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## CNAS Releases Policy Brief on Yemen's Instability and the Threat to U.S. Interests

**Washington, D.C., November 20, 2009** - The deteriorating situation in Yemen, which includes a growing al-Qaeda presence, a separatist movement in the South, and an active insurgency in the North, demands immediate U.S. attention. [\*On the Knife's Edge: Yemen's Instability and the Threat to American Interests\*](#), a new policy brief authored by CNAS Fellow [Andrew Exum](#) and Senior Fellow [Richard Fontaine](#), outlines the severity of Yemen's internal security challenges and offers several policy recommendations to improve regional stability and reduce the threat to U.S. national interests.

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In the coming decades, Yemen will face national disasters of consequence: a youth population explosion, a water shortage, and a precipitous decline in petroleum output and therefore revenue. This confluence of political, ideological, economic, and environment forces will only increase the likelihood of Yemen becoming a failed state and a more lethal breeding ground for Islamic militant groups.

"The consequences of instability in Yemen reach far beyond this troubled land, and pose serious challenges to vital U.S. interests," write authors Exum and Fontaine. "Despite facing a multitude of global crises, the Obama Administration must seek to mitigate instability on the Arabian Peninsula."

By committing to a comprehensive engagement plan, the authors argue that the United States can employ modest means to accomplish limited ends: deny al-Qaeda a sanctuary, prevent regional instability, and secure vital U.S. interests. The United States should also engage its regional partners in a dialogue which will benefit both Yemen and its neighbors and work to remove Yemen from the knife's edge.

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