Security Council

Research Report
The Situation in the Middle-East (Yemen)

Introduction

One of the worst current conflicts and humanitarian crises is the conflict in the Republic of Yemen. Having been ongoing for about three years, the fighting has caused more than 7,000 deaths, left more than 40,000 people injured and struck 80% of the population with food insecurity, with 4,5 million people needing treatment for malnutrition.

While the civilians bear the brunt of this conflict, the parties that are involved, remain fighting and a stalemate has been reached. Many countries have intervened in the conflict, making the situation even worse and a sustainable solution seem far away.

The Committee

General information

The Security Council is a forum where the main goal is to discuss matters of international peace and security such as areas in conflict. The council will contain 15 people were 5 of the countries always have a guaranteed seat, these countries are the P5 (Permanent 5) countries:

China, France, The United Kingdom, The Russian Federation and the United States of America. These countries have veto-power which means that if one of the P5 member states disagrees to a proposal given then it automatically fails. These P5 countries have a lot of power.

The Security Council has the ability to make binding important decisions unlike the other organs of the UN. A key example of these decisions is the sending on UN peacekeepers to areas of conflict. This can only be certified by the UN Security Council.

Voting

An amendment or resolution needs 9 votes in favour in order to pass, and no vote against from any of the P5 countries. Abstentions are always allowed, even in motions to divide the house.

Ad-hoc

In the Security Council, there is an Ad-Hoc debate procedure in use which means that no resolution is prepared beforehand and there is no lobbying. In the Security Council, delegates hand in individual clauses, each clause is debated, and it passes or fails. This way a resolution is created. As a delegate, it is very useful to prepare individual clauses in advance.

Key Terms

Arab Spring

The term Arab Spring describes a series of anti-government demonstrations and protests in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010. The 2011 Yemeni Revolution is a part of the Arab Spring.

Cold war/proxy conflict

A cold war is defined as a state of geopolitical tension or 'armed peace' between countries or organizations without actually being in the state of war. The most famous cold war so far is the one that lasted from 1947 until 1991 between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

A proxy conflict, which is a term inseparably connected to the term 'cold war', is a conflict in which two opposing parties do not directly engage with each other, but rather within another conflict. For

example, in the Syrian civil war, the USA supports the Syrian rebels and the Russian Federation supports the Syrian government army. The USA and the Russian Federation oppose each other in this conflict without actually being in a state of conflict against each other.

Houthi

The Houthis, officially called Ansar Allah (Supporters of God), is a political movement of Zaydi Shia Islam practitioners that oppose President Hadi's government. They are one of the main belligerent groups in the Yemeni civil war.

Sunni/Shia Islam

Muslims have been divided into two major groups since the beginning of the religion. Sunni Muslims believe that after the prophet Mohammed's death, his father-in-law Abu Bakr was his rightful successor as Caliph, while Shiite Muslims believe that his rightful successor was his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib. Even though Sunni Muslims won and about 85% of the Muslim population is Sunni, Sunnis and Shiites have always lived together peacefully. However, some ongoing conflicts still bear the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in their roots.

General Overview

As mentioned in the introduction, the conflict in Yemen may be the worst ongoing conflict worldwide, which has resulted in a humanitarian crisis of devastating proportions. The war started about three years ago, in 2015, but the roots of the conflict lay in 2011, when the Arab Spring shook the Middle East and former president Saleh was forced to resign in favour of Vice-President Hadi. Since then, Hadi has been fighting against Saleh loyalists and Houthi rebels, backed by local powers such as Saudi Arabia.

Background

In 1990, Ali Abdallah Saleh became president of the unified Republic of Yemen, consisting of the former northern and southern republics. Yet despite this unification, the tension between the two regions did not cease; there was an attempted secession in 1994. On top of regional tensions, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula began to launch its first attacks on the nation in 2000.

In 2004, the Houthi movement, a Shia insurgency, rose, led initially by Hussein al- Houthi; he was killed by government forces in September 2004 and his brother took over the movement. The movement continued over the following years, and hundreds were killed in clashes with the army. Several ceasefires were signed.

Arab Spring

In 2011, street demonstrations began in Yemen. The Houthi movement, in particular, protested against the rule of President Saleh, who then agreed to hand over power to Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Following his inauguration, the National Dialogue Conference was set up to draft the new constitution. The Houthis withdrew from the conference because it did not reform governance sufficiently, and two Houthi representatives were assassinated during the conference.

The government cut fuel subsidies in July 2014, further angering the Yemeni people and especially the Houthis, who took to the streets to protest – demanding that the government step down. In September 2014, the Houthis took over Sana'a, most likely with the help of former President Saleh and forced the government to flee.

In January 2015, the Houthis, opposed to a proposal to divide Yemen into six federal regions, seized the presidential palace in Sana'a. They dissolved parliament and formed a Revolutionary Committee

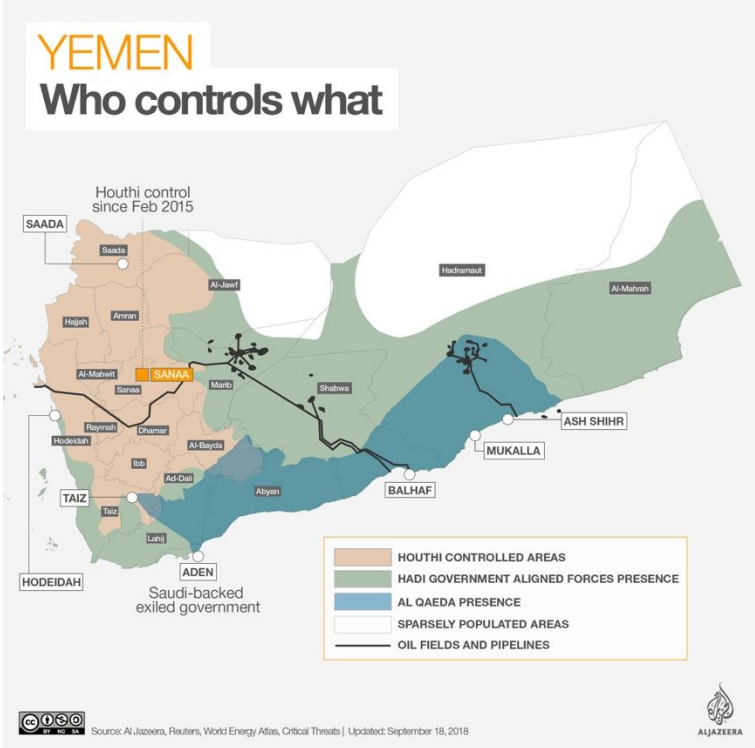
to govern in February. Saleh announced his support for the Houthis, and loyal military forces aligned themselves with the Houthis.

The civil war

The civil war began in March 2015 at the Battle of Aden Airport, from which the Yemeni army fled. The same month, ISIL bombed two mosques in Sana'a. The Houthis announced that their targets included the government as well as AQAP, while President Hadi declared Aden Yemen's new capital.

After the Houthis reached Aden, Hadi went into exile in Saudi Arabia. This prompted Saudi Arabia to launch a coalition comprised of several Gulf states and others from the air. The USA has also been conducting drone strikes, especially targeting AQAP fighters.

Aden was eventually recaptured by the government, but in January 2015 ISIL and AQAP gained control of neighbourhoods in the city.



Areas controlled in Yemen as of September 2018

Despite being following different schools of Shia Islam, the Houthis have been accused of being proxies for Iran. Iran has allegedly supported the Houthis with weapons and training. The accusations were made by the USA and Saudi Arabia, although both the Houthis and Iran have denied this.

The civil war provided an opportunity for both AQAP and ISIL to expand in Yemen. AQAP has taken control of much territory in the south, including the city of Mukalla – although troops eventually drove them out in April 2016. Likewise, ISIL announced the formation of a state in Yemen and has taken responsibility for several suicide bombings.

In April 2016, UN-sponsored peace talks took place between the Houthis and the former President's General People's Congress. Although a ceasefire was agreed on, it did not last.

In October 2016, Saudi-led airstrikes killed 140 at a funeral in Sana'a. This promoted both the UK and the USA to scale back their support for the coalition and demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. Although Saudi Arabia agreed to this, the Houthis rejected it.

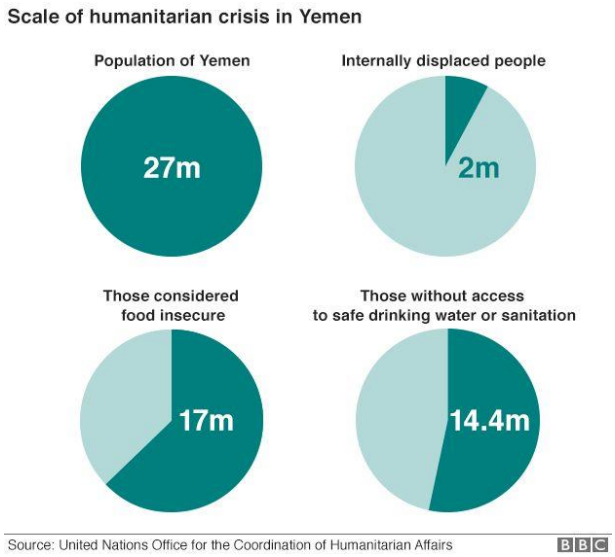
Both sides are now battling for Sana'a which has been held by the Houthis since February 2015. Landmines are a very big problem in the area, which have been left between by Houthi forces when front lines have changed.

Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict

At the base of the civil war lies the conflict between the Houthi rebels with the Saleh loyalists and the Hadi government. However, Yemen also forms the area of a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two of the most influential countries within the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, which is mostly Sunni, and Iran, mostly Shiite, have been in a cold war for several years now. The two countries have fought each other in several unstable countries in the Middle East. In Yemen for example, Iran is believed to back the Houthi rebels and provide them with weapons and intelligence, which is also one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia intervened in the conflict with airstrikes, fighting the Houthis.

Humanitarian crisis

The conflict has not only victimised the fighting rebels and soldiers, but it has also affected millions of innocent civilians. According to a UN study[1], the fighting has caused more than 7,600 deaths and has left more than 42,000 people injured. What might even be a bigger problem is the food insecurity that struck the country. Almost 4.5 million people, including 2 million children requiring services treat or prevent malnutrition, which is a 150% increase since late 2014. A cholera epidemic also spread across the country starting in 2016. So far, 1 million cases, of which at least 600,000 under 18, have been reported at the end of 2017 and the number is still rising, with about 80% of the population lacking proper hygienical services. On top of that, there is currently a huge lack of funds which means that many non-governmental organizations and UN agencies can't even offer sufficient treatment and services. Nevio Zagaria, World Health Organization (WHO) Acting Representative in Yemen: "With more than 14.8 million people lacking access to basic health care, the current lack of funds means the situation will get much worse."



Scale of humanitarian crisis in Yemen

Major Parties Involved

Hadi government

The current government of Yemen under president Hadi probably forms the most important party in the conflict, as the appointment of this government sparked the fighting. Hadi's army and Hadi loyalists primarily fight the Houthi rebels, who occupied a big part of the country in the north. They do this backed by Saudi Arabia and the Saudi-led coalition of nine other Middle Eastern states.

Houthi rebels

The Houthis form the second major party in the conflict, as they against the Hadi government. The name of this Shiite rebel group comes from Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who led an uprising in 2004 aimed at increasing the autonomy of the provinces and protecting the Shiite Islam from the Sunnis. Currently, the Houthis occupy a large part of the country and are being attacked by Hadi forces and the Saudi-led coalition.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has intervened in the conflict since 2015. When Hadi fled to the country in March 2015, Saudi Arabia was alarmed by the conflict and believing the Houthis to be backed by Iran, it started airstrikes against the Houthis. It set up a coalition of nine mostly Sunni states (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan) backing Hadi and currently, this coalition still carries out airstrikes against the Houthis.

Iran

Although the Iranian government has denied some accusations, Iran is widely believed to be backing the Houthi rebels and to provide them with weapons and intelligence. Therefore Iran is another major party within the conflict. Iran has also been backing the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah for the past years, an organization that has also provided weapons and intelligence to the Houthi rebels.

AQAP (- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) and ISIL-YP (- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Yemen Province)

Both AQAP and ISIL-YP have taken advantage of the instability in the country and carried out a variety of terroristic attacks, mainly in the south. The terrorist organizations are both protagonists of the jihad, the holy war against non-believers, and they carry out their attacks through, for example, bombings and self-immolation. Although these attacks do not affect the population as much as the fighting between the other major parties, a lot of damage is still being done by these organizations.

WHO (- World Health Organization)

The WHO, a UN agency, is primarily tasked with ensuring a healthier future for people all over the world. It does so by providing hygienical services, food, water and medicines in (conflict) zones all over the world.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1962-1970	After the death of Imam Ahmad, a seizure of power by army officers leads to the set up of the Yemen Arab Republic. A civil war in north Yemen (independent after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire) begins between royalists, backed by Saudi Arabia and Ahmad's son, and Republicans, backed by Egypt. South Control remains under British colonial rule until 1967, when it becomes The People's Republic of South Yemen. In 1969, Marxists take power of The People's Republic of South Yemen and reorient policies towards the Southern Bloc. The civil war ends in 1970 and the Yemen Arab Republic is formed.
1971	Thousands from South Yemen flee to the north following a crackdown on dissidents. Armed groups form in an attempts to overthrow the government.
1972	A ceasefire is brokered by the Arab League following border clashes between North and South Yemen.
1978	Ali Abdallah Saleh becomes president of North Yemen.
1979-1990	After a period of fighting between North and South Yemen, they are united as the Republic of Yemen under the leadership of President Saleh. Tensions remain.
May-July 1994	Saleh declares a state of emergency and dismisses southern government members following fresh fighting. Al-Baid declares the independent Democratic Republic of Yemen. A civil war breaks out, but the reunification occurs within a month after the south is defeated.

October 2000	The first Al-Qaeda attack occurs; a suicide attack on USS Cole, a US naval vessel. Seventeen are killed.
October 2002	A second major Al-Qaeda attack occurs on oil supertanker MV Limburg in the Gulf of Aden. One is killed and twelve are injured.
June-September 2004	A conflict breaks out between Yemeni troops and a Shia insurgency led by Hussein al-Houthi in northern Yemen. Houthi is killed in September by Yemeni forces and his father takes over.
2005-2007	Shia insurgency continues in March-April 2005 and March 2006. 800 are killed, and many more are killed in January- March 2007.
June 2007	Abdul-Malik-al Houthi accepts a ceasefire, but clashes renew in early 2008.
August 2009 – February 2010	Yemeni forces renew fighting against the Shia Rebels and many become internally displaced. A ceasefire is signed in February but breaks down in December 2010.
January 27, 2011	Uprising erupts in Yemen during Arab Spring
February 27, 2012	Yemeni revolution ends and Hadi becomes president
September 2014	Houthi rebels take over Sana'a
January 2015	Hadi government flees to Aden, Yemen
March 2015	President Hadi flees to Saudi Arabia
26th of March 2015	Saudi Arabia sets up coalition and starts airstrikes
August 2015	Hadi government succeeds in taking back Aden
November 2017	Houthi rebels launch missile towards Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
2nd of December 2017	Former president Saleh opens up to negotiations with Saudi Arabia
4th of December 2017	Former president Saleh is killed by Houthi rebels
January 2018	NATO joins the Saudi-led coalition
3rd of March 2018	Fights between Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement and Saudi-backed troops left over 55 people dead in the Nihm District in Yemen's north, with many more wounded; on the same day, fighting between the opposing groups killed at least 25 people along the western coast of Yemen.
12th of April 2018	Saudi Arabia rejected Iran's request about a ceasefire in Yemen.
4th of July 2018	A United Nations report stated that over 121,000 Yemenis had fled Hudaydah due to the attack on the port city by the Saudi-led coalition.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Besides several failed UN supervised negotiations and Security Council resolutions on the situation, Saudi Arabia has set up a coalition which primary aim is to fight the Houthi rebels, in favour of President Hadi, which they achieve mainly by launching airstrikes in Yemen. The coalition has been backed by the USA, the UK and France, which provided inter alia weapons and intelligence to the coalition. However, this has not proved effective, as the Houthi rebels still remain standing and the airstrikes have only affected the Yemeni population in a negative way.

Concerning the humanitarian crisis, a variety of UN agencies, such as the WHO, and non-governmental organizations have put effort into supplying the population with healthcare and food to prevent malnutrition and starvation. This has certainly helped many civilians, but as Saudi Arabia

set up a blockade on Yemen and the funds of the organizations are insufficient, the aid that has been given has not been enough to help the whole population.

Important Decisions a Resolution Must Take

There are several decisions that this resolution must take in order to be successful. Firstly, before making any solutions to the problem of the conflict, you must think about the causes of that certain solution and what effects it would have on each major party involved in the country. Furthermore, consider the opinions of mainly the P5 countries because, with one disagreement, they have the ability to use their veto-power to fail the solution. Consider the following questions in order to brainstorm some solutions during your period of research:

- ◊ Will your solution include any other UN committees such as human rights in order to deal with the refugee crisis?
- ◊ In what way will the conflict be dealt with that does not evoke any other worsening of groups?
- ◊ How will be dealt with ISIL-YP?
- ◊ How will be dealt with the Houthi rebels?
- ◊ What will be done about the Hadi government, since they're not good for the country?

Further Reading

- ◊ The Crisis in Yemen Explained – Bloomberg (YouTube): https://youtu.be/YnYiVIGeKxU
- ◊ Explainer: The War in Yemen Explained in 3 minutes – Al Jazeera English (YouTube): https://youtu.be/nLRgdFP-s30
- ◊ "Yemen Crisis: Who Is Fighting Whom?" BBC News, BBC, 2 Dec. 2017, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423

Most Relevant UN Documents

- ◊ S/RES/2216 This resolution demanded the Houthis to withdraw from all seized areas and to relinquish all seized arms and established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2216.pdf
- ◊ S/PRST/2014/18 Expressing grave concern about the situation in Yemen. http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S%20PRST%202014%2018.pdf
- ◊ S/PRST/2016/5 Presidential statement welcoming the peace talks. http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2016_5.pdf

See Security Council Report (http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un- documents/yemen/) for other documents.

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