some African states such as Djibouti. Additionally, the moves by the ‘Prosperity Guardian’ are mostly reactive by responding to the Houthi attacks. This reduces the damage resulting from the Houthi attacks at the level of maritime navigation in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, the reactive nature ensures that these attacks won’t cross the American red lines by not impacting international trade. As a confirmation of this assumption, it was noteworthy that a Pentagon statement stressed that the attacks against the Houthis on January 11, 2024, were separate from and not part of the ‘Prosperity Guardian Operation’.

As for ‘EUNAVFOR ASPIDES’, the statements issued by European officials reflect that the defensive nature dominates it, especially that the European stance since the beginning of the Gaza war is based on the need for not adopting escalatory moves that may expand the scope of the confrontations.



2-The Ineffectiveness of the ‘qualitative operations’ against the Houthis:

Although the American-British attacks on the Houthi militia, that reached about 70²⁷ till August 3, and despite their operational intensity, they haven’t impacted the capabilities of the militia in the way that could push them to stop escalation in the Red Sea. This can be justified in light of some main considerations, the first of which is the assumption that the Houthis always have prior knowledge of American attacks. This is related to several Western reports about imminent attacks against the group which are probably followed by the Houthis, moving them to change their weapon storage locations. The second consideration is that the Houthis, like most militias in the region, mainly depend on primitive and portable missile launchers whose locations can be easily changed. The third is that the majority of the group’s first-rung leaders hide inside underground bunkers. Therefore, targeting them directly is a difficult task.

It seems that the United States, during its qualitative operations against the Houthis, focuses on the pattern of “limited” military operations that ensures achieving a set of goals. These include delivering the message that Washington is able to target the militia’s infrastructure and weapons. Moreover, the United States is keen to reduce the militia’s damages and not to stir a response that would exacerbate the escalation in the Red Sea or impact the path of the Yemeni peace, led by the UN Envoy Hans Grundberg.

3-Politicizing the file of the US terror lists: It seems that the United States’ re-designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group has aimed to use this move as a political pressure card to deter the Iran-backed militia. The nature of the decision in addition to official statements about it revealed that this is a temporary measure related to the developments of the current stage. This is especially related to the fact that Washington is keen not to take drastic escalatory moves that may impact the peace path in Yemen, especially after the declaration in December 2023 that Saudi Arabia has completed the roadmap’s articles and delivered it to Hans Grundberg.²⁸

Practically, the US designation of Houthis as a terrorist group doesn’t impact the militia’s financial potential or their ability to import weapons. They mainly rely

²⁷ Extended timeline of US-UK military operations against the Houthis since January 12, 2024(Wikipedia)

²⁸ Saudi Arabia welcomes reaching a roadmap to support peace in Yemen, December 25, 2023(Sky News Arabia)

on the Iranian-made smuggled weapons as well as local royalties and taxes they impose in their controlled areas as a funding source to buy weapons. This is along with their wide ties with several armed organizations and militias as well as having financial and technological capabilities that enable them to own local-made weapons.

4-The Expansion of Houthi attacks during Escalation: A main indication that can confirm the hypothesis of the ineffective Western measures in dealing with the Houthis can be gauged from the continuing attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea and the militia's adoption of some qualitative operational measures. These include targeting some oil tankers and the US destroyers operating in the Red Sea. This is along with targeting Tel Aviv on July 19, 2024, and September 15, 2024. This pushed Israel to launch a devastating direct attack on the Port of Hodeidah on July 20, 2024, after the first attack. Moreover, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu declared after the latest Houthi attack on Tel Aviv that "the Houthis will pay a heavy price. They should have known by now that we charge a heavy price for any attempt to harm us".²⁹

UPDATE 01.10.2024

Israel's military said it [launched](#) a series of air raids on Houthi targets in Yemen on September 29, in response to a missile attack by the Iran-aligned militia on Israel over the past two days.

In a statement on Sunday, the Israel's military said dozens of aircraft, including fighter jets, attacked power plants and sea port facilities at the Ras Isa and Hodeidah ports."

The attack killed at least four people – one port worker and three electric engineers – the Houthi-affiliated Al Masirah TV reported.

The Israel Forces described the strikes as "extensive, intelligence-based aerial operation".

²⁹ Israel vows 'heavy price' for Houthi missile strike, September 15, 2024(BBC.Com)

The latest Israeli attacks have moved the conflict and escalation between the two sides to the stage of direct confrontations.

Finally, it can be said that the United States and the Western states have relied on an approach that included “limited military” and political dimensions to achieve the missing deterrence against the Houthis to stop their attacks in the Red Sea. However, these moves have so far failed in achieving any effectiveness at the level of stopping the Houthi escalation. This is in light of some military and logistic considerations. There is another dilemma -- of not linking the Western escalation approach in the Middle East, including the Red Sea, to the Gaza war and instead seeking to fragment the escalation files and deal with each case in different ways.

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- Note: this is a translated version of the [original paper](#) written in Arabic on September 18, 2024.
- Cover photo: Greek oil tanker Sounion attacked by Houthis in August 2024 (Source: Aspides)

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