

The Question of Yemen

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Definition of Key Terms
 - A. IDPs
 - B. Proxy War
- III. Overview
 - A. Presidencies
 - B. History of the Civil War in Yemen
 - 1. Beginning
 - 2. The Start of a Proxy War
 - 3. Humanitarian Crisis
- IV. Countries and Organizations Directly Involved in the Conflict
 - A. Hadi
 - B. Houthi/Saleh
 - C. AQAP
 - D. US
 - E. Britain
 - F. Iran
 - G. Saudi Arabia
- V. Timeline of the Yemen Conflict
- VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties
- VII. Possible Solutions
- VIII. Bibliography

I. Introduction

The Yemeni Civil War is one of the least broadcasted wars taking place in the past century. After the Arab Spring in 2010, the already poor nation became destabilized as the new President, Hadi, lost control of much of the northwestern part of the country to Shia Houthi rebels and part of the Yemeni army that was still loyal to the former President Saleh. Fearing that the rebels would create a new Shia state and strengthen Iran's influence, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) decided to intervene through aerial strikes to help the new president. Because of the destruction of life-supporting ports in the major waterfront cities and the destruction by guerrilla warfare, civilians suffered. The UN has stated that the Yemeni citizens could be subject to the worst famine. Considering that the United Nations' Security Council (UNSC) is the executive body of the United Nations, it must help to play a consequential role in the stabilization and pacification of Yemen. There must be ceasefires and negotiations between the warring factions. The UNSC has already worked closely with both sides to find peaceful solutions; however, many of the proposals failed in their origin or did not last long.

II. Definition of Key Terms

A. Internally displaced person (IDPs)

The term Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) refers to anyone who has lost their home and is currently on the run. The difference between an IDP and a refugee is where they are currently located. IDPs are (still) within their home nation, whereas a refugee has already crossed the nation's border.

B. Proxy War

Officially, a proxy war is defined as a war where neither side directly engages in the combat. The term is also often used more loosely, if two warring sides engage in a conflict in a different territory neither claims to control.

III. Overview

A. Presidencies

Saleh Presidency

By the early 1970s, North and South Yemen were fighting each other. The YAR (North) received aid from Saudi Arabia and the PDRY (South) received aid from the Soviet Union. By the late 1980s, the two nations stopped fighting and established a demilitarised zone along the border. A constitution for a united Yemen was drafted in 1990. The Republic of Yemen was declared on May 22 of that year, uniting the two Yemen nations. Ali Abdullah Saleh became president with the General People's Congress party ruling the parliament. Weakening economic conditions led to civil unrest in Yemen starting in 1991. A civil war began when forces opposing the ruling party established a new Democratic Republic of Yemen centered in Aden. This new nation never gained international recognition and fell when the government military seized Aden in 1994, ending the civil war. The aftermath of the three-year civil war profoundly impacted Yemeni society. The government forbade party membership in the military and enacted universal suffrage. The Yemeni government advertised these decisions as stabilising measures; however, the government hoped to further ingrain their rule. At this point, the government had not changed hands at any point since the unification. The economy was also profoundly weakened. Yemen's currency was devalued and the cost of fuel doubled. Water, food and electricity was scarce and more expensive.

One of the inciting developments for the current Yemeni Civil War was the Arab Spring, which started in 2010. All three nations involved in the Arab Springs removed their leaders. The Arab Spring riots in Yemen started in 2011. By then, Saleh had been in power for over 30 years. On the 27th of January, over 16,000 protesters held a demonstration. Due to the political situation, Saleh announced that he would neither run for president in 2013 nor pass his power on to his son. To mitigate the domestic uprising, the

government offered talks, promised compromises and threatened violence, the last of which the government delivered. Politicians started to resign after the deaths of peaceful protestors and important military leaders. Tribal leaders sided with the protestors. The GCC pushed for a peaceful solution, including amnesty for Saleh. Although Saleh refused to sign the deal, he did, however, resign in exchange for immunity in 2012.

Hadi Presidency

Hadi was elected the president of Yemen on February 21, 2012. The West had high hopes that Hadi would create stability and democracy in Yemen. These were misplaced hopes to begin with, as the National Dialogue Conference, organized by the UN and the GCC to hand over the power to Hadi, was badly managed and unable to deal with the country's main political factions. Hadi's initial term was two years, which was officially extended by one year. The international community provided no assistance to strengthen the transition beyond the actual event. No real financial assistance was given by the international community to help create a stable democracy. At least in part because of these circumstances, Hadi was unable to create effective policy to solve the nation's basic problems (water, rural development, employment creation) and while he may have put more effort in it than his predecessor, the nation stayed unstable. This dire situation was not the only thing which helped pave the road for another civil war. The domestic news outlets played a paramount role in undermining the trust of many citizens in the new president. With a large illiteracy rate, most Yemeni people rely on television and radio to inform them on the politics in the country. However, many news outlets are owned by private people, most of whom have political agendas: even for example, former President Saleh owns media outlets. Subsequently, Hadi was painted as weak, hesitant and conspiratorial.

B. History of the Civil War in Yemen

Beginning

In 2012, the Shiite Houthis started gaining control of vast rural areas in former North Yemen. In a strategic move, former President Saleh joined forces with his former enemy, the Houthis. The security reform under Hadi only had effect on the top level, allowing Saleh to still gain influence of a large part of the Yemeni military. Saleh also had the backing of well-trained military personnel from when he was president. The forces of the Hadi government could not control the uprising. By the end of the third year (2015), the Houthis took control of Sana'a, the capital. Hadi was put under house arrest and made to sign a document, declaring he resigned a president and the parliament was dissolved. Hadi escaped to Aden not long after. By the time Hadi managed to get to Aden, he had both resigned and his actual three-year term had ended. According to some, the only way for him continue to be president, would be to have parliament agree to retract the resignation. However, the parliament had already been dissolved. Many southerners pushed for a temporary transition of the capital to Aden to create stability. With the 2015 Arab Summit at Sharm el Sheikh, the Hadi government was moved to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Summit also created a ten-nation force to help the Hadi government fight the Houthi/Saleh uprising.

The Start of a Proxy War

On 26 March 2015, Saudi Arabia launched air strikes under the name "Decisive Storm." This decision was also a demonstration that the GCC could act without the US, with whom their differences had increased during that time--especially, regarding the Iran nuclear deal and Syria. Saudi Arabia and the GCC members (aside from Oman) elected to intervene without a resolution passed by the UNSC. Saudi Arabia had no problem assembling an alliance. Many of the GCC members are financially and politically indebted to Saudi Arabia and were not in a position to refuse to join the alliance in Yemen. Later on, other Western countries like the US and the UK joined the GCC alliance. While the US aerial force is very strong, to date only the US

Special Forces ground troops have been involved. Only Iran has castigated the intervention. On the other side of the war, stand the Houthis and the Saleh supporters. Because the Houthis and Saleh were at odds during the Saleh presidency, this alliance could fall if either side tries to gain too much power.

Humanitarian Information

Yemen is the poorest nation in the Arab world. Before the civil war, the poverty rate nationwide was already at 50 percent. The United Nations has stated that, of the four famines predicted for 2017, Yemen is the worst, with around 17 million inhabitants being food-insecure. Currently, 7 million people are close to starvation and 19 million are in urgent need, equating to two thirds of the population. More than a million pregnant women are malnourished. There are 3 million IDPs as about 400,000 homes have been destroyed. Due to the nature of the war, health services have also been crippled - about 300 health facilities have been damaged or destroyed. Every 10 minutes a child under five dies due to a preventable cause. Most Yemeni are completely bankrupt, with neither money nor assets to sell. The population cannot make any money or even survive. In addition the government staff has not been paid, and the private sector employment practically does not exist. Moreover, foreign funded development projects is barely present as it has become very hard to import anything, with many of the ports being badly affected. Since Yemen imports 90% of its staples, the GCC blockade, while an effective weapon to enforce the arms embargo on the Houthi-Saleh alliance, prevents basic supplies from entering the country, is helping also to engineer the famine itself. People can't afford to buy the little food that does arrive. The situation for children is not any better. About 2 million children cannot attend school and many girls are married off as young as 13 so that their desperate families can survive. The UN estimated in January 2016 that 2,800 civilians had been killed since the escalation in March—60 percent of them in airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition. Civilians have been targeted by both sides, in violation of international humanitarian law, as a UN panel of experts found. Another violation was Saudi Arabia's declaration of the entire city of Sa'da as a

"military target"; the city has seen some of the war's worst devastation, including the destruction of a hospital run by the international relief organization Doctors Without Borders. The coalition and resistance fighters have targeted hospitals and schools, the panel found. It noted that Houthi forces have committed war crimes, as well.

IV. Countries and Organizations Involved in the Conflict

A. Hadi

President Hadi continues to be confined to the presidential palace in Aden after returning to Yemen from eight months of exile in Saudi Arabia ending in November 2015. He currently has been in power longer than intended. Most siding with Hadi believe that he needs to stay in power until enough security exists for a proper election. Most of Hadi's power stems from the international parties backing him; however, it is unclear how much power he actually has over his own military and the nation as a whole.

B. Houthi/Saleh

The Houthis started in the late 1980s as a cultural and religious movement among believers of Zaydi Shi'ism in northern Yemen. The Zaydis are a minority in Yemen, but prevalent in the northern highlands, where Zaydi imams ruled much of the region until 1962. Zayid is a different school of Shi'a than that practiced in Iran. In 2003, Saleh decided to back the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. At this point the Houthis turned into a political militia. The Houthis fought the Saleh regime intermittently until the Arab Spring. In 2009, they also fought the intervening Saudi forces. The Houthi movement grew due to its criticism of the UN-backed transition and was able to expand beyond its original northern area. Former President Saleh has become more popular with the Yemeni citizens due to the deteriorating hope of a strong

new government. Both Saleh and his son have the loyalty of some parts of Yemen's military, tribal networks, and large parts of the General People's Congress (GPC) political party. Nonetheless, the Saleh-Houthi alliance is purely tactical. Saleh's loyalists oppose Hadi's government as they lost power due to the transition and the Houthis likewise do not support the new government.

Saleh was killed in December 2017 after he had changed his mind and wanted to establish links to Saudi Arabia. Violent clashes broke out between the Houthi armed groups and military supporters of Saleh. The situation is getting more complicated.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/05/ali-abdullah-saleh-killing-changes-dynamics-yemen-civil-war>

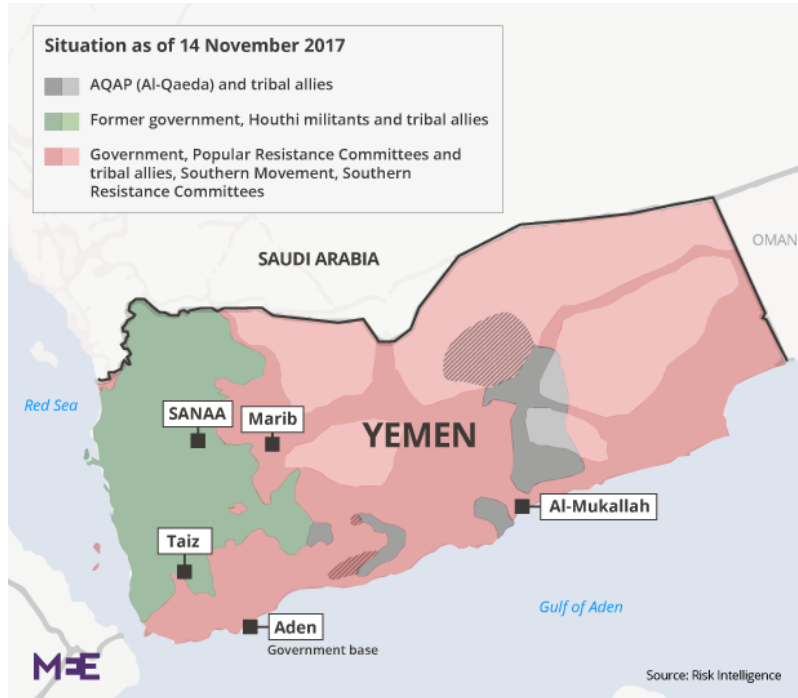
C. AQAP https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda_in_the_Arabian_Peninsula

AQAP has greatly benefited from the political instability. The U.S. government has ranked it as the most dangerous al-Qaeda affiliate. Reuters has even called it a "mini-state" within Yemen. The militia spans over 350 miles and finances itself through the profits of port trade and the national oil company. Some Sunni-tribes have allied with AQAP, scared of the advance by the Houthis in recent years. Due to the increased Saleh-Houthi threat, the Yemeni army has relaxed its pressure against the militia. In April 2015, AQAP was able to report a large victory. It managed to capture the major city of Mukalla and released three hundred inmates. Many are believed to be AQAP members. Since then, the militant group has expanded its control westward to Aden and even seized parts of the city. The type of war fought against AQAP has changed more recently. While U.S. drone strikes continue, Washington withdrew special operations forces in 2015 that were training and assisting Yemeni troops. The UAE group troops have, however, been more efficient than the US airstrikes and have even managed to regain control over Mukalla. While these are significant

improvements, Al-Qaeda is enmeshed in tribal networks and some estimate that they have thousands of supporters.

D. US

The United States originally backed the Saudi-led coalition reluctantly, conjoint with the UK and France. US interests involve securing the Saudi borders and creating stability in Yemen. An important economic goal for the US is the free passage through the Bab al-Mandeb, the connection between the Arabian and Red Seas, which is used to move millions of barrels of oil daily. Another fundamental goal for the US military programme is the insurance of a government in Sana'a that will cooperate with US counterterrorism programmes. During the infancy of the US Yemen mission, Washington mainly provided the Saudi-led coalition with intelligence support. Since that point, it has increased its role in the region, first starting drone strikes and later putting special forces on the ground. The US is also the biggest provider of Saudi arms. Of the USD 8.7 billion Saudi Arabia and the UAE spent on arms in 2014, USD 8.4 billion went to the US. While the Obama administration has continuously supported coalition operations, US officials have pushed the Saudis for restraint, expressing that the intensity of the bombing campaign was undercutting shared political goals. Since the conflict began, the US and UK have together transferred more than USD 5 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia, more than 10 times the USD 450 million that the US State Department and the UK's Department for International Development have spent or budgeted for aid to Yemen. With the Trump Presidency, the southern rural area has found that drone strikes are far more frequent and, in addition, direct US air strikes have become a regular feature. It should be expected, that the Trump government will take a more active role in aiding the Saudi/GCC coalition. More recently, the Trump administration has involved special forces ground troops, such as the now notorious Yakla ground attack in al Baidha.



E. Britain

The UK considers itself one of the largest donors to aid the Yemen humanitarian missions, having spent Sterling 130 million last year for aid. However, it sold weapons worth USD 3.3 billion to Saudi in the same year—over 25 times that which it spent for humanitarian causes. More alarming even, is that some of the cluster bombs used by the Saudi alliance have been determined to be of British origin. While Britain would be violating the Convention on Cluster Munitions, neither the US, Saudi Arabia nor Yemen have signed or ratified the document. After this information came to light, the Saudi alliance switched from British to Brazilian cluster bombs. Due to the predicted British recession on account of Brexit, analysts doubt whether the May administration will stop selling weapons to the Saudi coalition.

F. Iran

While Iran's involvement equates to a small percentage of that of the GCC and its allies at best, it is the Houthis' primary international backer. Iran has increased support for the Houthis, having originally only given verbal support, they have now also started backing up the Houthis with military support, including arms. Hadi also blamed Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese ally, of supporting the Saleh-Houthi alliance. Many regional specialists caution against overstating Tehran's influence over the movement, especially because Iranians and Houthis adhere to different schools of Shia Islam. All the while, the Houthis and Iran share comparable geopolitical goals: the Houthis are the principal rival to Hadi's Saudi- and U.S.-backed government and Iran attempts to challenge US and Saudi preeminence in the region.

G. Saudi Arabia

A military intervention was launched by Saudi Arabia in 2015, leading a coalition of nine African and Middle East countries, to influence the outcome of the Yemeni Civil War in favour of the government of President Hadi. The intervention initially consisted of a bombing campaign on Houthi Rebels and later saw a naval blockade and the deployment of ground forces into Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition has attacked the positions of the Houthi militia and loyalists of the former President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, allegedly supported by Iran, in response to a request from the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi.

V. Timeline of the Yemen Conflict

2010	The Arab Spring begins
June 2011	Protests become prominent in Yemen
November 2011	President Saleh gives governing power to his deputy, Hadi.
February 2012	Hadi inaugurated as president after uncontested elections.
January 2014	The National Dialogue Conference creates a new constitution
July 2014	Tribesmen destroy the country's largest oil pipeline, severing supplies from the interior to a Red Sea export terminal.
September 2014	Houthi rebels take control of the capital, Sana'a
February 2015	Hadi flees to Aden after Houthis reject the constitution.
March 2015	GCC airstrikes start after Hadi asked for their assistance.
April 2016	UN talks between the government and Houthi coalition.
October 2016	Airstrike by Saudi-led coalition hits a crowded funeral in Sanaa, killing 140 mourners and injuring 500.
January 2017	US commando raid kills 14 AQAP militants; children of the militants are also killed.
June-Nov 2017	Outbreak of cholera kills 2,100 and affects almost 900,000 others, medical agencies say.
December 2017	Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh is reported killed after

fierce fighting in the capital Sanaa.

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

Imposing sanctions on individuals it said were undermining the stability of Yemen, the Security Council today demanded that all parties in the embattled country, in particular the Houthis, immediately and unconditionally end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition. Adopting resolution 2216 (2015) by 14 affirmative votes to none against, with one abstention (Russian Federation), the Council also demanded that the Houthis, withdraw from all areas seized during the latest conflict, relinquish arms seized from military and security institutions, cease all actions falling exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen and fully implement previous Council resolutions. Imposing sanctions, including a general assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo, on Abdulmalik al-Houthi, who it called the Houthi leader, and Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, son of the president who stepped down in 2011, the resolution called upon all Yemeni parties to abide by the Gulf Cooperation Council and other initiatives and to resume the United Nations-brokered political transition.



VII. Possible Solutions

When finding possible solutions, make sure that they build on programmes already working to achieve the same goals. Every major group in the civil war has stated that only a political solution will have long lasting stabilizing effects. The UN's agencies and over 100 humanitarian groups are working within Yemen. Finding ways to improve the current programmes will also play a crucial role in the stabilization process. A UN Verification Inspection Mechanism established in 2016 failed to dramatically expedite the arrival of necessities. Such a programme, if improved, could greatly ameliorate the humanitarian situation. Another aspect that will play a major role in stabilizing the country will financial aid. The UN has urged its member states for USD 2.1 billion to fund humanitarian work in Yemen. This sum will unlikely be realized as last year's appeal collected only 60% of the USD 1.6 billion asked for. Other fundraising efforts for Yemen have redirected heir proceeds to alternative serious humanitarian crises, such as in East Africa. In order to solve this crisis, the UNSC needs to make its policy clear. Negotiating a ceasefire will be the safest bet to efficiently supply civilians with much needed humanitarian supplies. A long-lasting solution will, however, only be created through new elections and a widespread belief by the affected population that both religious strands can live together, peacefully. The UNSC must also make it clear to its member states that foreign aid is essential in ensuring global stability, and that failing to provide this aid, as many member states have done in the last few years, could greatly diminish the effectiveness of the UNSC.

VIII. Bibliography

"Yemen profile - Timeline." BBC News. December 04, 2017. Accessed January 15, 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>.

Perper, Rosie. "Who's fighting who in Yemen, where conflict and political rivalry have engulfed the country for nearly a century." Business Insider. December 08, 2017. Accessed January 15, 2018. <http://www.businessinsider.com/history-of-conflict-in-yemen-2017-12?IR=T>.

"Yemen Situation Report." Critical Threats. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/yemen-situation-report>.

"Yemen | Department of Political Affairs." United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2018. <http://www.un.org/undpa/en/middleeast-westasia/yemen>.

"Arab Spring: A Research & Study Guide * الربيع العربي: Yemen." LibGuides. Accessed January 15, 2018. <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200752>.

"Over 100 civilians killed in a month, including fishermen, refugees, as Yemen conflict reaches two-year mark." OHCHR | Accessed January 15, 2018. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21444&LangID=E>.

"The Laws of War." Human rights investigations. June 06, 2014. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://humanrightsinvestigations.org/the-laws-of-war/>.

Schmitt, Eric. "Women Killed in Yemen Raid Were Qaeda Fighters, Pentagon Says." The New York Times. January 30, 2017. Accessed January 15, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/world/middleeast/yemen-raid-women-qaeda.html?_r=1.

"The war in Yemen." OpenDemocracy. April 05, 2015. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/helen-lackner/war-in-yemen>.

"Religions - Islam: Sunni and Shi'a." BBC. August 19, 2009. Accessed January 15, 2018. http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sunnishia_1.shtml.