

BRIEFING NOTES

Yemen and Saudi Arabia: Renewed Strikes and the Risk of Regional Escalation

The strikes on 10 and 11 October against King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, followed by Saudi bombings on 13 October targeting oil facilities in Houthi-controlled territories, mark a new phase of escalation in the war in Yemen.



RIYADH

SAUDI ARABIA

RED
SEA

YEMEN

SANAA

STRAIT OF BAB
EL MANDEB

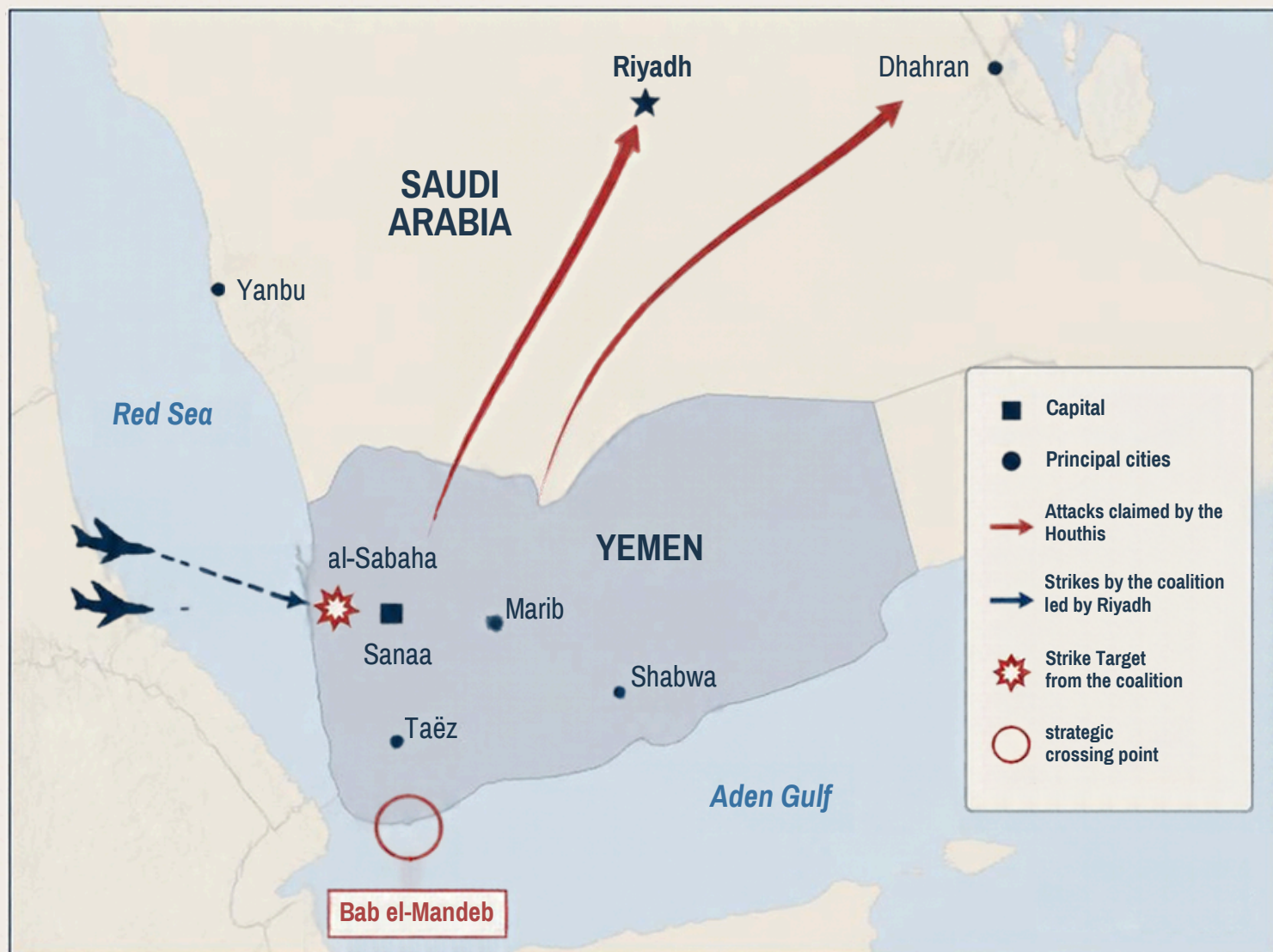


ANALYSIS | EISMENA



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AN ESCALATION THAT CHANGES SCALE



10–11 October

claimed strikes by the Houthis against King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh: 13 dead and more than 300 wounded during the first attack, then 1 dead and 11 wounded the next day.



13 October

response of the coalition led by Riyadh against the al-Sabaha oil station, west of Sana'a, and other hydrocarbon infrastructure in areas controlled by the Houthis.



13 October

the headquarters of Aramco in Dhahran is affected, causing a limited fire with no casualties according to the Saudi authorities.



The confrontation spans from civilian infrastructure to energy facilities, with a heightened risk of chain-reaction retaliation.



SAUDI VULNERABILITIES AT THE HEART OF THE RESPONSE

1 Asymmetrical pressure

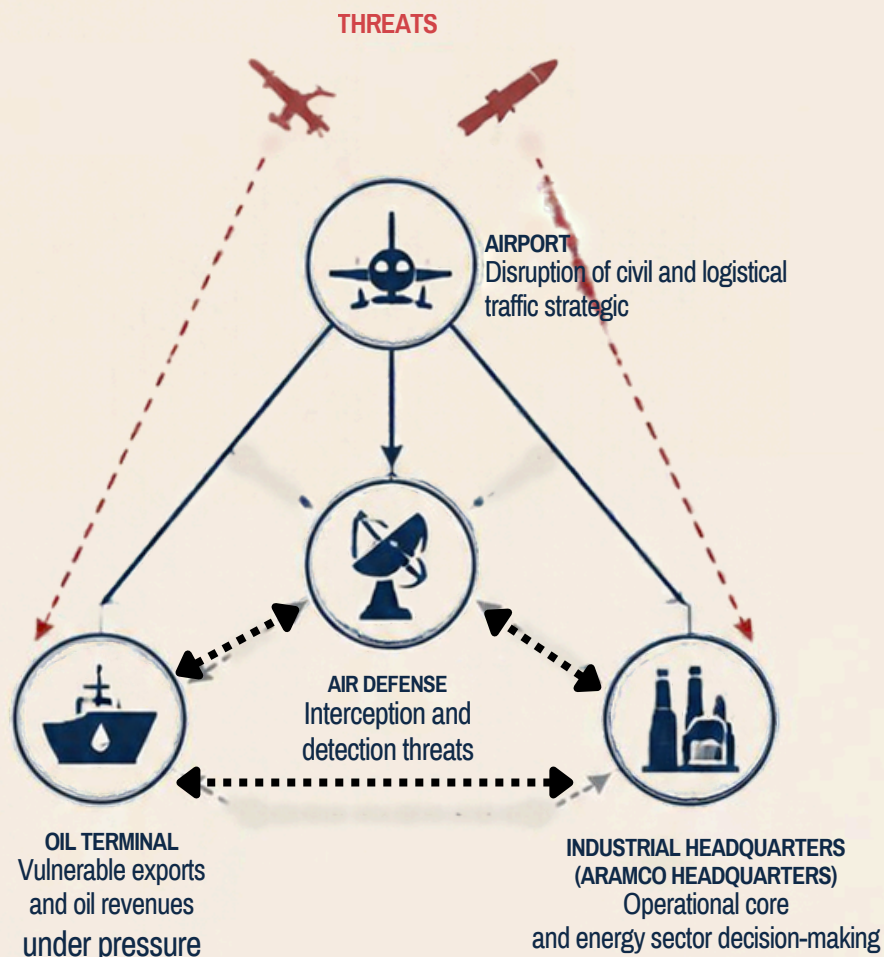
The combination of drones and missiles complicate the protection of a vast territory, despite significant military investments and advanced interception capabilities. The Houthis can impose safety, economic costs and disproportionate policies.

2 Energy as a lever

The strikes on oil infrastructure and the Aramco headquarters widen the confrontation to installations essential for the economic functioning of the Kingdom. The coalition claims that al-Sabaha contributes to Houthi military capabilities; the Yemen Petroleum Company indicates that the site did not contain oil stocks at the time of the strike.

3 The Riyadh Dilemma

Intensifying the response risks to expand the conflict; to favor de-escalation can be interpreted like a strategic retreat.



Central issue:

to restore deterrence without getting bogged down in a new military campaign.

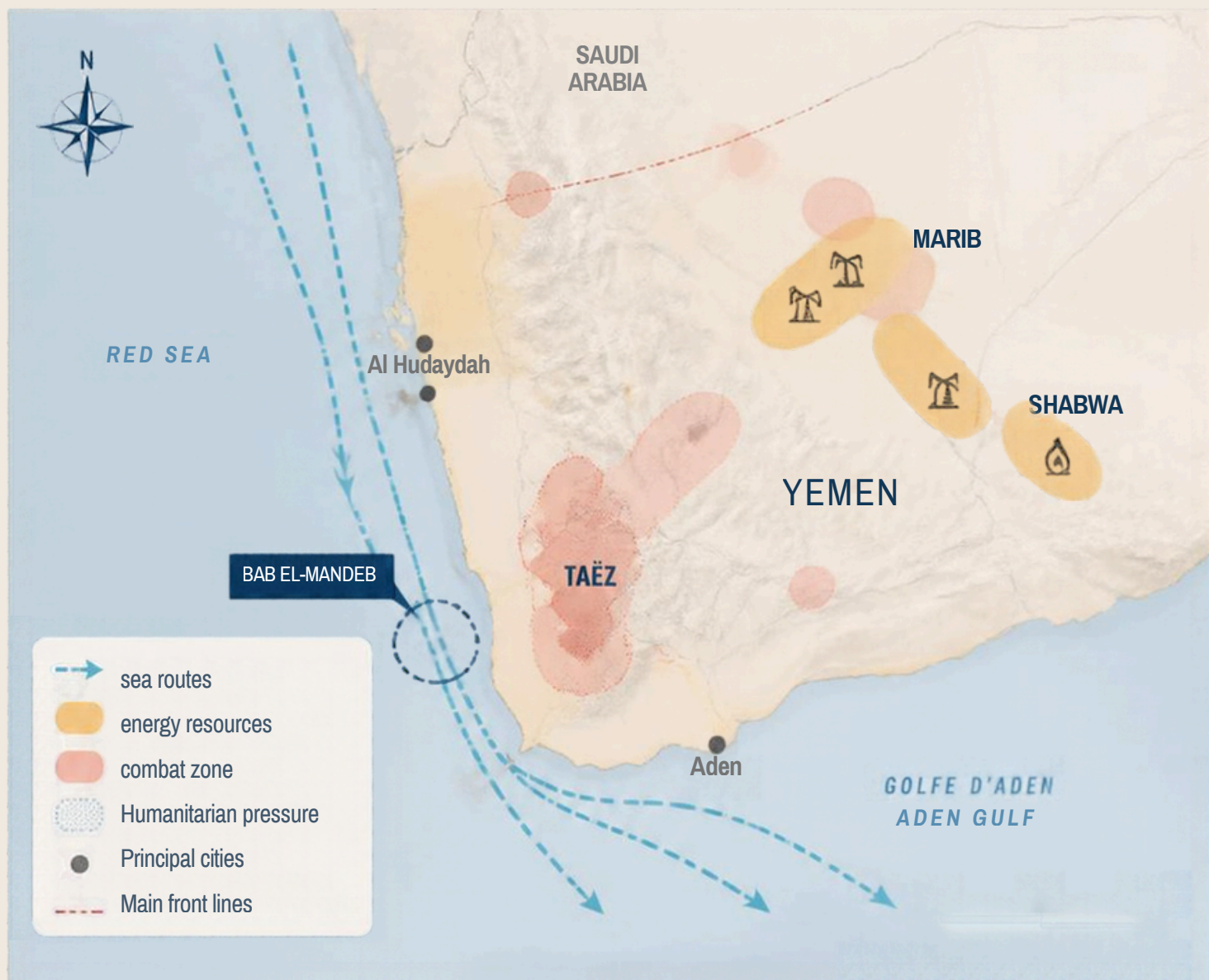
REAL INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT, BUT MAINLY DEFENSIVE

ACTOR	COMMITMENT ANNOUNCED	OPERATIONAL RANGE	MAIN LIMITATION
 Türkiye	Defense Pact of Mecca activated; preparation of military means	Air defense, equipment and technical assistance	Ankara excludes participation in offensive operations in Yemen
 Pakistan	Collective defense commitment with Riyadh and Ankara	Protection of the Kingdom	No clearly established commitment in a land or air campaign against the Houthis
 France	Military, radar and defence systems deployed in Yanbu	Protection of Saudi infrastructure on the Red Sea	No announced participation in the bombings in Yemen
 United States	Initial refusal to join offensive operations directly; participation envisaged after the deadly strikes	Uncertainty strategic and possible support expanded	Risk of opening a new front in the context of the confrontation with Iran

The alliance’s political scope for now exceeds its operational scope.



A CONFLICT THAT GOES BEYOND THE SAUDI BORDER



- 1 Bab el-Mandeb:** maritime route essential for international trade and Saudi energy exports.
- 2 Marib and Shabwa:** governorates rich in oil and gas resources, at the center of territorial balances and supply routes.
- 3 Marib and Taëz:** government forces announce advances around strategic sectors, while the Houthis maintain significant offensive capabilities. In Taëz, the intensification of fighting and the cutting off of supply routes raise fears of a new encirclement; five civilians were killed and at least seventeen wounded in twenty-four hours according to information relayed on 13 October.
- 4 Humanitarian pressure:** access restrictions, supply disruptions and increasing strain on health facilities and aid delivery.

PERSPECTIVES: CONTAINING THE THREAT WITHOUT REGIONALIZING THE WAR

SCENARIO 1



Continued strikes

High risk of attacks on other strategic infrastructure and a chain reaction of retaliation.

SCENARIO 2



Earth pressure around Marib and Taez

Increased pressure on the Houthis, with no guarantee of lasting retreat.

SCENARIO 3



Controlled de-escalation

Preserve Saudi security interests and freedom of navigation, while avoiding a strategic backward interpretation.

RISK LEVEL



LIMITED
RETALIATION

PROTRACTED
REGIONAL WAR



STRATEGIC CONCLUSION

The central issue is Saudi Arabia’s ability to contain the Houthi threat without turning renewed hostilities into a prolonged regional war. Protecting energy infrastructure, securing Bab al-Mandab and the stability of Yemen are now closely linked.