Yemen War

What is the issue?

- The over 4-year-old war has devastated Yemen and triggered a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in one of the world's poorest countries.
- It saw a dramatic new turn after a spectacular aerial attack took out two major oil production facilities deep inside Saudi Arabia and sent global crude prices soaring.

What is the story behind the war in Yemen?

- In February 2012, the Arab Spring's Yemeni Revolution of Dignity ended President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 34-year rule.
- The transfer of power to long-time Vice-President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi was followed by massive internal strife, jihadist attacks, unemployment, and food insecurity.
- A 2-decade old insurgency of the Shia Zaidis (Houthis) after their leader Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, whom Saleh's army had killed in 2004, flared up and Yemen's northern Saada province and adjacent areas passed into Houthi control.
- The capital Sanaa fell in the beginning of 2015 and as the Houthis, backed by Saleh and Yemeni forces loyal to him pressed on, Hadi fled first to Aden and then to Saudi Arabia.
- With the establishment of the Houthi government in Sanaa, Riyadh and its Sunni Arab allies waded into the war.
- Saudi Arabia's intense bombing campaign against the Houthis and the loyalists of Saleh was provided logistic and intelligence support by the U.S., U.K. and France.

Why Saudi Arabia and Iran are against each other?

- As in many military and non-military conflicts in the region, Saudi was provoked by its intense insecurity about the Sunni kingdom's great rival, Shia Iran.
- Saudi Arabia and the US considered the Houthis to be a proxy of Iran, armed and funded by the regime in Tehran.
- Yemen's coastline along the Gulf of Aden and its unique location on the Red Sea's mouth gives it enormous strategic value.

- The US and Saudi have an old and deep relationship. The Americans started to associate themselves with the military action before Trump became President.
- The Trump administration now faces some pressure in Congress to end America's involvement in the war.
- It sees Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's assault on Yemen as part of the continuing larger effort by the two allies to beat and bleed Iran.

What happens now?

- American officials have cited intelligence assessments and satellite pictures in support of claims that the attacks that penetrated Saudi air defences were carried out using sophisticated drones and cruise missiles that couldn't have originated from Yemen.
- But the Houthis have claimed responsibility while Iran has denied involvement and the US evidence doesn't provide conclusive proof to the contrary.
- Tensions in the Gulf are already high, and the crisis suggests Trump's policy of maximum pressure against Iran could backfire in any way.
- It is unclear if the President wants to actually strike at Iran, the war not very popular in the US.
- The relentless Saudi bombing of Yemeni civilian areas is seen both pointless and morally indefensible globally.
- Yemen is in the middle of what has been called the world's worst man-made humanitarian disaster.
- International groups believe some 70,000 people have been killed since January 2016, and that about 80% of Yemenis desperately need humanitarian aid.

Source: The Indian Express

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