Separatist takeover of Yemen's Aden

What is the issue?

- The southern separatists had takeover Aden which is the interim seat of Yemen's government.
- This could leave Saudi Arabia struggling to hold together a military coalition fighting the Iran-aligned Houthis.
- It also risks fragmenting southern Yemen as the United Nations (UN) struggles to restart talks to end the war.

What has happened in Yemen?

- On 10th August 2019, United **Arab Emirates (UAE) backed separatists** (who want to split from the north) effectively seized Aden by taking over the government's military bases.
- On 11th August 2019, the **Saudi-led coalition backed Yemen government** hit back, saying it attacked one target, after threatening to act if southern forces do not cease fighting.
- Both the sides had been nominally allied in the coalition fighting the Houthis, who overthrew Hadi's government from the capital Sanaa in 2014, but they have rival agendas.

What does this mean for the coalition?

- It makes it harder for Saudi Arabia to weaken the grip of the Houthis, who hold Sanaa and most urban centres.
- In 2015, the Western-backed Sunni Muslim coalition intervened in Yemen against the Houthis. This is seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- The Houthis have no traction in the south, where the UAE has armed and trained Yemeni troops there.
- But the Southern Transitional Council that leads the separatists may not have broad support outside Aden.
- Its move risks igniting infighting in the south and emboldening militant groups among Yemen's many destabilising forces.

How did it reach this point?

- There is no love lost between the separatists and Hadi's government, which

they accuse of mismanagement and corruption.
- The war has revived old strains between north and south Yemen, formerly separate countries that united into a single state in 1990.
- This is not the first separatist uprising. They seized Aden in January 2018 and, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi helped end that standoff.
- The UAE has asked UN to exert pressure on both sides. Riyadh said it would host an emergency summit of the parties to restore order.

Is the Saudi-UAE alliance in Yemen broken?

- The coalition is fractured but not broken. The UAE is unlikely to recommit troops but will support Riyadh, so it can contain Shi'ite Iran.
- The UAE said it scaled down its presence in Yemen due to a holding truce in the main port of Hodeidah, which became the focus of the war when the coalition tried to seize it.
- Diplomats say as the UAE accepted, there could be no military solution due to global criticism of coalition air strikes and the humanitarian crisis.
- Western pressure to end the war and heightened U.S.-Iran tensions, which risk triggering a war in the Gulf, added impetus to the decision.

What can the UN do?

- For now **shuttle diplomacy**. UN Envoy had been trying to save a stalled troop withdrawal deal agreed by the Houthis and Hadi's government at December peace talks in Sweden.
- The Envoy is also trying to **calm tension between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia** after the movement stepped up missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities in recent months.
- But if any broader political talks on a transitional ruling body materialise, they would have to include more of Yemen's restless parties, including southern separatists.

Source: The Indian Express

Quick Facts

Shuttle diplomacy

In diplomacy and international relations, it is the action of an outside party in serving as an intermediary between principals in a dispute, without direct principal-to-principal contact.



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering