



UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

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ABSTRACT

In 2013, as a result of the decision to postpone the signing of Ukraine's Association Agreement with the European Union, thousands of people gathered at Maidan, in Kiev, to protest against the central Government. After weeks of confrontation between the militants and the State forces, president Yanukovich was ousted, and new protests emerged, this time by pro-Government demonstrators who considered the deposition a coup. In this context, Crimea held a referendum declaring itself independent from Ukraine and joined Russia, and the Eastern portion of the country, mostly pro-Russian, also began to demand its independence. A major armed confrontation developed between the Government and pro-Kiev militias, on one side, and the militias of Donetsk and Luhansk, on the other, raising concern among the region. Russia was accused of supporting the separatists and the European Union and the United States were accused of intervening in the internal affairs of Ukraine. Since the beginning of the crisis, several cease-fire accords have been signed; peace, however, did not last, and an increase in offensives in the near future is expected.

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1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The meaning of the word “Ukraine”, “borderland”, tells us a lot about the history and the significance of this territory. The region, a crossroad of different cultures, is of great importance mainly due to its geostrategic position (linkage between Asia and Europe) and its fertile lands, factors that contributed to subject the territory to rough disputes between powers such as Russia, Austria, Turkey and Poland. This history of conquest and clashes and the consequent multiplicity of cultures, religions and interests exerting influence over the population explain why Ukrainians found it so hard to establish a common identity and achieve sovereignty. In other words, Ukraine’s history is a succession of conflicts and tensions between the East, the West and, in between, a multicultural people that seeks to form a nation.

1.1 THE KIEVAN RUS AND THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

The Great Principality of Kiev – also known as Kievan Rus – was the first great Slavic nation, being the common origin of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, and exerting influence in the formation of Eastern Europe as a whole. The Rus originated in 882, under Prince Oleg, but the rule over the territory was dispersed until Volodymyr (980-1015), consolidated control over the people that there inhabited, and adopted Orthodox Christianity (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 2001). In the period, Kiev was the most important Slavic city, a prominent commercial and cultural center. From 1054 on, succession disputes engendered the decay of the Rus, culminating in the 1240 Tatar pillage of Kiev that dissolved the Principality and consolidated the dominance of the Golden Horde¹ in the region (Defense Language Institute 2013).

1 Westernmost division of the Mongol Empire.

Image 1: The Kievan Rus (1220-1240)

Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2010.

In 1648 the Cossacks rose against the Polish authority and declared a Hetmanate² under the leadership of Orthodox Bohdan Khmelnytsky. With the Pereyaslav Treaty of 1654, the Hetmanate requested Moscow's help against Poland, though preserving its autonomy. Moscow and Poland fought until 1667, when under the Andrusovo Treaty, an agreement envisaged to impede Ottoman advance in the region, they divided Ukraine into the Polish-ruled West Bank and the Russian-ruled East Dnieper Bank, and put Kiev under Muscovite control (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 2001).

The Muscovite emperor Peter the Great, in an attempt to regain access to the Swedish-controlled Baltic Sea, declared war on Sweden in 1700, thus starting the Great Northern War. The Cossacks, fearing loss of autonomy in case of Russian victory, let the Swedish troops enter their territory. After several setbacks, Russia turned the situation on its favor in a combat in the

² Ukrainian Cossack semi-autonomous state that lasted until 1782. It became one of the most important agricultural suppliers of Eastern Europe (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 2001).

Dnieper East Bank; the Battle of Poltava (1709), as it became known, marked the Russian ascension in European politics. The war ended with the Treaty of Nystadt (1721) and the Russian Empire was declared (Potemkin 1966).

Under the rule of Catherine II, the empire expanded. Putting an end to Cossack autonomy, Catherine established control over their lands, imposing Russian serfdom and repressing the Ukrainian culture³. In 1795, with the partition of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia, Catherine also took control of the Dnieper West Bank, thus ruling over 80% of the current Ukrainian territory. Furthermore, defeating Turkey in 1774, the empire granted control over the Ukrainian Black Sea coast: Russia was able to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea and, in 1783, annexed Crimea, creating Sevastopol and the port of Odessa (Reid 2000). The Russian presence in the Black Sea, however, worried Britain and France, as the access to warm waters increased Russia's capacity to project naval power and challenged the colonial primacy of the two countries. Hence, when Russia annihilated the Turkish fleet in 1853, a coalition formed by Britain, France, Austria and Sardinia attacked the empire of Nicholas I, initiating the Crimea War. After the yearlong siege of Sevastopol, Russia resigned and had to limit its naval presence in the region (The Economist 2014).

Mirroring similar developments in the rest of Europe, a significant Ukrainian nationalist movement emerged in the city of Lviv⁴, in Austrian-ruled Galicia, calling for autonomy within the Habsburg Empire. Despite being rapidly defeated, the movement inspired modern Ukrainian nationalism (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 2001). The following period was of great modernization of Russia's economy, fostering a sensible development of industry, notably in the Donbas (the formerly called East Bank). However, the rapid grow of the Russian population generated frequent hungers and a rising dissatisfaction that would lead to revolutionary movements in the 20th century.

3 Catherine claimed that she restored a "rightful inheritance", recalling the Russian origins in the Kievan Rus (Reid 2000).

4 Under Austrian control until 1918 and Polish control until 1939, when was dominated by the USSR, Lviv is traditionally the cultural center of Western Ukraine. It is also an important Catholic pole in Ukraine, as the Austrian and Polish domination left a deep influence in this Galician city (Reid 2001).

1.2 THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE RISE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Russia's participation in World War I came with great costs, but was decisive to the Allies. In June 1916, Russia launched the Brusilov Offensive, in which its forces dismantled the Austrian army in the eastern part of the latter's Empire. The battles granted Russia the control of the territories of Bukovina and Eastern Galicia, where locals mainly supported the Austrian forces⁵. The operation also obliged the Germans to relocate some troops from the West Front, thus giving the French resistance some relief. Despite being a military success, the operation exhausted Russian material and human resources, consuming almost a million and a half lives and worsening the social crisis in Russia, which culminated in the fall of tsarism and its replacement for the Kerensky-led provisional government in 1917 (Liddel Hart, 1970).

Russia would only leave the war when the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, rose to power (Arostegui et al 2001). At the same time, Ukrainian movements, divided between pro-Soviet (in the East), pro-German (in the West), and nationalist groups, were trying to consolidate a sovereign State. Thus, both Russian and Ukrainian delegations, in separate, signed peace treaties with the Central Powers. Amid the Civil War (1917-1922) and the foreign interventions in Russia, Poland, supported by France, invaded West Ukraine and Russia, which successfully counter-offended. In 1921, Russia and Poland agreed on the Peace of Riga, which divided Belarus and Ukraine between the parties (Encyclopedia of Ukraine 2001).

One important issue that surpassed the constitution of the Soviet Union was its nationalities policy, a guideline based on the notion that “while in Western Europe purely national States are born, in the East, multinational States are born with the leadership of a developed nation, to which the lesser ones would be political and economical submitted” (Buonicore 2015); in sum, each Soviet State should be “nationalist in form, socialist in content” (Roberts 2011). As a response to this policy, Woodrow Wilson presented his “14 points” that, putting self-determination above the survival of the political entity, could undermine the territorial integrity of the multicultural USSR's (Fischer 1967). While the latter influenced autonomous (as in Central Ukraine) and pro-Western (as in

5 In the West, Ukrainians traditionally tend to be “pro-German” (Reid 2001).

Western Ukraine) nationalist movements in Eastern Europe, the former stimulated the pro-Russian nationalism.

In 1922 the USSR was founded, encompassing the Ukrainian, Transcaucasian and Byelorussian Socialist Republics, under the leadership of Moscow. Lenin's New Economic Policy benefited Ukraine with the installation of several industries⁶ and, with the rise of Stalin and his Five-Year Plans, the industrializing measures and investments in technology were intensified (Arostegui et al 2001, Gracheva 2011). On the other hand, due to this process and the collectivization of agriculture, food shortages became common, as in the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33⁷ (Hopper 2015).

1.3 THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR AND THE COLD WAR

Isolated by the West, Stalin had to reach a defense agreement with the Nazis; known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the accord allowed the USSR to conquer eastern Poland, northern Romania and the Baltic States (Visentini and Pereira 2013). However, Hitler attacked the Soviet territory in 1941 and started what the Soviets call the Great Patriotic War. After failures in seizing Leningrad and Stalingrad, Hitler launched his last big offensive in the East front. The battle took place near Kursk, in the Donbas, and enabled the Soviet offensive towards the west, when the URSS finally reached Berlin. It is important to note that, in Western Ukraine and in the Baltic states, the Nazis received support from the local population, as they were perceived as liberators that would put an end to Polish and Russian authority in the region (Barber and Harrison 2006).

With the rise of bipolarity in the post-war and with Truman's Doctrine of Containment⁸, the Western and Soviet blocs organized in antagonizing military alliances, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, respectively (Vizentini 1990). Despite the American superiority, the USSR managed to consolidate an influence zone over Central and Eastern Europe and,

⁶ Ukraine was already an important agricultural center of the USSR, then becoming an industrial zone.

⁷ Also known as Holodomor by Ukrainians, which means "death by hunger", the famine consumed millions of lives and some considers it a premeditated action by Stalin to punish Ukrainian nationalists who resisted the collectivization (UN Human Rights Council 2015).

⁸ This doctrine was deeply influenced by George Kennan's Long Telegram, when the U.S. diplomat in Moscow writes about the need to counter Soviet expansionism (Kissinger 1994).

through a new Five-Years plan, Stalin enabled the USSR to compete with the capitalist bloc – however, once again the modernization efforts came with huge social costs (Michelena 1977).

After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a sensible reorientation in Soviet politics. Khrushchev, the new leader, proposed a “pacific coexistence” between capitalism and socialism (Reis Filho, 2000). In 1954, he transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine, in order to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Pereyaslav Treaty; his reasons for that, however, are not perfectly understood – the most accepted explanation is the one that says that this was a means to grant support for the regime among the Ukrainian people, heavily affected by the industrialization process and Stalin's purges (Keating 2014; Taubman 2006). The Donbas' industry was deeply involved in the impressive technological advances of the period, mostly in the military and aerospace sectors (Holloway 2006).

From late 1970's on, the USSR started showing signs of economical and political exhaustion. Thus, between mid 1980's and early 1990's the Soviet apparatus was completely dismantled by the reforms conducted by Mikhail Gorbachev, and, in December 1991, the USSR came to an end, originating 15 new States⁹, including Ukraine and the Russian Federation, presided by Boris Yeltsin (Vizentini 1996).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2011.

⁹ They are: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Image 4: NATO member states

Source: The Economist, 2013.

With the dismembering of the USSR, Ukraine became for the first time a de jure and de facto sovereign State. The country's political scenario was characterized by widespread corruption and by the strong influence of regional "clans", linked to the central government, which controlled most of the Ukrainian media, undermining the freedom of speech (Alt 2015). Regarding productive capabilities, Ukraine inherited from the USSR the majority of pipelines that supplied Europe with Russian gas, and the huge industrial complex of the Donbas Basin, encompassing military, power generation, chemistry, machinery, gas, metalworking and spacecraft industries. However, independent Ukraine did not manage to keep its industry dynamic and output fell drastically along the decade, as the production was fueled by the demands of bipolar competition during the Cold War (CIA World Factbook 2015). Ukraine's president in 1991, Leonid Kravchuk, had to deal with a grave economic crisis caused by internal divisions and the radical transition to a market economy¹¹ (Carnegie Endowment 2012). Due to his inability to undertake effective reforms to tackle the crisis, Kravchuk lost popularity and was replaced in the 1994 elections by the former Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma, a candidate massively supported by the Eastern population.

11 Between 1991 and 1994, Ukraine's GDP fell by a half. Moreover, the country suffered with hyperinflation and the deficit represented 14.4% of the GDP (Carnegie Endowment 2012).

Elected as a moderate pro-Russian candidate, Kuchma declared a “multi-vector policy”, under which he would seek to improve relations with the west in order to gain leverage over Russia, at the same time maintaining good relations with Moscow (Kuzio 2012). In mid-1990’s, Ukraine signed agreements such as the Partnership for Peace (1995) and the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership (1997), which envisioned a possible admission in the EU and initiated cooperation with NATO (Hatton 2010). Kiev also received financial aid from the U.S. and suffered influence of American organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy (Mearsheimer 2014). This new approach increased Western power in Ukrainian politics, although it remained weaker than Russian influence.

After Kuchma was accused of involvement in the death of opposition journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, and after his government sold radar systems to embargoed Iraq, the EU and the U.S. dropped their attempts of approaching Ukraine, stimulating an Ukrainian “disillusionment” with the West (Kuzio 2012). The consequence of this new context was the improvement in Russo-Ukrainian relations. Since the Soviet dissolution, contacts with Moscow were tense, due to the situation of Crimea and the naval fleet in the Black Sea – although Yeltsin did not make any efforts to retrieve the peninsula, its status became more complicated as its majorly Russian population intensified claims for autonomy in face of the Ukrainian government. The region received a special status in 1992 and, in 1997, it was agreed that the Black Sea Fleet would be partitioned between Kiev and Moscow and that the base of Sevastopol would be leased to Russia (Hatton 2010).

In this context of Kuchma’s growing unpopularity and campaigns for his impeachment, central banker Viktor Yushchenko emerged as an influent opposition leader and was nominated Prime Minister in 1999 (Eke 2002). Yushchenko became very popular as Ukraine’s economy started to quickly show conspicuous improvement after his economic reforms, and his alliance with oligarch Yulia Tymoshenko gave him a more prominent political position. However, due to pressures from traditional elites and fearing Yushchenko’s growing influence, Kuchma ousted him of power in 2001. Yushchenko then took the leadership of opposition bloc Our Ukraine (also known as the Orange Bloc), from that moment on consolidating his image as a pro-Western opposition leader and paving the way for his candidacy in the presidential elections of 2004

(Karatnycky 2005).

2 STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

2.1 THE ORANGE REVOLUTION AND YUSHCHENKO'S SHIFT TO THE WEST

In November 2004, Ukrainians went to the polls to choose their new President. As the results came out, the Central Election Commission announced that Yanukovych, a candidate backed by Kuchma and by the Russians, had beaten the challenger Yushchenko, the candidate with a reformist platform and a European orientation. International observers, such as the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) and the OSCE Monitoring Mission, however, questioned the vote count, accusing the Government of having manipulated the outcome of the electoral process. Stimulated by the reports of fraud, the Ukrainian population gathered at the Independence Square to protest. Among the factors that contributed to create a favorable environment for this political mobilization were the growth of the middle class in urban centers and the increased dissemination of information about corruption in the country. In addition, Ukraine witnessed the development of an incisive civil society with a strong opposing position, led by its unsatisfied elite, and supported by the U.S., Europe, the National Endowment for Democracy and philanthropists (Karatnycky 2005).

As the days passed, the protests and the international pressure gained strength and volume, causing the Supreme Court of Ukraine to invalidate the outcome of the polls. Yushchenko, who on the first day of demonstrations had declared himself President, negotiated new elections with the Rada (the Parliament) in exchange for constitutional modifications. The Parliament then approved adjustments to the electoral law and amended the Constitution, reducing the powers of the President and turning Ukraine into a semi-presidential Republic. After new elections held in late December, Yushchenko became the President. The majority of his votes came from the Western, Northwestern and center regions of the country, while Yanukovych won most of the votes in the Eastern and southern portions of the territory (Karatnycky 2005). These

differences in political positions among the regions were the result of substantial historical and developmental differences: while the West was predominantly agricultural and had greater cultural identification with Europe, due to recent domination by Poland and Austria, the East was industrialized and was the region where most Ukrainians who considered themselves ethnic Russians lived, due to its close ties with the Russian territory.

The Orange Revolution was not only a movement with internal repercussions, also embodying a competition to decide the geopolitical orientations of Ukraine. Yushchenko had based his candidacy on his desire to lead the country to a European Choice – his victory represented a shift to the West, once it put in power a pro-Western reformist President, supported by an Orange Coalition of parties with the same objectives (Kuzio 2008). In line with general expectations, Yushchenko's first foreign policy measure was to announce the end of the multi-vectorial policy and focus entirely on the Euro-Atlantic integration through NATO and the European Union (Kuzio 2006). His initial goals were to achieve international recognition of Ukraine as a market economy, to gain support for the country's candidacy for the WTO and to establish with the European Union a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (Hatton 2010). During this period, Ukrainian relations with Russia hit a new low.

The European Union did not respond immediately to Yushchenko's aspirations of integration, in large part because the bloc was dealing with a constitutional crisis and suffering from increasing fatigue after approving the memberships of ten new countries. Still, EU sought to give Kiev a clear European perspective, showing that there would be, in the future, possibility for integration (Karatnycky 2005). Thus, the bloc included Ukraine in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which had the goal of promoting prosperity and stability in Europe through the creation of a circle of allied countries surrounding the member-States. Through the ENP, in 2005, the European Union offered Ukraine better conditions of trade and financial assistance, facilities in obtaining visas and projects of security cooperation (Wolczuc 2005). Unlike the European Union, which kept its approach in the rhetorical level, NATO was willing to engage actively in the Ukrainian integration. The Organization embraced the new foreign policy perspective of Kiev, and elevated the country, in 2005, to an Intensified Dialogue on Membership, the previous step to a direct integration plan (Hatton 2010).

Moscow, in face of EU's and NATO's expansion in the direction of the former Soviet republics, sought more assertive actions to ensure that Ukraine remained under its sphere of influence (Almeida 2008). In 2006, a few months before the Ukrainian parliamentary elections, Russia increased the price it charged Kiev for natural gas exports, later cutting entirely the supply (Cruz and Machado 2012). This move was an attempt to increase support for Yanukovych's Party of Regions in the election process, and it was part of the pipeline politics, a strategy in which Moscow used its control over hydrocarbons to achieve political objectives in other countries (Wilson 2009). The Russian pressure added to the President's disagreements with Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko led Yushchenko to reject the formation of a pro-reform Orange Coalition in the polls, resulting in the establishment of a pro-Russian "anti-crisis" Parliament under the leadership of Yanukovych (Hatton 2010). It is important to notice that the impacts of the pipeline politics were not restricted to the Ukrainian Parliament: with the gas shortages, Kiev retained for its own consumption part of the gas directed to Europe, spreading repercussions of its disputes with Russia throughout the whole continent. With the signature of new agreements, the gas flow was normalized and a reduction in Russian gas prices for Ukraine was settled. The crisis, nevertheless, reinforced the notion among Europeans and Russians that it was necessary to diversify hydrocarbons' sources and transport routes (Almeida 2008).

The relationship with Moscow was tensed even further in the context of the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, after the prospects of this country joining NATO. Because Kiev and Tbilisi had a close relationship and had adopted similar pro-western postures, Yushchenko assumed a position contrary to the Russian actions, going so far as to sell armaments to Georgia, ruled at that time by Mikheil Saakashvili (Cruz and Machado 2012). The situation worsened when the Ukrainian President approved a decree demanding that the Russian Black Sea fleet indicated its itinerary when it left Crimea, and refused to renew Russia's permission for the use of the Sevastopol port, which expired in 2017. During the crisis in the Caucasus, the weak and uncoordinated action of both NATO and the EU to respond to the Russian offensive demonstrated that these blocs were not willing to confront Moscow in its surroundings. Given that at that time European countries were seeking to repair their relationship with Russia, any attempt to integrate Russian neighbors into Euro-Atlantic

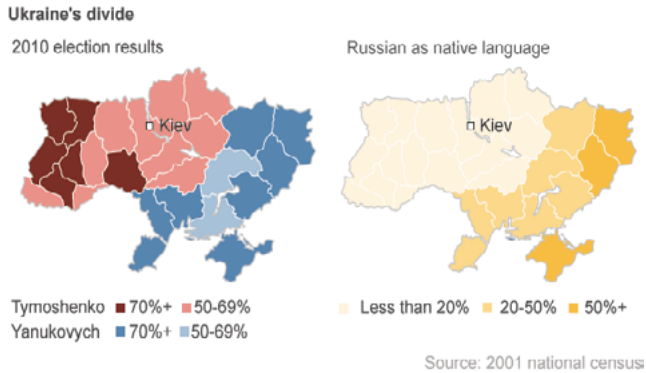
structures was seen as a factor that could stress the contacts. This circumstance represented the closing of the possibilities of Ukraine joining NATO or the European Union at any time soon (Hatton 2010). Even when EU and Ukraine began discussing in 2008 the establishment of an Association Agreement (AA), the highest level of agreement that the bloc can have with a non-Member State, plans for long-term integration were not in order. These discussions were, still, used as a bargain instrument with Russia (Kropatcheva 2014).

In 2009, motivated by disagreements over the State energy company Naftogaz's debt with Gazprom¹², Russia cut off Ukraine's gas supply again. This new crisis was the way Moscow found to show EU that Kiev was not a reliable economic partner, in hopes of hindering the understandings initiated with the dialogues on the AA (Hatton 2010). Several European States began to suffer shortages in gas supplies and started pressing for a solution to the deadlock. After a few weeks, Tymoshenko signed an agreement with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, fixing the conditions for trade and transport of gas for a period of ten years. The most criticized provision of the agreement was the definition of a fixed amount for Naftogaz's purchases of Russian gas that exceeded the Ukrainian internal consumption needs (Cruz and Machado 2012).

In September of the same year, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, presented a proposal to create a European Missile Defense System, which was meant to complement NATO's defense system, protecting its members against a ballistic missile attack by hostile countries. The role that would be assigned to Ukraine in the project was linked to three factors: the Ukrainian interest, the completion of a concrete proposal on the part of NATO and the Russian opposition (Sinovets 2011). This initiative disturbed Moscow and brought a new concern to Russian strategic calculations, once the possible installation of anti-missile defense in the Ukrainian territory would disable Russian second-strike capabilities.

12 Gazprom is the largest Russian energy company. Controlled by the Kremlin, the company operates gas and oil pipeline systems, produces and explores gas and oil, and transports hydrocarbons in the Russian Federation and European countries.

Image 5: 2010 election results and percentage of the ukrainian population who uses russian as a native language.



Source: BBC, 2013.

In 2010, Yushchenko's mandate came to an end. During his tenure, he was unable to deliver all the reforms he had proposed, due to the new Constitution that removed some of the presidential prerogatives and due to the non-adoption of initiatives that would decrease the power of the oligarchs. This failure, together with the effects of the economic and financial crisis of 2008, which generated a 15% drop in the country's GDP, culminated in widespread dissatisfaction with the Government (Christie, Baev and Golovko 2011). The Orange coalition was shattered in two, Our Ukraine, comprised of pro-Yushchenko factions, and UDAR (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform), a bloc that backed Tymoshenko, weakening the President's political support base (Hatton 2010). This context of internal and international prospects led Yanukovich, this time by democratic means, to the Presidency in 2010.

2.2 YANUKOVYCH'S RISE TO THE POWER AND THE RETURN TO THE MULTI-VECTOR POLICY

Because Yanukovich received support from the Russians during his entire political career, and because he assumed openly pro-Russian positions in the past (Karatnycky 2005), the general assumption was that the new president would direct Ukraine's foreign policy to Moscow. The first two measures of the Government seemed to endorse this belief: Yanukovich signed the Kharkiv

Agreements, also known as “gas for fleet”, through which Russia’s fleet had its license to remain in Sevastopol renewed until 2042, in exchange for a 30% discount on Ukrainian purchases of Russian gas. In addition, the Rada approved a law On the Foundations of Domestic and Foreign Policy, establishing a position of neutrality and non-alignment to security blocs such as NATO (Glebov 2011). It is important to note that those assertive policies undertaken by Yanukovych were only made possible after Ukraine reinstated the Constitution of 1996, returning to a presidential regime.

However, while Yanukovych had clear intentions of instituting a foreign policy that brought Kiev closer to Russia, the new President did not wish to abandon the connections established by the previous Government with the European Union. As his goal was to ensure Ukraine’s autonomy and to transform the country into a “bridge between the East and the West”, the president intensified the policy of balancing between the West and Russia, returning to the multi-vectorial policy of Kuchma. The three pillars of foreign policy of the period were the European integration, the strategic balance between major partners and the denuclearization and demilitarization (Cruz and Machado 2012).

To counteract the European expansion, Moscow sought to present its own model of integration for the former soviet republics, highlighting Ukraine as an essential part of the project (Kropatcheva 2014). Both the EU and Russia were more assertively pursuing their different projects of regionalism, which were seen by them as mutually exclusive. In 2010, Russia, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, announced the creation of a Customs Union, which implemented a common system of tariffs. To draw Kiev for the Union, the Russian Government stated that it would be willing to reduce the gas prices, and stressed that the project would benefit Ukraine in economic and industrial sectors. Nonetheless, Ukraine rejected membership in the bloc, not wanting to close the door to a possible free trade agreement with the EU (Kropatcheva 2014).

In 2011, Tymoshenko was arrested on charges of having exceeded her power as Prime Minister when she commanded the signature of a disadvantageous agreement between Naftogaz and Russia in 2009 (Cruz and Machado 2012). Her arrest was just one of the many convictions that were carried out against opposition politicians. This situation was widely criticized by the European Union, and the bloc decided to condition the signing of any agreement with Kiev to the improvement of the country’s democratic situation. It was estab-

lished that in 2013, at the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit, EU and Ukraine would sign the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA); until that moment, EU would allocate around 470 million euros in Ukraine for programs related to governance and democracy, for reforms that could facilitate the consolidation of the agreements and for sustainable development. In addition, Ukraine would receive loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank (Kropatcheva 2014).

In response to the European policy, Russia increased its economic and political pressure over Ukraine. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, for example, explained that the EU's conditions in the AA and DCFTA would be "burdensome" for Ukraine, causing disruptions in Russia's cooperation with the country's traditional manufacturing and industrial sectors. According to Moscow, if Kiev was included in a Free Trade area with EU, Russia would need to control exports from Ukraine more strictly, in order not to allow European exports, under the cover of Ukrainian products, to get to Russian territory under a cheaper customs regime. In summer 2013, Russia used a stricter customs regulation that led to a stop of exports of Ukrainian products to Russia for several days. The Kremlin also used incentives such as a possible reduction in the price of the gas exported to Ukraine, the renegotiation of Naftogaz's debt and loan offers to try to persuade Yanukovich not to sign the agreements (Kropatcheva 2014)

2.3 THE EUROMAIDAN AND THE CRIMEAN CRISIS

In November 2013, President Yanukovich suspended the preparations for the signature of the Association Agreement and of the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. The decision, according to the Government, was motivated by the need to consolidate economic ties with Russia and to better analyze the alternative agreement on trade and production proposed by that country. The EU and the Ukrainian opposition reacted negatively to the announcement, accusing the President of using the negotiations as a bargain between Moscow and Brussels and claiming that Russia was putting pressure on Kiev, mainly through exports of natural gas (Voice of Russia 2013; RFERL 2013).

Yanukovych's decision to postpone the agreement with EU highlighted the delicate position of the country: Russia was Ukraine's most important trading partner, accounting for around one-third of the country's imports and exports, Ukraine's industrial sector, concentrated on the eastern part of the territory, was heavily dependent on Russian energy supplies, and Russian businesses had acquired direct ownership of large chunks of Ukraine's economy. The European Union was no less important for Kiev, accounting for the highest investment rates in the country and increasing its importance in Ukrainian capital and consumer goods imports over the years. In addition, the bloc was an important ally for the improvement of Ukrainian position in international financial institutions (Fontaneli et al 2014).

Thousands of people who supported the European option, in protest against the administration's course of action, occupied the Maidan (Independence Square) in the capital Kiev, demanding the resignation of several government figures, including the President himself, and the release of Tymoshenko from prison (BBC 2013). As the protests reached the greatest magnitude since the Orange Revolution, the pressure on the Government grew. The Parliament tried to adopt a decree banning the protests, but the population continued to fill the streets. Several clashes occurred when the police tried to disperse the protesters using violence (USA Today 2013).

In an attempt to take control over the situation, the Government approved an anti-protest legislation, which banned unsanctioned gatherings and imposed multiple limitations on mass demonstrations, the media, and the Internet. While western countries considered that these laws restricted the right to peacefully protest and exercise the freedom of speech, constrained independent media and inhibited the operation of NGOs, Kiev hit back, affirming that the bills "[...] [were] aimed at implementing a number of norms that already exist[ed] in the laws of a lot of European countries, m[et] commonly recognized democratic standards and international practices and [were] compatible with the commitments within the OSCE framework" (Reuters 2014a; RT 2014e). The effects of these regulations were almost nil, and the clashes between demonstrators and police resulted in the deaths of more than 80 civilians, with both sides accusing each other of using unidentified snipers to open fire against the population (CSIS 2015). With the aggravation of the conditions, Yanukovych rescheduled the 2014 elections for May and determined the reinstitution of the Constitution

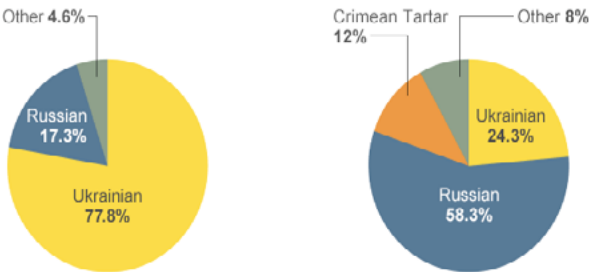
of 2004, which limited the presidential powers (RT 2014a). However, the protesters, mostly those belonging to the ultranationalist group Right Sector (or Pravy Sector), whose members formed a “self-defense” group, proved unwilling to accept less than the immediate ousting of the President (The Washington Post 2014a). Yanukovych fled Kiev and Turchynov, speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, became the acting president until the elections. Several parliamentarians from the East also left their posts and sought refuge in other cities.

The atmosphere in Kiev somehow soothed, while violent clashes occurred between supporters of the former President and supporters of the new administration in cities like Odessa, one of the most important deep-water ports of Europe (The Guardian 2014a). In Crimea, in the cities of Simferopol and Sevastopol, demonstrators seized Government buildings, demanding more autonomy for the region and the establishment of stronger ties with Russia; the regional Government of the peninsula then began to prepare a local referendum to determine the extension of Crimean self-govern prerogatives. On February 22, the parliamentarians who remained in the Rada (most of them representatives from the western oblasts, from the nationalist parties UDAR and Svoboda) officially ousted President Yanukovych, and Tymoshenko was released from prison (Trend 2014). Stating that the Government in Kiev was not legitimate, the Crimean regional Parliament voted for the separation of the peninsula from Ukraine and for its integration to Russia, setting up a referendum to consult the population about the decision. Both the Ukrainian Government and the European Union considered the decision illegal, while the Kremlin supported the Crimean initiative for what it considered self-determination and started revising the national legislation concerning the annexation of new territories (CSIS 2015).

In the meantime, unidentified troops, which called themselves self-defense squads, occupied public structures in Crimea. Kiev accused the Russians of being responsible for the unidentified military men and of conducting an armed invasion in Ukrainian territory, but the Kremlin denied any involvement (The New York Times 2014a; The Washington Post 2014b). Disapproving of the Russian posture regarding the developments in the situation in Ukraine, Western Governments adopted a set of sanctions against Moscow. In addition, the U.S. increased its military presence in the Baltic, in Poland, in Romania and in the Red Sea, while Russia employed forces on its border with Ukraine and

came to occupy a natural gas facility near the village of Strilkove, in the coast of the Azov Sea (Aljazeera 2014a; The Telegraph 2014a).

Graph 1: Ethnic identity of Ukraine and Crimea
Ukraine by ethnic identity Crimea by ethnic identity



Note: Some totals may not add up due to rounding
Source: 2001 Ukraine census
Source: BBC, 2014.

On March 16, the day of the regional poll, 96% of the voters responded “Yes” to the integration of the Crimean Republic to the Russian territory (RT 2014b). While the U.S., EU and Ukraine reaffirmed the illegality of the decision and defended the Ukrainian territorial integrity, the Crimean Parliament officially declared its independence of Ukraine and requested the integration of the territory to the Russian Federation (BBC 2014a). Russia responded promptly, signing a Treaty of Integration with Crimea on March 18, and beginning the next day to occupy militarily the peninsula (Sputnik News 2014a). The Kremlin responded the critics by stating once again that Crimea had the right to self-determination and affirming that the West was trying to bend the rules it applied to Kosovo in 2008 (RT 2014f). Ukraine subsequently declared its intention to leave the Commonwealth of Independent States and signed an agreement with the European Union, while further sanctions were imposed on Russia (AP 2014; BBC 2014b). Russia recurred once again to the pipeline politics, threatening to cut Ukrainian gas supplies if Kiev did not pay its debts with Gazprom; As 40% of all European gas imports came from Russia, and since 70% of the Russian gas exported to Europe flowed through Ukrainian territory, uncertainties over energy provisions added up to the overall crisis.

The disturbance spread further across the country, reaching the eastern region, where a significant part of the population was self-identified as ethnic

Russian. The pro-Russian demonstrators in the Donbas¹³, mainly in the cities of Donetsk and Kharkiv, rallied against what they considered a coup-imposed government and demanded, as Crimea did, a referendum to determine the future of the region (Sputnik News 2014b; RT 2014c). Those protestors, mostly deserted soldiers, veterans and civilians of Ukrainian nationality and Russian ethnicity, teamed up to form dozens of armed militias, and occupied government and security forces' buildings. Among the main groups that emerged were the Donbas People's Militia, in Donetsk, and the Army of the South East, in Luhansk. Later on, the Cossack Terek Wolf Stonia unit, Chechens, Ossetians, Armenians, and combatants from other nationalities joined their fight (The Guardian 2014c).

Following this new development, NATO and Western countries implied that the presence of a Russian military contingent on the border with Ukraine could be an indication of a possible intervention intended to establish a land corridor to Crimea and to secure and support the whole rebel territory, reaching as far as Transnistria¹⁴, a separatist region located in Moldova, along the border with Ukraine; Russia defended itself, affirming that those contingents were simply taking part in a previously scheduled military exercise (The Washington Post 2014c; CNN 2014). Seeking to counter and punish Russian actions, Western countries excluded Russia from the G8. Nonetheless, this measures did not impact Kremlin's approach – considering the integration of Crimea a fait accompli, the Russians decided to withdraw from several bilateral agreements with Kiev, among which were those versing on the presence of Russian troops in the Black Sea and in the Ukrainian territory (Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia 2014).

In a new attempt respond to the question of Crimea and the presence of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border, NATO decided to suspend all cooperation with Moscow, at the same time announcing the beginning of joint military exercises with the Ukrainian army and the increase in the number of troops stationed in Poland (CSIS 2015). According to Russia, those measures constituted a violation of the Rome Declaration and the Fundamental Act of the NATO-

13 Donbas is a geographical and cultural region that corresponds to the Eastern and South-Eastern portions of Ukraine.

14 The region of Transnistria declared itself independent from Moldova in 1990, with the assistance of Russian and Cossacks military. Since then, the region has taken a pro-Russian stance and struggles to obtain recognition of its independence.

Russian Council, which stated that “there must be no excessive permanent military presence on the territories of the Eastern European states” (RFERL 2014).

2.4 THE BATTLES IN DONBAS AND MINSK I

On April 7, pro-Russian activists from the Donbas People’s Militia, who had taken control over some cities in the East, declared the independence of the People’s Republic of Donetsk, while new violent demonstrations took place in Luhansk, Kharkiv and Odessa. The Ukrainian Government engaged in “anti-terrorist” operations against the armed protesters, but the rebels continued to expand their territorial control. Defense battalions were established at the regional level; however, as the Ukrainian army did not have enough capabilities to fight the rebel forces (the size of the combat-ready force was of only 6.000 troops), the Rada signed a decree authorizing the creation of civilian paramilitary forces (Gorenburg 2014). Battalions such as Donbas, Aidar, Azov and Dnibr, funded by private donations from wealthy oligarchs, together with the already existent Righ-Sector, then bolstered the fighting forces in the southeast, helping to control the advance of the separatists. Most of these paramilitary groups were of ultranationalist ideology and were formed by Ukrainian far-right and neo-nazi activists, by pro-west protestors, and by citizens of European countries. It is important to notice that while these groups fought alongside the central government, they were not directly controlled by Kiev (Puglisi 2015).

In May, Donetsk held a referendum, in which 89% of the voters supported the declaration of independence, and formalized its request for integration with Russia, while Luhansk declared its independence and the Army of the Southeast pledged alliance to the new State (CSIS 2015). Moscow was not as assertive as it had been in Crimea, only expressing respect to referendums. As reports of Ukrainian authorities alleged that the Russians were permitting the entry of troops, tanks and supplies to the militias in Eastern Ukraine through the common border, Kiev and Western Governments again accused Russia of destabilizing the region, encouraging separatist tensions, and intervening militarily (NBC News 2014; NATO Allied Command Operations 2014). In face of the intense wariness of its allies, especially Poland, motivated by the supposed Russian aggression, NATO decided to increase its military contingent in all Eastern Europe (Reuters 2014b). Russia denied the allegations, stating that the

Kremlin was keeping distance from the crisis and accusing western countries of directly interfering in the internal matters of Ukraine (RT 2014g).

On May 25, Petro Poroshenko, a businessman of pro-European tendencies, was elected President of Ukraine. Only 45% of the population went to the polls, since the voting procedures were blocked or barred in several areas of Donbas. According to Poroshenko, the first steps of the new presidential office would be focused on “stopping the war, putting an end to this chaos and bringing peace to a united Ukraine” (The Guardian 2014b). As part of his stabilization plans, the new president announced a unilateral ceasefire, ordering Government forces to retract and offering the rebels amnesty for those who surrendered (NPR 2014). The Government also developed a peace project comprised of 15 steps, including the creation of a buffer zone on the border with Russia, the disarmament of mercenaries, and the elaboration of projects for the decentralization of power. The rebels agreed to honor the ceasefire proposed by the President, but the truce was violated only a few days after, when eastern forces downed a military helicopter (CSIS 2015).

Image 6: Rebel held territories as of Jun 11, 2014



Source BBC, 2014.

In the end of June, the Ukrainian President signed the Association Agreement with the European Union, establishing free trade between the parties and bringing Ukraine closer to membership with the bloc (The New York Times 2014b). The Government soon began to develop projects of economic and political reforms to adapt the administration and the economy to European

standards. Afterwards, relations with Russia became even more delicate: beyond asserting that Kiev would face serious consequences due to the signature of the agreement, Moscow accused the Ukrainian forces of killing a Russian citizen in one of the attacks in Donetsk, stating that, in the event of further provocations, “Russia reserved the right to take all measures [...] to protect its territory and provide the safety of its citizens” (RT 2014d). Russia employed soldiers, tanks, armored vehicles, warplanes, and military helicopters supplemented by self-propelled artillery and multiple rocket launchers on the border with Ukraine and began its own campaign of sanctions against the EU and the United States. After this, the rebels intensified their attacks and advances (CSIS 2015).

In September, after a meeting in Minsk, Belarus, with representatives of Ukraine and separatist forces, Poroshenko announced the establishment of a new ceasefire (Press office of the President of Ukraine 2014). The agreement defined that the Government of Ukraine would grant the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk a privileged status of greater political autonomy, and the rebels, in return, would cease their separatist pressures. The ceasefire suffered constant setbacks, not being recognized by groups such as the Azov Battalion and the Aidar Battalion (pro-Kiev), and collapsing completely when the pro-Russian militias of Donetsk and Luhansk, now joined under the name of United Armed Forces of Novorossiia (UAFN), attacked Ukrainian positions in Mariupol (Aljazeera 2014c). After this expansion of the fronts of conflict, a set of peacekeeping drills led by the U.S. and other NATO allies, known as exercise Rapid Trident, began near the city of Lviv in western Ukraine, while Moscow stated that these activities could cause further turmoil in the country and accused the western countries of arming and supporting the Ukrainian battalions (CSIS 2015).

Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Novorossiyan forces and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) met again in Minsk for a new round of talks in an attempt to complement the previous ceasefire. During the meeting, Kiev and Moscow agreed with pro-Russian separatists to create a 30-kilometer buffer zone and to move artillery 15 kilometers far from the front line on both sides (Reuters 2014). After these arrangements, the Ukrainian army and rebel forces undertook measures to remove their armaments off the delimited regions, but the clashes continued, reaching new violent proportions (CSIS 2015). Alexander Zakharchenko, the self-proclaimed Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed People’s Republic of Donetsk, stated

that the UAFN would cease its observation of the ceasefire with the Ukrainian military, with the ultimate goal of taking towns such as Slavyansk, Kramatorsk, and Mariupol (Aljazeera 2014b). Ukraine Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak said Kiev was preparing for a new round of fighting in response to the alleged “increased activity” by Russia and pro-Moscow rebels across the Donbas (Yahoo News 2014).

Image 7: Rebel held territories as of Sep 09, 2014



Source: BBC, 2014.

New points of conflict arose when the newly elected pro-western Ukrainian Parliament voted in favor of revoking the non-aligned status of Ukraine, a symbolic action towards closer ties with NATO. The Organization spokesman in Brussels stated that the “door is open and Ukraine will become a member of NATO if it so requests and fulfills the standards and adheres to the necessary principles” (Business Insider 2014). The Kremlin had previously stated that Russia needed a “hundred-percent guarantee” that Ukraine would never be allowed to join NATO. The expansion of NATO’s membership towards Russia’s borders was a major security concern for Moscow, influencing in the unfolding crisis in Ukraine (Sputnik News 2014c).

In early November, Ukrainian Minister of Defense Stepan Poltorak ordered territorial defense battalions and pro-Kiev militias to be absorbed into the formal structures of the Ministry, so that the conflict could be best managed by the central Government (Sputnik News 2014d). The vast majority of the battalions made their activities official and began receiving greater support from

Kiev, although their financing remained murky. The Right-Sector, by its turn, refused to even register with the central government – the group fought against the eastern separatists, but adopted a stance against Kiev since March, when one of its leaders was killed by Ukraine State Security Forces. In December, these battalions blocked humanitarian aid from reaching rebel-held areas of eastern Ukraine (The Telegraph 2014b; Vox 2015b).

2.5 MINSK II

The year of 2015 started with a military buildup in the eastern territories and with low prospects for the maintenance of the ceasefire due to a new UAFN offensive in Mariupol. Western analysts argued that Mariupol was a key strategic objective for any Russian and rebel strategies meant to establish a land-bridge between Russia and the annexed Crimean peninsula, once again indirectly accusing Russia of supporting the separatists (Bloomberg 2015). Due to the deterioration situation, the Ukrainian Government declared a State of emergency in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (Reuters 2015).

Image 8: Rebel held territories as of Jan 23, 2015.



Source: BBC, 2015.

In February, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France met again for a new round of talks in Minsk, signing a new ceasefire. The agreement dictated the restoration of control over the Donbas to the Ukrainian central Government, which in turn should undertake a constitutional reform

that would give the separatist regions a special status. Among other measures addressed by the agreement were the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the front and the expulsion of foreign armed groups and militias from the country (BBC 2015a).

Image 9: Minsk Buffer Zones



Fonte: BBC, 2015.

After a period of continued attacks and clashes in the East, the Ukrainian army and pro-Russian forces began withdrawing their heavy weapons from the region (BBC 2015b). During this process of implementing the cease-fire, Russia and Kiev both stated the possibility of withdrawing weapons of less than 100 mm caliber from the front line, an extension of the determinations of the Minsk agreements. In addition, Poroshenko declared his willingness to hold a referendum on the political decentralization of Ukraine (RT 2015a; CSIS 2015). However, in a short period of time, new accusations of violations of the agreement emerged: while the rebels claimed that the central Government was not transferring social payments to the regions affected by the conflict and was breaching the truce, the Ukrainian army accused the rebels of carrying out new attacks with heavy artillery (Ukraine Today 2015).

A new series of statements and actions worsened the situation. The Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yatsenyuk, announced that Kiev will sign with

NATO a set of agreements on cooperation in “control, communications, intelligence and surveillance” under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program (TASS 2015). Just a few days later, France’s intelligence chief questioned NATO’s claims that Russia had tried and has been trying to invade Ukraine (RT 2015b). Later, Gazprom’s CEO declared that after 2019 the contracts on gas transport with Ukraine will not be renewed, and Russia will redirect the energy flow to Europe to the Turkish Stream pipeline (RT 2015c). President Putin also issued a statement reaffirming that Russians are not involved in the conflict, criticizing the U.S. for trying to impose its interests in Ukraine, and accusing Kiev of establishing a total blockade over Donbas (BBC 2015c). Finally, on 17 April, 300 U.S. troops arrived in Ukraine to train national forces under Operation Fearless Guardian. For the Kremlin, this represented a new factor of instability for the conflict, demonstrating Washington’s interests in undermining the Minsk agreements (CSIS 2015).

In May, the European Union agreed to implement Ukraine’s Association Agreement in 2016, despite Russian requests for its postponement. In addition, NATO carried out military exercises in the Baltic countries and both NATO and the EU began to draw up a plan to develop complimentary strategies for the defense of their members, in response to what they consider an aggressive Russian posture in the crisis. Likewise, the Rada voted on the cancellation of five security agreements with Moscow, in response to the alleged Russian support for the rebellions in the southeast of the country (LA Times 2015; CSIS 2015). The Kremlin considered these actions a new act of defiance and further evidence of the lack of interest of Western countries and Kiev in the creation of a favorable environment for the stability of the Minsk agreements.

The clashes between rebels and Kiev persisted over the months, with an expansion of the battlefield, especially to the cities of Maryinka and Krasnohorivka, near Donetsk, and the OSCE monitoring team highlighted the generalized concerns of an upcoming offensive in the summer. Western countries again accused the Russians of massing troops and weaponry, including mobile rocket launchers, tanks and artillery, at a makeshift base near the border with Ukraine, while the Russians reaffirmed that there was no connection between these military movements and the Ukrainian crisis (CSIS 2015). Almost simultaneously, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia signed a memorandum for the joint acquisition of medium-range air defense systems (Reuters 2015b).

Currently, the main conflict in Ukraine occurs between the government forces and the rebels, and foreign powers, such as Russia and the Western countries, accuse one another of trying to influence the crisis and undermining the ceasefire, either by military means or through political and diplomatic pressures. Moreover, the estimated 30 pro-Kiev battalions operating in the East increase uncertainties, as those groups adopt a more aggressive posture against the separatists and since they are not under full control of the central government. While the Azov and other volunteer battalions might a potent and reliable force on the battlefield against the rebels, they also might pose a threat to the Ukrainian government when the conflict in the east is over: the strength and autonomy of these groups in the East can give them the conditions to take advantage of the power vacuum in the region and create warlordism systems; in addition, many of the members of the Azov and Aidar Battalions believe it is necessary to establish a “stronger” Government in Kiev to “unite the nation” (The Guardian 2014d; Vox 2015a).

Because it opposes different demands and interests, the situation in Ukraine requests complex efforts from the international community so that the parties can reach a lasting peace. Previous ceasefire attempts have failed, not being able to satisfactorily combine the existing demands, and until today the deescalation of the situation was not achieved.

3 PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, and especially after the emergence of separatist impulses in the southeast, the international community sought to act to avoid the escalation of the situation and to find a solution for this conflict. The main measures taken were multilateral peace plans and meetings and debates in the UN committees. In order to fully understand those initiatives, it is necessary to refer to agreements made in the 20th century, which are now used as basis for speeches and resolutions.

The first historical precedent that must be considered is the resolution 2625 (XXV), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1970. This resolution put into effect the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States, which stated among its

principles that States should refrain from the threat and the use of force in international relations and should not intervene in other country's domestic affairs, and reinforced the right of self-determination of peoples, as presented in the UN Charter (UN 1970).

Five years later, in 1975, the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Final Act was approved. Signed by 33 European countries, the United States and Canada, the agreement created the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and stipulated ten key principles that should guide the relationship between the States. According to the text, the signatory countries should refrain from use of force and should consider the borders of other signatories inviolable, respecting their territorial integrity and abstaining from militarily occupying their territories. In addition, the States agreed not to intervene in any way in the external and internal matters of another signatory country (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act 1975).

A few years later, in 1991, the former Soviet republics signed the Alma-Ata Declaration, extinguishing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States. Among the agreement determinations were the elimination of all Ukrainian and Belarusian nuclear weapons, the recognition of and respect for the State sovereignty and self-determination, the principles of equality and non-interference in internal affairs, the renunciation of the threat and use of force among member-states, and the notion of territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders (The Alma-Ata Declaration 1991).

Finally, in 1994, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Budapest Memorandum. In exchange for Ukraine handing over its nuclear weapons – which had stayed in the country's territory after the dissolution of the USSR –, and Kiev's compliance to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation, those three great powers guaranteed they would not use force against the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan (The Budapest Memorandum 1994).

After these considerations, we can now analyze the previous actions undertaken by the international community since the beginning of the current crisis, in November of 2013. In 2014, a day before the Crimean referendum on its possible separation from Ukraine, an emergency meeting of the Security Council

was convoked. The draft resolution presented on that occasion referred to the UN Charter, the Resolution 2625 (XXV) of 1970, the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991, among other documents, to establish the illegality of military intervention and a territorial conquest in Ukraine, and stipulated that the referendum which was to be held in Crimea was invalid, since it had not been authorized by the Ukrainian central Government. Of the 15 Council members, only China abstained and Russia vetoed the resolution (UN 2014a).

On the following day, Crimea approved its separation from Ukraine, being subsequently integrated into Russian territory. In response, on March 27, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that followed the same lines of the resolution proposed in the Security Council, reaffirming the commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and establishing that the Crimean referendum had no validity, and therefore cannot be used as the basis for changes in the status of the peninsula and of the city of Sevastopol (UN 2014b). 100 members voted in favor, 11 voted against and 58 abstained.

The conflict did not deescalate, and pro-Russian separatists took control over several buildings and government offices in the eastern oblasts (provinces). Gathering in what became known as Geneva Talks in April 2014, the United States, the European Union, Russia and Ukraine agreed that all sides should refrain from any violence, all illegal armed groups should be disarmed and all illegally occupied sites should be released. The countries at this meeting also established that Kiev should work on an inclusive, transparent and accountable constitutional process, which should include the immediate establishment of a broad national dialogue, with outreach to all of Ukraine's regions and political constituencies, and allow the consideration of public comments and proposed amendments (Text of Joint Diplomatic Statement on Ukraine 2014).

The results were almost null and the situation continued to escalate, especially after president Poroshenko signed the Association Agreement with the European Union. Thus, representatives from Kiev and pro-Russian forces, under the supervision of a Trilateral Contact Group composed of representatives from Kiev, Moscow and the OSCE, gathered in Belarus in September and approved the Minsk I agreement. Among its resolutions were the decentralization of power through the establishment of a law granting special status

for Donetsk and Luhansk, the provision of humanitarian aid, the removal of illegal military groups, military equipment and mercenaries from Ukraine and the conduction of early local elections in the separatist oblasts (Kyiv Post 2014). That cease-fire did not have a permanent result, collapsing in September after a rebel led offensive on the city of Mariupol.

Another cease-fire was approved in February 2015, after the leaders of Ukraine, France, Russia and Germany settled on measures to ease the tensions in the East. The Minsk II agreement determined the immediate ceasefire between the parties, the pullout of all heavy weapons by both sides, creating a security zone from 50 to 140 km (varying with the caliber of the artillery), the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries, and restoration of Ukrainian government's full control over the state border in the conflict zone. Other measures, of political order, were the establishment of a constitutional reform in Ukraine with focus on decentralization, and the approval of a permanent legislation on the special status of Donetsk and Luhansk, both of which should come into effect by the end of 2015. Finally, the agreement also referred to humanitarian aid, amnesty to those involved in the conflict and the release of prisoners and hostages (Minsk Agreement on Ukraine Crisis 2015).

4 BLOC POSITIONS

The Ukrainian crisis involves and threatens core interests of the **Russian Federation**, which explains its will to resist to Western pressure. For the Russians, the Ukrainian crisis is the product of a new western “containment policy”, represented by the enlargement of NATO and of the European Union, as was the Georgian War of 2008. Moscow fears that a Western dominance in Ukraine (one of its lasts remaining allies in the region), could pave the way for the installation of a missile-defense system in the European continent, in Poland and the Czech Republic (Pautasso 2014, Mearsheimer 2014). Thus, the pro-democracy and even ultranationalist movements that arose after Yanukovitch's decision to postpone the agreement with the EU were seen by the Russians merely as a Western tool to establish a Russian-hostile government in Ukraine under liberal values (Mearsheimer 2014). In a statement that clarifies Russia's stance on the issue, Prime Minister Medvedev said that Russia “would adopt as though a posi-

tion as possible [...] and defend our national interests” (CSIS 2015).

In Russia’s view, the integration of Crimea “ha[d] elements of historical justice” since the region is formed mostly by Russian-ethnic population and since it followed a legitimate referendum, in which 96% of the Crimeans affirmed their will to be part of the Russian territory (NPR 2015, Kremlin 2014). The Russian representative to the UN, Mr. Churkin, affirmed that “the enjoyment of the right of self-determination through a separation from an existing State [...] applied when future coexistence within a single State becomes impossible” and that Crimea’s conformance with Ukraine became unachievable after the “legal vacuum” that followed the unconstitutional “armed coup” in Kiev (RT 2014h). Moscow also draws attention to the fact that Crimea had already held two referendums, in 1991 and 1994: in the first, 94% of the voters agreed with the reestablishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic; in the second, more than 77% of the voters casted yes for greater autonomy within Ukraine and for dual Russian and Ukrainian citizenship for Crimeans (Global Times, 2014). In what refers to the separatists Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, Russia denies involvement but respects their fight for more autonomy within Ukraine, as these populations also held referendums (The Independent 2014).

Many of these issues have already been addressed during the Minsk talks and resulted in the Minsk I and II agreements. However, Russia insists that the Ukrainian government is not fulfilling its compromises, as frequently there are reports of the presence of official forces’ heavy weapons in the frontline (Sputnik News 2015a). The presence of foreign military advisors in the country, from the U.S. and the UK, also represents a breach of the agreements, as they called for foreign forces to remain out of the region (Press TV 2015). Moreover, Moscow criticizes the fact that the Ukrainian government still did not lift the economic blockade of the separatist regions nor granted them a special status, considering them “occupied” by Russia (RT 2015d, Press TV 2015). Thus, the Kremlin urges the full compliance with the Minsk agreements and calls for Western countries to recognize that Poroshenko’s government is not currently doing so (RT 2015d, MFA of Russia 2015). Moreover, Russian officials say that their country cannot do much to enforce the Minsk agreements because it is not a participant in the conflict (The New York Times 2015b).

The **People’s Republic of China** welcomes all efforts to mediate the

Ukrainian crisis and reaffirms that the solution to this situation has to be a political one. In March, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stated that “China respects and supports Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and hopes the Ukrainian issue can be settled through dialogue”, and Beijing plans to maintain a friendly cooperation with Ukraine (China Daily 2015, The Independent 2015a). China supports the Russian approach to the situation, although it does not share Moscow’s view of self-determination as it could be used against the Chinese integrity, if applied to separatists regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet (The New York Times 2014c). Nonetheless, China is very critic of the Western stance during the crisis: Beijing believes that western countries are not showing respect to Russian security concerns, and affirms that the root reason of the crisis is the “game” between the EU and the U.S. and Russia. In that sense, China calls for the West to abandon its “zero-sum mentality” (The Independent 2015a).

China strongly opposes the sanctions imposed by the European Union and U.S. to Russia, as “[they] may lead to new and more complicated factors” and interactions (Reuters 2014c); as Beijing and Moscow have close economic ties and are strategic partners, the weakening of the Russian economy also affects Chinese interests (Harvard International Review 2015). In order to counter the negative effects of the sanctions, Russia and China signed a US\$ 400 billion commercial deal and even conducted joint military drills in the Mediterranean Sea (Bloomberg 2014a, Deutsche Welle 2015a).

The United States of America is deeply concerned with Russia’s stance on the situation, and considers the aggressive posture of this country to be the main cause of the crisis. President Obama blames Russia’s “incursion” for the escalation of aggression, but, despite pressures from the Congress and some from the Secretary of Defense Ash Carter to deploy arms to Ukraine, limited until now the support given to Ukraine to the financial scope (The Guardian 2015a, Deutsche Welle 2015b, The New York Times 2015c). In this sense, the U.S. not only strongly endorses the financial aid given to Ukraine by the EU and the IMF, but also already spent huge amounts of resources in financial and humanitarian aid to Poroshenko’s government (RT 2015e, Sputnik News 2015b). The U.S. also sent around 300 paratroopers to train Kiev’s National Guard, answering to the Ukrainian government’s demand for more military support (Newsweek 2015a, Reuters 2015c). Nonetheless, the U.S. also increased its military presence in Eastern Europe, conducting military drills in Poland, Lithuania and

Latvia, where it already had hundreds of troops settled since early 2014 (Daily Mail 2015, The Washington Times 2015).

The American sanctions against Russia started right after the integration of Crimea to the Russian territory, and increased throughout 2014 (U.S. Department of State 2014). A year later, the Department of State seemed to maintain the same stance: according to spokesperson Jen Psaki, “sanctions related to Crimea will remain in place as long as the occupation continues” (Forbes 2015). During John Kerry’s trip to Russia in May, however, tensions seemed to low as the secretary said that the U.S. is ready to repeal sanctions if the Minsk agreements were fully implemented by Russia (The Telegraph 2015a).

The U.S. thus urges for the enforcement of the cease-fire agreed in Minsk, which is being breached “daily” in Ukraine, mostly by separatists (Voice of America 2015). The U.S. also calls for the Russian government to stop all kind of military participation in the Donbass conflict, as well as to end any kind of military presence in Ukraine. In this sense, a U.S. Army Commander claimed in March that there were around 12,000 Russian troops in Ukrainian territory (The Independent 2015b). The US believes that the fulfillment of the Minsk agreements are the best way to achieve stability and, despite condemning Russia’s actions on the issue, already proved that some easing of the tensions can be reached through dialogue (The Telegraph 2015a).

The **United Kingdom** shares the American view of the situation and supports the negotiations headed by France and Germany. Answering the critics about UK’s relatively modest role in the Ukrainian crisis, Foreign Secretary Phillip Hammond said that the Germans were in a best position to lead the negotiations and that “the UK has always led the fight in the EU for tougher sanctions” (Deutsche Welle 2015c, The Guardian 2015b). In March, the United Kingdom sent military advisers to Ukraine to train the troops fighting separatists in medicine and defensive tactics and supplied the country with an additional humanitarian aid of 15 million pounds (BBC 2015d, CNN 2015b). London defends that the sanctions against Russia should be maintained until the Minsk agreements are fully respected and, in the case of non-compliance or of new Russian aggressions, it affirms that it is prepared to take sanctions against Russia to a “whole different level”, as stated by PM David Cameron (The Telegraph 2015b). The UK does not have immediate plans to aid Ukraine with weapons and lethal assistance, but is “not ruling anything out for the future”

(Reuters 2015d).

France, alongside Germany, has been leading European Union's negotiations with Russia and Ukraine and, despite some differences regarding the suspension of the delivering of French Mistral-class warships to Moscow, Hollande has maintained cordial relations with Putin. The French-German initiative to hold the Minsk II talks can be seen as a response to growing pressures for a more effective and even military action towards the situation, especially from Americans and Eastern Europeans (The New York Times 2015c). However, Paris opposes an eventual Ukrainian NATO membership and the deploying of lethal aid to the Ukrainian government, also ruling out the possibility of launching a UN peacekeeping mission in Eastern Ukraine as proposed by the Ukrainian government, since the OSCE's mission is already working in the region (Sputnik News 2015c, TASS 2015b). France does not support the deploying of new sanctions against Russia and shares the general position of EU member countries of conditioning the lifting of the existing sanctions to the fulfillment of the Minsk agreements (Reuters 2015e). Hollande described the cease-fire violations of May as "unacceptable", and said that they risk flaring the conflict again (TASS 2015c). For France the top priority is the implementation of the Minsk agreements, as they provide the only framework available so far for achieving peace (UN 2015a).

Spain supports a common European stance in the issue, approving the German-French leadership in the negotiations. In March, the Spanish foreign ministry José Margallo defended the permanence of the sanctions until there is a full compliance with the Minsk agreements (El Diario 2015). Nonetheless, as Spain has been one of the countries that suffered the most with the mutual sanctions imposed between the EU and Russia, Madrid does not defend new sanctions, affirming that the existent ones are already showing results (RBTH 2015). Spain is against the supply of lethal aid to the Ukrainian government and attempts to maintain cordial relations with Russia despite the tensions; even so, Spain does not recognize the referendums held by the separatists in the Donbas and Crimea and urges Russia for the respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and the international law (La Vanguardia 2015).

Lithuania has been holding one of the toughest positions on the issue among the EU countries, showing great concerns about its own security and territorial integrity. President Dalia Grybauskaitė affirmed that "the Kremlin is

testing Europe and would push ahead if not halted” and that, while the West is considering lethal-aid to Ukraine, Russia is already delivering heavy weapons to the separatists (The Wall Street Journal 2015). The president also heavily criticized the Minsk agreements, calling them weak and considering them just a “partial solution”, as they do not provide any framework regarding the control of borders (The New York Times 2015d). In that sense, Lithuania urges the West to use “all means necessary” to help Ukraine and it is already giving all types of military support possible to Poroshenko’s government (Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania 2015). Lithuania is in the process of constituting a joint brigade with Ukraine and Poland and a national rapid-reaction force, in addition to reintroducing conscription (TASS 2015d, The New York Times 2014d, Newsweek 2015b). Moreover, NATO is considering the deployment of a permanent ground force in the Baltic States, following an official request sent by those countries in May (The Washington Times 2015).

Although **Jordan** considers Russia’s actions a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, the kingdom has been showing a moderate posture on the issue. Amman calls for a “serious and effective dialogue” between Russia and Ukraine and for the respect of Ukrainian sovereignty, including over Crimea, and recalls the principle of non-interference in internal affairs (Xinhua 2014, UN 2014c). In this sense, Jordan praised the efforts spent by the UN and the OSCE on the issue (UN 2014d). While Jordan shares deep ties with the West and is one of its most important allies in the Middle East, the kingdom still enjoys good relations with both Ukraine and Russia – Amman reached an agreement with Moscow that envisages the installation of a nuclear plant in the North of its territory (Reuters 2015f).

Soon after the beginning of the crisis, **New Zealand** affirmed its support for the EU and the U.S. handling of the issue and condemned Russia’s actions. Wellington responded to Moscow imposing a travel-ban on individuals involved in the crisis and freezing negotiations with Russia regarding a free-trade agreement (Worldview 2014). On the other hand, Russia’s countersanctions also indirectly damaged New Zealand’s economy (The New Zealand Herald 2014). New Zealand’s representative in the UN, Carolyn Schwalger, supported OSCE’s role in the matter and called for the Security Council to remain seized of the matter in order to enforce the Minsk agreements. Also, she urged Russia to pressure the separatists groups to comply with what has been agreed (UN 2015a).

Malaysia has shown great concern for the situation in Eastern Ukraine, especially after the downing of Malaysian airliner MH17 that killed 298 people, including 44 Malaysians (Malaysia Permanent Mission to the UN 2015). In this sense, Kuala Lumpur praises the acting of the OSCE on the matter, highlighting its assistance in the recovery of the MH16 debris (UN 2015a). Malaysia, which maintains good relations with both Ukraine and Russia, calls for a peaceful solution to the crisis and its de-escalation, affirming that the safety of the Ukrainian people must be the top priority.

The **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** strongly supports Russia on the matter, considering the current Ukrainian government to be the result of a coup imposed by ultra-nationalists backed by NATO and the U.S. (Bloomberg 2014b). When on visit to Russia in last January, Maduro stated that he supported the Russian people and that “Venezuela will always stand with Russia” (La Nación 2015). The mutual relations between the two countries have gone warmer as both suffer serious economic difficulties worsened by the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the low international oil-crude prices. Moreover, Maduro stated publicly that Venezuela is willing to cooperate closely with Russia within the Security Council in order to “contribute to international justice and world peace, while defending the dignity of our own people” (Sputnik News 2015d).

Chile has been holding a moderate stance on the issue and hopes the crisis can be solved through dialogue and diplomacy. Chile supported the UN General Assembly resolution of March 2014 that considered the referendum held in Crimea as illegitimate (La Tercera 2014). On the other hand, Chilean Foreign Minister Herald Muñoz recently declared himself against the sanctions deployed by the EU and the U.S., claiming that they are illegitimate as they were held unilaterally (Sputnik News 2015e). Santiago maintains good relations with both Ukraine and Russia and hopes the issue can be solved diplomatically. In this sense, Chile urged respect for the “rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine”, as well as for the human rights of the minorities (UN 2015b)

Since the end of the civil war in 2002, **Angola** has been developing a foreign policy focused on multilateralism, sharing bilateral cooperation with countries such as China, the U.S. and Russia (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2015). Angola's relations with Russia have an historic importance that has had

implications until today, as Moscow was a great supporter of the Angolan fight for independence. About the conflicts in Maryinka in June, the Angolan representative to the UN expressed his concerns about the reescalation of the conflict and called for the enforcement of the Minsk agreements, noting that the threat or use of force is not a means to end the conflict. Finally, Angola praises the role the OSCE has been playing in the crisis (UN 2015b).

Chad traditionally enjoys very close relations with France, its former colonizer, and the U.S., although relations China intensified in the last years (Africa in World Politics 2014). Mahamat Cherif, Chadian representative to the UN, reaffirmed in June that the solution to the crisis was political, and showed great concerns about developments in the conflict near Maryinka. On the other hand, he highlighted that the Minsk agreements already showed sensible improvements in the situation in Eastern Ukraine, thus urging for their fulfillment (UN 2015b).

Nigeria strongly believes that the solution to the crisis must be a political one. In this sense, the country considers that military solutions must be avoided, as they are untenable by the moment. Abuja affirms that a deep dialogue between the parties is necessary to achieve peace, including with the separatists, who must have their claims listened and respected (UN 2015b). However, this should be done with the utmost respect for the Ukrainian territorial integrity. Nigeria's representative highlighted in June the fragility of the situation in Eastern Ukraine, and called for the enforcement of the Minsk agreements as they were designed to prompt stability in the region (UN 2015b).

5 QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Which is the best way to provide national reconciliation between the Eastern Oblasts and Kiev? How this might be ensured? How can further problems in such relation be avoided in the medium term future?

2. What concrete measures the Security Council can adopt to stabilize the situation in Ukraine?

3. How can the Security Council prevent the flow of weapons and money to the hands of the militias?

4. How is it possible to conciliate the diverse goals and interests of the major regional players in Ukraine?

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UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN YEMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study guide aims to embrace the most important issues regarding the present situation in Yemen, in order to provide a basis for understanding and debate over the topic. To do so, this paper is divided into five sections. The Historical Background will explain Yemen's historical formation, the roots of the North-South divide, its colonial past, as well as the trajectory of both states during the second half of 20th century. This session ends with an overview of the major problems in recently-unified Yemen as well as a description of Arab-Spring-related events in 2011. The Statement of the Issue will concentrate in describing the country's most influential political factions which are parties of the current conflict. Later, it will provide a description of the events from the fall of Hadi's government onwards, including the highlights of the civil war and the subsequent intervention led by Saudi Arabia. The Previous International Action session shall list the actions taken and the International and Regional sphere to deal with the situation in Yemen, as well as analyzing UNSC approved resolutions and related documents. The Bloc Positions will concentrate on the UNSC members' interests and arguments used in debates regarding the situation in Yemen. At the end, the Question to Ponder shall provide five main questions that may guide the debate.

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1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Examining Yemen's history is critical to understand its current crisis. Its history has been marked by several foreign invasions that encountered strong resistance, which led the country to be called "Turks' graveyard" and the "Vietnam" of both Egypt and the Ottoman Empire.

1.1 ORIGINS OF YEMEN'S DIVIDE

Before the Islamic conquest, many kingdoms and City-States occupied the region. The occupiers lived mainly of the spice trade, especially myrrh and incense, with nearby civilizations. The most notable were the kingdoms of Minean, Sabeen, Himyarite, Qataban and Hadhramawt. With the decline of trade after the fourth century, the kingdoms declined and the area became isolated from the world (Etheredge 2011).

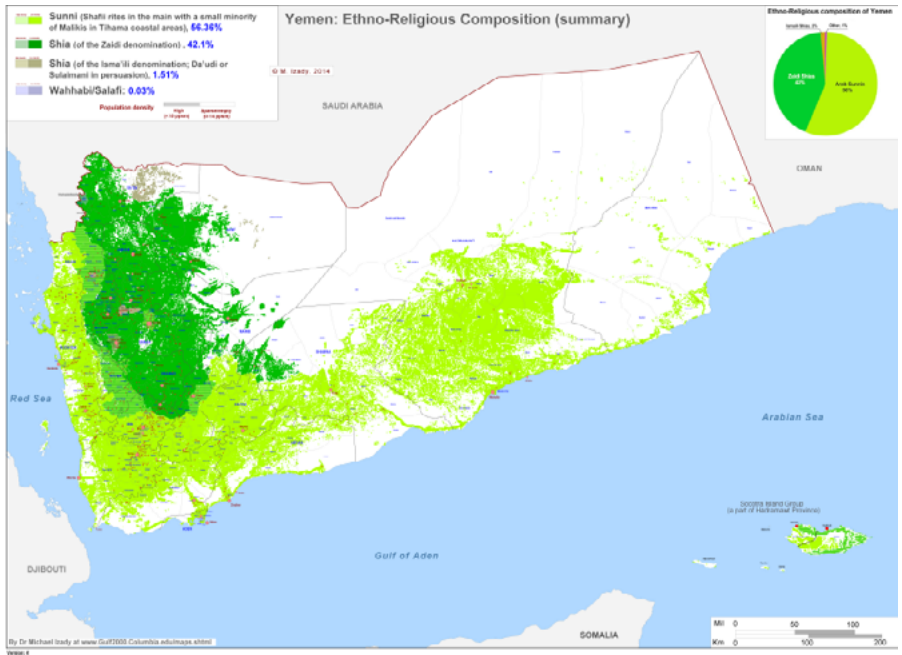
The birth of Islam in the seventh century and its subsequent expansion quickly reached Yemen, which became a prominent provider of soldiers for the caliphate (Burrowes 1995). Two centuries later, the Zaydis, a Shiite Islamic¹ sect that believes that Zayd ibn Ali is the legitimate successor of the Prophet, established themselves in the mountainous region in north Yemen. The sect ruled such area until 1962, putting it under the Imam's authority, a religious and political leader. Although the Imams rule has ended, the Zayd sect still has a strong influence on politics, representing about forty percent of the population and predominating in the army (Auchterlonie and Smith 1998). In the twelfth century, most of the Southern population, especially Aden, adopted the Sunni Shafii sect. This North-South religious divide is still present in the current Yemeni society, with both sects dividing the country geographically in half (Burrowes 1995).

The Southern and coastal regions of Yemen lived a period of great prosperity from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, especially due to the spices and coffee trade and its strategic location. In order to avoid the presence of foreign

¹ There are two main sects in Islam: the Shia and the Sunni. This division came from a political dispute in the early days of Islam. Roughly, the former believes that the religious leader must be a descendant of the Prophet, and their laws are based directly on Koran. The latter follows the laws of the Koran and the Sunnah. Zaydis are part of the Shiite sect, but are considered closer to the Sunni practice than to others Shiites.

powers in the region - namely Portugal - the Ottomans invaded Yemen in 1538 (first conquering Aden), taking both North and South. However, the invasion's high costs caused their withdrawal in 1635 (Auchterlonie and Smith 1998). After the victory over the Ottomans, the Zaidys managed to consolidate their power in both North and South until the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, however, the Southern tribes gradually separated from the North (Burrowes 1995, Kour 2005).

Image 1: Yemen's Ethnic-Religious Composition



Source: Izady 2013.

In 1839, the British conquered Aden and put it under British India's jurisdiction until 1937, as they were looking for a midway port on the route to India and to ensure their presence in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf (Etheredge 2011). In the decades following the occupation, the British signed a series of treaties with the "Nine Tribes" in the vicinity of Aden, due to the growing threat from foreign powers (especially the Ottomans) and from the tribes in Aden's hinterland. These agreements ensured the protection by the British

against other powers without interfering in internal tribal affairs, consolidating an informal system called the “Protectorate of Aden”. This period increased the differentiation between “city” and “tribes”, as the settlers took a series of measures to isolate Aden from the region, ultimately launching the basis for the posterior Southern separatism. The port city gained further prominence with the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), which connects the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean (Willis 2004).

In 1849, the Ottoman Empire invaded Northern Yemen again, and the occupation lasted until its own dissolution at the end of World War I, in 1918. The main reason to occupy Yemen once more was to establish a buffer zone between the British and the important city of Mecca (Farah 2002). After a few disputes in the Ottoman and British ruled territories, both parties negotiated its demarcation in 1902-1905, setting the borders that were maintained until the unification of the two Yemens in 1990 (Willis 2004, Auchterlonie and Smith 1998).

After the First World War and the consequent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Imam declared North Yemen’s independence. In 1934, a rising Saudi Arabia won a border war against North Yemen, and took the territories of Asir, Jizan and Najran in the later peace treaty. Fred Halliday (2005) argues that such conquest:

laid the basis for a Saudi–Yemen conflict, and much Yemeni resentment, that was to last for decades. Only in June 2000, at a summit between Prince Abdullah and President Al-Abdullah [Saleh], was a comprehensive agreement on this frontier, the longest undelineated one in the world, reached. That very night all Saudi aid to the Yemeni opposition was stopped, and various media activities associated with them, and based in London, abruptly interrupted (Halliday 2005, 178).

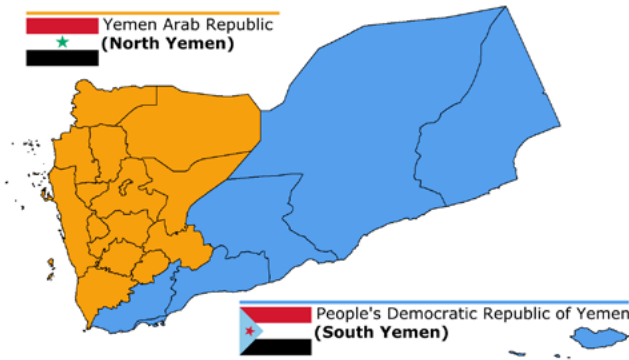
In the South, Aden became an official British colony in 1937, no longer staying under the Indian colonial government jurisdiction. This administrative change was followed by a larger allocation of British troops and the opening of a British Petroleum refinery, which resulted in an economic boom, turning the port into one of the busiest in the world (Burrowes 1995). In 1959, England, trying to stem the growing Arab nationalism in the region (mostly from Egypt), included the tribes of the Protectorate of Aden into a Federation, to which the city of Aden was added in 1963 (Auchterlonie and Smith 1998).

1.2 THE "TWO YEMENS" AND THE UNIFICATION PROCESS

The 1960s saw both regions experiencing a period of crisis: the North involved in a long and bloody civil war and the South struggled for independence from the British. According to Halliday (1990, 8), four main factors led to the growth of the independence movement: “colonial policy and its changes, socio-economic development, the growth of Arab nationalism, and the 1962 revolution in North Yemen”. After three years of an intense conflict of guerrilla warfare and terrorism, the British evacuated from Yemen in 1967. The pro-independence militias, notably the National Liberation Front (NLF), established a new state, the People’s Republic of South Yemen (Brown 1984).

Meanwhile, a seven-year-long civil war took place in North Yemen, after a republican coup that followed the Imam’s death in 1962. The conflict opposed monarchists, supported by Saudi Arabia, Israel and the UK, and the republicans, backed by Nasser’s Egypt and the Soviet Union. President Abdullah al-Sallal attempted to establish a republic based on the Egyptian formula, and therefore the war was framed by the struggle for regional influence between Egypt (pan-Arabism and republicanism) and Saudi Arabia (conservative monarchy). Additionally, Yemen’s strategic location was of vital importance for both countries: the first sought an ally at the exit of the Suez Canal, and the Saudis wanted to prevent the emergence of a strong country on the perimeter that could spread republicanism in its sphere of influence (Ferris 2015).

Since the beginning, Egyptian military were deployed to the country, and as the conflict escalated, its numbers rose to around 70,000 troops. As the losses amounted to about 10,000 men, the high political and economic costs for the country led to a withdrawal, especially after the defeat in the war with Israel in 1967 (Ferris 2015). Ultimately, Sallal was overthrown from the republican movement’s leadership, and a coalition between Republicans and Monarchists - which excluded the Imam - was created after a peace negotiation process. It was the birth of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) (Brown 1984).

Image 2: North and South Yemen prior to unification

Source: Wikimedia Commons 2011.

The two recently born countries then took different paths. In the People's Republic of South Yemen, an internal coup led NFL's left wing to assume the government. In 1970, the country changed its name to People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), assuming a policy embracing socialism and aligning to the socialist bloc, particularly to the USSR (Halliday 1990). The Soviets then established a maintenance base for ships near Aden, important due to the vital commercial and logistical sea routes from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. The PDRY also played an important political role in the region, by financing guerrillas in neighboring countries (including in the YAR) and harboring foreign revolutionaries (Halliday 1990).

Despite some progress after the economy's nationalization and other socializing reforms, the country remained poor and dependent on foreign aid (mostly from the USSR) and income from migrants. The economy suffered a severe blow on the occasion of the closing of the Suez Canal in 1967, amid the Six Days War. Two violent political crises subsequently shook South Yemen. In 1978, a single party model was adopted and the NFL was converted into the Yemen Socialist Party. An intraparty struggle in 1986 led to a self-destruction and virtual decapitation of YSP's leadership, causing the emergence of Ali Salim al-Beidh as the new leader (Halliday 1990, Burrowes 1995). This chain of events that deeply destabilized the country paved the way for future unification with the North.

The contrasting scenario of relative economic development and political stability in the North further deepened such trend. As the North started opening its economy, an exodus of workforce (mainly to Saudi Arabia) took place, as well as the arrival of many foreign experts to help in the modernization of its economy. After a series of political crisis, in 1974, 1977 and 1978, Ali Abdullah Saleh took power and stabilized the country. Formal democracy was introduced in 1982, and oil began to be exported in 1987. The economic development and political stability in the YAR and economic and political crisis in the PDRY facilitated the process of unification in 1990 (Auchterlonie and Smith 1998).

The unity was in question since the independence of the South, as both countries oscillated between war and cooperation. In 1972 and 1979, border skirmishes between the two Yemens were followed by the signature of political declarations with intentions to unify the countries. After a short crisis due to petroleum extraction in the border, the leaders of the two Yemens agreed to initiate the process of unification in 1989-1990 (Burrowes 1995).

The Republic of Yemen became formally a multiparty democracy with Ali Abdullah Saleh (former Yemen Arab Republic's President) as the President and with Ali Salem al Beidh (former Leader of Yemen Socialist Party) as the Vice-President. From the beginning, the new country was shaken by a crisis. In 1991, as a response to the Yemeni support to Iraq in the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia expelled 800,000 Yemenites from its territory, creating a new mass of unemployed and reducing a major source of income of the Yemeni economy. Although the unification achieved some success in democratization, the armies of formers PDRY and YAR were still not unified, and some factions of society, like the Muslim community and the former Southern elite, still opposed the unification (Burrowes 1995).

In 1993, although belonging to different political parties, Saleh and Beidh run for President and Vice-president respectively, and they won the general elections, but the former's party won the majority in legislative elections. In 1994, vice-president Ali Salem al Beidh, claiming an economic and political discrimination of the South, isolated himself in Aden and proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen). This led to a short civil war, won by the North, that once again unified Yemen. In 1997, new elections were held, leading to a major victory of the President's party, General People's Congress (60%), and Al-Islah (20%), an Islamic party

(Burrowes 1995).

By 2005, the economy was not growing enough to keep up with the growing population, exacerbating social problems (Etheredge 2011). According to Visentini (2014), President Saleh ruled his country through buying loyalty from tribes, distributing favors and allying with local oligarchies, as the country faced problems like unemployment, declining oil revenues, water scarcity and population high growth rates. Furthermore, three problems concerned the government even before the Arab Spring: Houthi's insurgency, Southern separatism and the Al-Qaeda (Visentini 2014)².

The first started as an armed conflict in 2004, when the Zaydi Leader Husayn al-Houthi and his followers chanted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans in pacific protests. The government took violent actions to stop the protests, which were responded with more violence by the Houthis. The group leader was considered a threat and was killed by the government in 2004. From then to 2010, there were several fights between the government and the Houthis. With the increasing violence, more and more tribes from the North started to call themselves "Houthis" (Salmoni, Loidolt and Wells 2010).

The second problem was Southern separatism. This movement gained force once again in 2007, although it remained mostly pacific. The people of the South claim that they were put aside in the country's politics (Visentini 2014). Although only a fifth of Yemen's population lives in the South, it accounts for more than 80 percent of the oil exports and for most of the country's sources of revenue, due to the Aden-located refinery and its port (Al-Batati 2014).

The question regarding Al-Qaeda gained importance in 2000, after the terrorist attack on USS Cole³, at Aden harbor. Furthermore, the 9/11 attacks led the United States to seek cooperation with President Saleh against the growing terrorism threat inside the country, notably in the Eastern region. The United States provided men and resources, and launched several drone strikes in Yemen since 2002. However, Al-Qaeda from Yemen and Saudi Arabia managed to organize and consolidate itself as the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009, quickly becoming the group's most active branch (Visentini 2014).

2 These three questions are furthered below. For further information, check the Statement of the Issue's "Local factions, political groups and divisions" subsection.

3 On October, 2000, the USS Cole destroyer was refueling at Aden's port when suicide terrorists exploded a small boat next to it, killing 17 US citizens and injuring many others (CNN Library 2014).

1.3 THE ARAB SPRING AND THE COLLAPSE OF SALEH'S GOVERNMENT

The wave of protests known as the Arab Spring reached Yemen in 2011. Early protests were peaceful and directed against corruption and asking for more democracy, better living conditions, and the resignation of President Saleh, which had been ruling the country for 33 years. The government fiercely repressed the protests, killing 45 protesters in March, which further mobilized the people of Yemen (Naylor 2015). This led to an escalation of violence, with several tribal leaders and army deserters joining the opposition forces. The US and Saudi Arabia, former allies of Saleh, supported the movement to remove him from power, as the costs of maintaining support towards him became too high (Visentini 2014).

After many clashes between loyalists and opposition forces, Saleh negotiated his resignation with the Gulf Cooperation Council⁴. However, Saleh stepped back in three occasions, until the escalation of the conflict led to a direct attack on the presidential palace, seriously injuring the President. The president went to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. In his absence, Vice-President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi took power, although he was unable to control the deteriorating situation. The instability in the country also exacerbated previous problems, as the Houthis insurgency, Al-Qaeda (which expanded its area of influence and operation) and internal tribal struggles (Visentini 2014).

In September Saleh returned to the country, finally signing resigning his resignation from power two months later. Hadi ascended to power, holding the responsibility to promote new elections. The opposition, mainly the Joint Meeting Parties⁵, was divided and could not compete with the situation. Elections were held in early 2012 with Hadi as the only candidate, winning the “dispute” and assuming the Presidency of the Republic of Yemen (Visentini 2014).

4 The Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981 and has Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates as members. It has as its main goal the economic, social and security integration of its members.

5 The Joint Meeting Parties was formed in 2002 in an attempt to challenge the GPC in Yemen politics. It is formed by the alliance of five opposition groups, including the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) and Islah, which is the strongest member (Crisis Group 2011).

2 STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Even though Abed-Rabbo Mansou Hadi was Saleh's vice-president for 17 years, he was still an unknown figure for most of Yemeni population by the time he was elected in 2012. Not only the people's trust would he have to gain, but also the armed forces', which were still suspicious about this new leadership and remained in part loyal to the former President. Acknowledging that it would be hard to control a country so affected by the widespread protests of the Arab Spring and legitimate its government inside the country, Hadi focused on gathering international support and, most importantly, financial assistance. His speeches in the United Nations in late 2012 addressed the importance of the fight against terrorism, represented in Yemen by one of Al Qaeda's most powerful branches, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Rosen 2015, Zimmerman 2014).

In January 2014, the country held the National Dialogue Conference, a forum in which all the existing political groups and factions, some of which were usually marginalized by the political elite, agreed to get together and discuss key systemic issues to the "post-Saleh Yemen". The result was the conclusion of a large agreement containing more than one thousand recommendations that foresaw the draft of a new constitution and a referendum on that constitution for 2015. Once the constitution was accepted by the referendum, the agreement predicted that new elections were to happen within nine months (J.H.-R. 2014, Rosen 2015, Zimmerman 2014). However, the result did not please everyone: the final document also stated that Yemen would move toward the adoption of a federalized system. The question of how to divide Yemen in federalized regions raised new discontent, since it has been long an issue of disagreement between Yemeni Southerners and Northerners. President Hadi formed a 22-membered committee – the Regions Defining Committee – to further discuss this issue, and on February 10, the committee voted for a six-region division: four in the North and two in the South. The Southerners rejected the decision, for a division of the Southern territory could hamper their independence ambitions; the Northerners were also not satisfied, since the division left all gas and oil reserves to the Southerners (Mudallali 2015, Zimmerman 2014, Al-Hassani 2014).

Therefore, it was not hard to foresee that the rise of a new President would have very little effect on Yemen's most contentious issues. The impossibility to

reach an agreement between the North and the South fostered tensions and made it easier for extremist groups to gain power in those regions: the Shiite Houthis and the separatists, respectively. The difficulty to gain legitimacy among the armed forces would also prove to be a problem, and the necessity to fight terrorism would definitely not be limited to speech rhetoric, with AQAP gaining more and more power in a country devastated by socioeconomic inequalities and political instability. All of those issues put together exploded in the chaotic situation we see Yemen is facing today.

2.1 LOCAL FACTIONS, POLITICAL GROUPS AND DIVISIONS

Grasping the Yemeni crisis directly involves understanding who the groups involved in its current situation are and in what consists their main objectives. The country has to face several diverging interests from distinct political groups and factions, namely the Houthis, the Southern separatists, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the government forces. Parts that can also increase the troubles are the ones that remain loyal to former President Ali-Abdullah Saleh, especially inside the army.

The international press usually calls **the Houthis** a “Shiite Muslim rebel group” or “Shiite militia” – probably in an attempt to make a direct connection with Shiites in Iran. They are, however, members from the Zaydi branch of Shia Islam, which make them a minority not only among Yemen’s mostly Sunni population, but also inside Shia Islam. They hold different beliefs not only from the Sunnis, but also from Shiites in Iran as well, for example: one of the basic premises of the Houthi movement is that people have a religious obligation to rise up against an unjust ruler, a very different vision from other Sunni and Shia schools of thought. These ones would rather prefer to avoid the chaos that can come from insurrection (The Week 2015, Basu 2015, Barrabi 2015, Rayman 2015, Rosen 2015).

The Houthi Movement started in the nineties in the Saada governorate in the North of Yemen. They began as a youth-oriented religious group of studies that preached for the revival of traditional Zaydism, making reunions under the name of Al-Shabaab al-Mu’minin, or “The Believing Youth Forum”. There are few official sources about their evolution to become the political group they are today, but some of them allege that this first group has gone through some divergences, and the “Houthi” nomenclature that is used today is after

Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, their founder. In the 2000s, they started to also use the name “Ansar Allah”, the “Partisans of God”. It is also known that they had support from former-President Saleh during their emergence, for he believed they were a counter-weight group to growing militant Sunni Islamism (Al Batati, Who are the Houthis in Yemen? 2015, Jane 2015, Schmitz 2015).

In 2003, however, Hussein al-Houthi organized protests against US invasion on Iraq, also criticizing Saleh’s government for its support to the US War on Terror. After that, the Houthis no longer enjoyed the benefits of President Saleh’s sympathy, and, in 2004, the first war against the government erupted. The reason were the protests in a mosque in Sana’a, an act that Saleh considered a challenge to his authority. He sent his forces to the province, and Hussein was killed. That was the first time the Houthis turned to arms, what they alleged to be on grounds of self-defense. The Houthis continued rebelling against the government with their new leader, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, and since 2004, they fought six wars. In 2010, part of them signed a ceasefire. Ansar Allah gained many followers by exploiting people’s resentments against the regime, which made the movement gather supporters that would not necessarily help the revival of the Zaydism, but who were willing to fight against an autocratic and oppressive ruler (Al Batati, Who are the Houthis in Yemen? 2015, Basu 2015, Jane 2015, Schmitz 2015).

Since the first attacks against Saleh’s administration, the Yemeni government has been accusing the Houthis of receiving financial and military aid from Iran. The international press often calls the group as an “Iran-backed” militia, due to the apparent “Shiite affinity”, but both Tehran and Ansar Allah deny the connection. In 2013, a vessel suspected of sending arms illegally to Yemen was intercepted, and officials found Iranian conventional weapons and explosives inside. Yemeni and US authorities believed the ship was meant to reach the Houthis. Even if few proofs exist of this alliance, analysts believe that supporting Ansar Allah would be part of the Iranian strategy of undermining Saudi influence in Yemen. The Yemeni government also accuses the Houthis of being backed by Libya, as well as by Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite Muslim militia – an organization strongly supported by Iran. In November 2014, commanders from Hezbollah arrived in Sana’a alleging that the reason of their presence was to help the Houthi with training for armed clashes in the region of Marib. This connection with the Iranian-backed Lebanese group could be

a proof of the connection between the Houthis and Iran as well (Ellis and Thompson 2015, Balanche 2014, Jane 2015, Zimmerman 2014, Barrabi 2015). However, despite the fact that Iran provides supplies and weapons to the Houthi Movement, there is evidence that Tehran has no control over Houthi behavior, as they are domestic actors, with decades-old interests in the Yemeni balance of power (The Economist 2015).

As Yemen is one of the countries with most firearms per capita in the world, there is plenty of availability of assault rifles such as AK-47s by legal and non-legal means to groups such as the Houthis. However, they are also equipped with RPGs, mortars, heavy machine guns and a variety of weaponry. It has also historically stolen Army's military hardware, including T-54 and T-55 main battle tanks, as well as surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) (IHS Jane's 2015).

Another root of conflict can be found in the **Southern Secessionist Movement**. As aforementioned, the Southern population has never been truly satisfied with the 1990 unification. Since then, they fear a government commanded by the North, and the divergences between both parts had already led to civil war, in 1994. The defeating of the South left profound marks and an eternal resentment. They claim to have been historically marginalized politically and economically by the North and excluded by government services and development projects. They have been denied an equal share of the oil revenues, even though 80% of the production in the country take place in the South. Aden's fisheries, ports and refineries are a center of economic activity, making the South responsible for the majority of Yemen's wealth. One of their major demands is the redistribution of wealth from Sana'a to the South. The economic and political grievances summed up with national identity issues gave birth to seven parties that share the common desire to build an independent Southern nation. Their coalition is known by the name "al-Hirak", although that is a loose definition for such a fragile coalition among diverse guerrilla and militant factions (Day 2010, Visentini 2012, IISS 2014, Zimmerman 2014, Al Batati 2014, Mudallali 2015).

This separatist movement had an apex in 2007, when former soldiers who had been compulsorily retired from the Southern Army after the civil war started rallying in Aden, demanding equal salaries to the soldiers in the North. President Saleh refused to hold talks and demanded his forces to suppress the protests, killing hundreds of people, which led such groups to engage in

protests during the Arab Spring events that deposed him. When Hadi, himself a Southerner, assumed the presidency, he offered an official apology for the civil war and compensations for civil and military servants who lost their jobs after the unification. He also has encouraged pro-separatism leaderships to join the transitional talks, but with the besieging of Sana'a and his government collapse, such approaching was short-lived, in fact encouraging its claims to overthrow the government and recreate a southern state. However, the Southerners have so far lacked a charismatic centralizing leader and better equipment, as well as the level of centralization of the Houthis: they are ruled by several leaders and divided in many factions due to internal divergences (Al Batati 2014, Reardon 2014). The latest events in Yemen may indicate a possibility to unify the Southern leaderships in one single and strong voice, as it can be stated by the strong anti-Houthi sentiment in the cities and by some calls for independence made by some of the Southern leaders: Nasser al-Nuba⁶, for example, affirmed they will no longer take orders from Sana'a (MacDonald 2015). Nonetheless, for now, there have been only sparse military operations, such as RPG attacks against government forces or the Houthis conducted by southern separatists.

The Northern Houthis and the Southern Secessionist Movement, as well as the divergences between them, however, are not the only things the Yemeni government has to deal with: the **Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula** is also increasing its influence in the territory. AQAP was formed in 2009 by Saudi and Yemeni Sunni militants of the international network of Al Qaeda, being considered its most active and dangerous branch. It already claimed the authority of attacks against several regional and Western targets, notably the attacks to Charlie Hebdo⁷ in January 2015. The US State Department estimated in 2014 that AQAP had a number close to one thousand members (Guéhenno 2015, Council on Foreign Relations 2015). It is possible that one of their most significant sources of funding comes from donors in Saudi Arabia that also fund other Sunni terrorist groups.

According to AQAP's propaganda, its primary goals are consistent with the principles of militant jihad of purging the Muslim countries of Western

⁶ Former military general and one of the founders of al-Hirak (MacDonald 2015).

⁷ On 7th January, two Islamist terrorists self-identified with AQAP and equipped with machine guns promoted an assault on the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo, in Paris, killing 11 and injuring an equal number, and killing six more as the police persecuted them. The attack was reportedly motivated by the frequent publication of Muslim-offensive contempt.

influence and replacing secular regimes with ones that observe the Sharia law to establish an Islamic caliphate. They include overthrowing the Yemeni regime, killing Western nationals and allies – notably members of Saudi royal family – and attacking US homeland (Council on Foreign Relations 2015, Jane 2014). Their presence in Yemen would be probably the first reason to motivate any foreign-led intervention in the country. In the beginning, the Yemeni government suspected that the AQAP and the Houthis held close relations, probably because both groups opposed the regime. These accusations proved to be rumors when AQAP exploded a device targeting a Houthi religious procession. In fact, even though they are still not as strong and influent as the Houthis, the AQAP benefits from the rise of the Houthis to grow, by convincing the groups who oppose them – specially Southerners – that Al Qaeda is the natural ally (Guéhenno 2015, Rayman 2015, Jane 2015). The United States, for example, had total support of President Hadi on conducting air strikes against AQAP targets, which is part of their counterterrorism strategy with target killing campaigns (Mudallali 2015, Council on Foreign Relations 2015). The Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula no longer directly administers areas of the country, but they continue to expand their operations and areas of influence, mainly in Southern and Eastern territories, also operating cells near the capital, Sana'a (Zimmerman 2014).

Finally, it is important to understand that the army in Yemen will also be a source of problems in the ongoing crisis. The armed forces are currently divided as some parts have been kept loyal to former-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, mainly the republican guards. This loyalty is dangerous to President Hadi's administration and Yemen's stability more generally, since he will no longer be able to count on the full efficiency of his army to shield the cities in case of attacks – that can come from the Houthis, from the Southerners, from AQAP or even from the neighboring countries, as Iran or Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, however, this situation is convenient for Mr. Saleh, who expects regaining influence in the country with the weakness and impotence of Hadi. Saleh is also being accused of allying these loyal military units with the Houthis, in an attempt to weaken even faster the current administration and carve him a secure space in the future of Yemeni politics (Les Echos 2015, Ellis and Thompson 2015, Schmitz 2015)

2.2 RECENT EVENTS

In August 2014, the leader of the Houthis, Abdulmalek al-Houthi, called for protests against the government. The deteriorating socioeconomic and security conditions of the country contributed to erode the credibility of President Hadi's government, which al-Houthi called corrupt and unable to carry out reforms that could improve people's lives⁸. The demonstrations started on the 18th day of the same month, and soon took over the streets of the capital, Sana'a, and many other cities around the country. The armed Houthi rebels soon arrived in Sana'a and started to set up camps surrounding the city and ministry buildings. They guaranteed that they would not use violence except for self-defense, but protests anti-Houthi and pro-Hadi soon took over the streets as well, leading authorities to worry that the situation could easily become violent. The UN Security Council expressed its concern about the security situation after Houthi's actions and about the effects its deterioration could have in Yemen's political transition (Guéhenno 2015, Security Council Report 2014).

On September 2nd, the President dismissed his cabinet and made a proposal for the Houthis that included their participation on a new government. They refused the proposal, and tensions escalated between them and some armed groups affiliated with the Islamic party Al-Islah⁹. On the 18th, Houthi rebels besieged a Sunni Islamist university in the suburbs of Sana'a, and the fights between the rebels and the military started to become more violent. However, once the fights spread into the city, military action was refrained, and former President Saleh was suspected to be involved in this decision. The Houthis took over the city in the next days, seizing the state-run television station and government buildings (Security Council Report 2014).

Thus, on September 21st, the Peace and National Partnership Agreement was signed. The plan made the parts agree to the appointment of a new government within a month, in order to stop the fighting and to attend Houthi's

8 Yemen's socioeconomic indicators place it among the least developed countries in the world: 35% of the population is unemployed – a rate that goes up to 65% among people under 30 years old – and 50% is illiterate – 70% when it comes to women. The revenues from crude oil represent around 70% of the total revenues of the country, and the recent fall off the crude prices worsened the economic collapse of the country (Balanche 2014).

9 Islah is a Northern-based Islamic opposition party. One of its key figures is the President of Iman University, Sheikh Abdul-Magid al-Zindani, who has been long engaged in the Islamic militancy and had in the past connections to Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda (Day 2010).

grievances. It addressed several issues concerning the country's critical situation: it predicted, for example, the reduction by 25% of fuel prices and the formation of an economic committee of qualified experts in order to make binding recommendations to the government, whose responsibility was to alleviate "the burden of the people". Most importantly, the Agreement predicted that the President should appoint political advisers from both Ansar Allah – representing the Houthis – and the Southern Peaceful Movement, as well as a new "neutral" Prime Minister not affiliated to any political party, three days following the agreement's entry into force. The document, based on the outcomes of the aforementioned National Dialogue Conference, was signed by 12 Yemeni parties and groups, including the Houthi representatives, the Peaceful Southern Movement representatives, and the General People's Congress party (GPC) – the party of both Saleh and Hadi, still ruled by the former (Jadaliyya Reports 2014, Al-Moshki 2014, Security Council Report 2014). The Houthis, however, refused to sign an annex of the agreement that demanded the restoration of state authority and control over all the territory, which meant a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the camps on the areas they held. It also stipulated the disarmament of all parties involved in the conflicts and the recovery of all state-owned weapons that were robbed during the events. Though many people saw this refusal as a sign that the Houthis were not ready to set off camp of Sana'a, they themselves considered the agreement a success, even without signing the annex (Al-Moshki 2014).

Nonetheless, the Houthis did not seem willing to fully respect the agreement and quickly violated it by tightening their grip on the capital with the seizing of the First Armored Division's headquarters. They moved the expansion of their territorial control¹⁰ southwards and westwards – into territories with the country's biggest Sunni population and the oil-producing region of Marib¹¹ (Security Council Report 2014, Guéhenno 2015). The Houthi's advance over the country enhanced fear in the Sunni-majority South that envisions federal autonomy and displeased AQAP, that operates intensely in Marib. The tribes in this region who support President Hadi also consider the Houthis "terrorists" and "invaders" and feared that their increased presence might destabilize this important region (Mudallali 2015). In November, the agreement got even

10 Sāda and Hodeida were two other big cities over which they took control (Les Echos 2015).

11 The region produces over 70% of Yemen's oil and gas (Mudallali 2015).

further away from working: the GPC and the Houthi group stated they would not accept the new Prime Minister nominated by Hadi, Khaled Bahah, because they considered that the decision did not fulfill the norms predicted by the Agreement. The GPC considered itself neglected by the President and decided to boycott the new government, calling on all the Party's nominees to reject any post offered. The Houthis also found the formation of the new government disappointing and stressed that it was necessary to meet the Agreement's criterions of integrity and efficacy (KUNA 2014).

The impossibility to find common ground for truly successful agreements contributed to the escalation of tension among all parts and led to even more troubled events right in the beginning of 2015. On January 17th, the Houthi militia kidnapped Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak, the President's chief of staff¹². He had a long story of disputes with the Houthis: himself a Southerner, Mubarak was the one who proposed the six-region divide that would separate the North from the oil and gas deposits. The Houthis even vetoed his nomination when Hadi chose him for the position (Mudallali 2015). Two days later, the militias attacked the presidential palace, surrounded the Prime Minister's house and defeated the presidential guard, taking their position. The Southern city of Aden closed all of its air, land and sea access, on a sign of support for President Hadi, who is also a Southerner. The next day, al-Houthi made a speech stating that his revolution knew "no limits" and demanding a national partnership with Southern and revolutionary parties, as well as improved security for people in Marib to fight against Al Qaeda. The later demand was seen by many as an attempt to gather sympathy from the tribes in order to control the oil resources, rather than defending the population from AQAP. The UNSC issued a statement supporting President Hadi and condemning the use of violence (Mudallali 2015).

Even so, on January 22th, both the President and the Prime Minister resigned, making an agreement with the Houthis that included the release of Mubarak and the withdrawal of the militias from the presidential palace, the city streets and the government institutions they were surrounding since 2014. In return, Hadi would concede the Houthis the constitutional changes they sought and a wider participation in state institutions (Mudallali 2015, The Economist 2015).

12 Which means he is the director of the President's cabinet (Les Echos 2015).

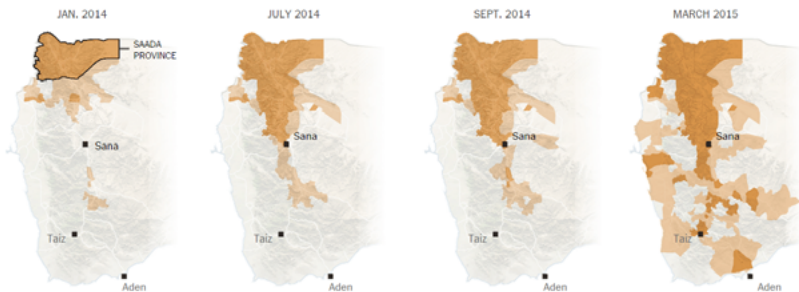
In February, the Houthis consolidated their move by dissolving the parliament and establishing an interim government (Ghobari 2015). By the end of the month, Hadi escaped the house arrest with the help of his security personnel, and moved to Aden (Becker 2015). In a television address, he declared the illegitimacy of the Houthi government takeover, and claimed his own legitimacy as Yemeni President (AlJazeera 2015, Almasmari and Hanna 2015).

2.3 THE ESCALATION OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE SAUDI-LED INTERVENTION

By the end of March, Houthi rebels, allied with pro-Saleh forces started advancing toward Aden, the last stronghold of Hadi government forces. On March 25th evening, airstrikes against rebel positions in Yemen, conducted by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia, launched a military intervention codenamed Operation Decisive Storm (AlJazeera 2015). The coalition, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, was composed initially by most GCC members (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain) but soon Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Jordan and Senegal joined the campaign (Reuters 2015). The intervention was held after requests for foreign intervention by the UN Security Council, the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) made by President Hadi, who fled to Riyadh when the bombing started (BBCNews 2015, Agence France-Presse 2015).

Image 3: Houthi Progression since 2014

■ Houthis control or have influence ■ Houthis are able to operate



Source: The New York Times 2015

The initial phase of hostilities focused mainly on bombing Houthi and pro-Saleh strategic positions such as arms depots, military bases, air-defense assets and airports in Sana'a, Taz and elsewhere. A no-fly zone and a naval blockade were established, as the main objective was to achieve air superiority and ultimately a complete control over Yemeni airspace (Mustafa 2015a). According to the coalition force's spokesman, the next phases would be centered in destroying rebel-controlled axes of ballistic missiles, supply corridors, ammunition stores, military facilities and logistics assets, as well as preventing the Houthis from entering and controlling Aden (A. H. Cordesman 2015, Al Arabyia 2015).

The United States has been providing logistical and intelligence support for the intervention, such as live-feed videos from US surveillance UAVs and aerial refueling for coalition fighter jets (M. Zenko 2015). There is also speculation over the airdropping of weaponry and medical supplies for anti-Houthi militias in Aden, as they were delivered with an advanced system of GPS-guided high-altitude parachutes, a technology available almost exclusively in the US (Stratfor 2015b, 17). The United States has also stopped the freezing of arms sales to Egypt – a prominent member of the coalition, which was in force since October 2013, on the occasion of the military coup that led to Al-Sisi's government (Bennet 2015). Additionally, as the members of the coalition are US allies, most of the military hardware used in the operation was provided in the last years by the US, such as the F-15 and F-16 fighter jets used in the bombing campaign (Mazzeti and Cooper 2015).

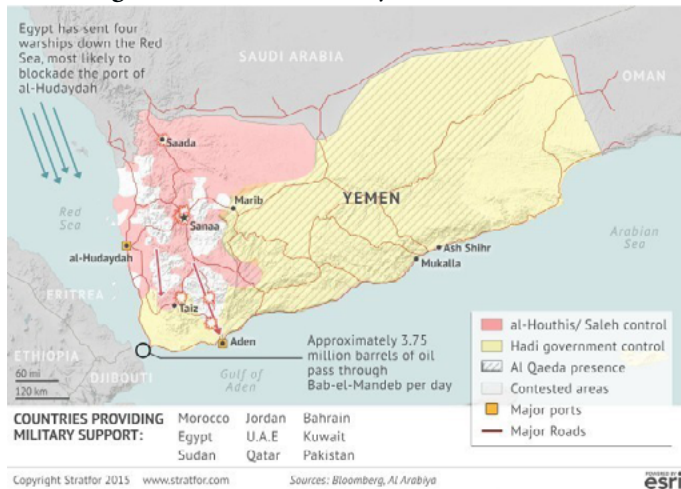
From the end of March to the first weeks of April, the war saw a dashing offensive by the Houthi and pro-Saleh forces toward Aden and the Eastern provinces of the country. However, the airstrikes effects and the resistance posed by the coalition-backed pro-Hadi and tribal militias slowly reverted the situation.

In the South, the main goal was to establish control over Aden, a port city which consists in a valuable strategic asset, due to its seaport and airfield that could be used as main supplying corridors for the rebel forces. It is also the core pocket of resistance of pro-Hadi troops, and its fall would have a great symbolic value. After a few days in the beginning of April, rebel troops were controlling most of the city's strategic positions, but its advance reached a stalemate as a fierce resistance by government forces and pro-Hadi militias stopped them, combined with the decisive coalition's air support. Tribal fighters and other militias have started storming the Aden-fighting rebel's flank, in an attempt to cut off their supply lines. As they are becoming increasing isolated, without supplies and reinforcements, and as coalition special forces¹³ started infiltrating through the

13 On May 3rd, between 40-50 special forces soldiers arrived in Aden to bolster the efforts of

port, the situation became increasingly worrying for the rebels (Stratfor 2015b).

Image 4: Situation in Yemen by the end of March 2015



Source: Stratfor 2015c.

As their units became gridlocked in Aden, the Houthis continued their progression toward East, specially toward the cities of Marib and Ataq, capital of the Shabwa region, where major Yemeni energy facilities are located. However, as the government's central authority eroded, many tribes started mobilizing their own men to resist the Houthis. In the Eastern Hadramawt region, around 20,000 tribal fighters were raised to fight in coordination with government forces, to repel the Houthi advance. Also, the coalition's menace of close air support, specifically, has discouraged concentrations of armaments and personnel in ground columns, which has slowed the rhythm of advance of Houthi and pro-Saleh forces. Special Forces units from the coalition also have been reportedly operating across the country, assuming advisory roles and helping to identify targets for the airstrikes (Stratfor 2015b).

By mid-April, the situation had stalemated in most of the country: as the air campaign and the tribal resistance had constrained the power projection by rebel troops, it has not been capable of regaining terrain previously conquered by them. The war's first phase of movements slowed down to become a war of attrition. As

pro-Hadi combatants. A Southern Resistance Movement's spokesman has confirmed them to be coalition forces' special units. Despite the Saudi denial of any involvement of ground troops so far, a video footage showing heavily armed soldiers walking in the streets raised suspicion that it could be Saudi special units or UAE soldiers, as their equipment was not available for regular pro-Hadi fighters.

practically every faction in the war counts heavily on external support for provision of weaponry, ammunition and even food and medical supplies, there has been an increase in Saudi and Iranian attempts to help their respective allies. In attempts to cut off the logistical support to rebels, Saudi air sorties have destroyed Sana'a International Airport, preventing Iranian aircraft to land. However, despite the blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and UAE, a Iranian convoy was located in the waters close to the Oman-Yemen border, prompting the US to dispatch a cruiser and an aircraft carrier to the location (Stratfor 2015b, 7), which led to sporadic moments of raising tensions (McLeary 2015a, McLeary 2015b).

On April 21st, the Coalition Forces' spokesman, Saudi Brigadier General Ahmed Asiri, announced the end of Operation Decisive Storm and the beginning of a next phased, called Operation Restoring Hope. Despite the vagueness of this new operation's core aims, it was supposed to consist mainly of humanitarian missions, counter-terror operations and focus on reviving political dialogue (Sputnik 2015, SUSRIS 2015). However, the volume of air sorties has remained high since then, which is explained by the broader Saudi strategy of weakening Houthi's position, in order to force a return to achieve a negotiated solution (Stratfor 2015b, 7). Although the air campaign alone is obviously not decisive to accomplish such aim, it is tied to the decades-long Saudi practice of influencing Yemeni internal actors through political contacts and its patronage system toward tribal leaders and key military and regional leaders (A. H. Cordesman 2015).

The coalition's air campaign is being highly criticized by UN humanitarian-related organs such as the Secretariat's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for its consequences. Preliminary assessments roughly estimate that airstrikes have directly caused more than 1,000 deaths and more than 3,000 wounded people. The number of internally displaced due to the war rose to 300,000 and around 12 million of the total 26 million Yemeni citizens face food insecurity (OCHA 2015). Additionally, around 2,000 to 3,000 Yemeni refugees flee the country to Djibouti and other neighboring countries every day, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Jakes 2015). The naval blockade added to the airstrikes has produced a major fuel shortage that has brought the water supply, telecommunication services, food production and water distribution to a halt, taking Yemen to the edge of an infrastructure collapse (AlJazeera 2015).

By the end of April, there have been frequent Houthi incursions to Saudi Arabia through the Northern Yemeni border, as well as shelling by mortar and Katyusha rocket artillery to the cities of Jizan and Najdan. Saudi Arabia has reportedly been shooting artillery fire toward Marib and Taiz, and has abandoned

border posts and evacuated cities in the border (Stratfor 2015b, 4, AlJazeera 2015). Even though such skirmishes in the border have a small dimension, due to the limited capacity of the Houthi to advance into Saudi territory, a coalition's ground operation to alter the impasse in the civil war has not been ruled out. In fact, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have repeatedly stated that this is an open possibility, and have assembled its rapid deployment forces. Saudi Arabia has reportedly mobilized 150,000 men in its border with Yemen, and Egypt has extended for three months its mandate for deploying troops abroad in the beginning of May (Reuters 2015). The situation appears to have reached a decisive point, as the coalition will have to decide whether to negotiate a solution keeping the current status quo or to deploy a ground incursion.

The current turmoil resulted from the civil war has benefited AQAP, which capitalized on the absence of state authority in most of the country and dramatically expanded its geographical range of operations. The terrorist organization has been deploying a sophisticated military operation since last summer, but as the conflict progressively escalated, it has adapted to the current situation, conducting different kinds of attacks, using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) assassinations and diverse guerrilla tactics toward both government and Houthi targets. However, as the later have advanced to the Eastern territories, AQAP shifted its attention to Houthi targets, turning them into its prior enemy (Zelin and Hoover 2015). By mid-April, it has taken control of an airport, a seaport and an oil-exporting terminal in Mukalla, at Yemen's Southeastern coast, as well as conducting a massive prison break, releasing about three hundred inmates. Although it already possesses strategic positions and assets in other parts of the country, this has been its boldest move so far, as it was the first time it actually assumed the ownership of such critical infrastructure (Laub 2015, Byman and Williams 2015, Stratfor 2015b, 10).

2.4 YEMEN IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC SCENARIO

The question of whether the Northern Shiite Houthis will or will not succeed in taking control over the country is part of the longstanding regional competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which has been taking place over the last 30 years. Despite never confronting directly each other, both countries dispute their influence across the region in a species of "regional Cold War". Middle East's destabilization – in course since Iraq's invasion in 2003 – was deepened by the disruption of many governments' central authorities during the Arab Spring. This situation offered fertile ground for external powers to meddle into domestic

disputes, consolidating Tehran-Riyadh dispute's *modus operandi* of supporting internal political factions in order to influence domestic political systems of fragile states such as Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and now Yemen (Visentini and Roberto 2015).

The Syrian Civil War, from 2011 onwards, became the epicenter of this regional dispute, as the US, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries actively supported different groups of rebel forces against the Iran-backed government. The war's spillover effects reached the surrounding countries and weakened the Iranian arch of alliances – labeled as “Resistance Axis” – composed by Lebanon's Hezbollah, Palestine's Hamas and Syria's Ba'ath government itself (Visentini and Roberto 2015).

The rise of the Islamic State (IS), as a result from the effects of the Syrian civil war, led to an implicit cooperation between Iran and the US, due to the shared necessity of containing the IS (Guimarães and Müller 2014). Such trend added to the fact that since 2014, but especially during the first months of 2015, the US-Iranian negotiations over a nuclear deal advanced significantly. As the prospects of a nuclear deal and the establishment of a Washington-Tehran *détente* arose, traditional US-allies are developing new forms of collective action instead of relying solely on the US. As both the GCC and Arab League are composed mainly by Sunni-majority countries, this rapid deployment force is being interpreted as an alliance directed toward countering Iran (Stavridis 2015, Mustafa 2015a)

Additionally, on March 28th-29th, following the beginning of the military intervention in Yemen, during the Arab League summit in Sharm el-Sheik, member countries' foreign ministers approved the establishment of an Arab Defense Force. Composed of 40,000 men – twice the size of NATO's Response Force –, it will be based on Egypt and commanded by a Saudi general. It shall be composed of ground, naval, air and special operation units. While the fulcrum of the forces shall be composed by Egyptian, Saudi and maybe Sudanese, countries such as Morocco, Jordan and the UAE will also provide men and niche capabilities, such as intelligence and special operation units (Mustafa 2015). While the troops are supposed to be paid by their respective countries, the permanent command structure will be financed by the GCC.

Saudi Arabia took the lead in this new regional configuration by coordinating the collective effort of an expanded version of its traditional main influence area, the Gulf Cooperation Council (Mustafa 2015a). Riyadh also started the bombing campaign simultaneously to the Lausanne P5+1 nuclear negotiations between Washington and Iran. Adding to the regional conditionings, Saudi Arabia has deep-rooted interests in Yemen. It has established, since Yemen's unification, a system of patronage over internal political factions, managing to balance one

against the other. As demonstrated above, the fall of Saleh started dismantling this fragile balance of power, culminating with the Houthi takeover of Sana'a and subsequent advance southwards (Haykel 2011).

The dashing Houthi expansion toward Aden triggered a prompt response both from Saudi Arabia and Egypt – the leading military powers in the coalition – due to the city's strategic character. The seaport gives access to the Bab el-Mandeb strait, situated between Yemen, Djibouti and Eritrea, therefore connecting the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. This strait is not only the entrance for the Red Sea but also its connection to the Indian Ocean (Visentini 2012, Balanche 2014). Through this important chokepoint passes most of the traffic that transits the Suez Canal, as well as through the Egyptian Suez-Mediterranean (SUMED)¹⁴ pipeline. As the Suez Canal control is still one of the most important sources of revenue for the Egyptian government, any destabilization directly affects Egypt's economic security (A. Cordesman 2015b). As most of the Persian Gulf oil exports transit the strait, its daily flow of crude oil and natural gas is an estimated 3.8 million barrels/d in 2013. Such importance is reflected in the prompt rise in oil prices after the coalition's intervention began by the end of March.

The main Saudi goal is preventing the Houthi from taking over Aden. The control of such a pivotal port in the region by what they consider to be an Iranian proxy group would eventually allow Iran to outflank the Gulf and deploying air and naval forces to Yemen, which shares a long and porous border with Saudi Arabia (Stratfor 2015a).

3 PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL ACTION

There have been two main multilateral spheres of discussion and action toward Yemen since the events that resulted in the fall of President Saleh: (i) the global sphere, through the United Nations Security Council itself; and (ii) the regional sphere, in which the GCC plays a leading role and the Arab League, a secondary one. The UNSC has adopted six resolutions regarding the Yemeni situation, while the GCC has been the prominent forum for coordinating a direct international approach by overseeing the transition from Saleh's government to Hadi's and later leading the military intervention, which soon became an Arab League-promoted force (IFES 2011).

¹⁴ The Egyptian Suez-Mediterranean Pipeline (SUMED) connects the Ain Sukhna terminal in the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean Sidi Kerir terminal, in Alexandria. It is the only nearby alternative route to the Suez Canal and therefore is essential for transporting oil northwards when the tankers are too large to go through the Canal (EIA 2013).

As the most recent roots of the current situation in Yemen derive from tensions accumulated mainly from the transition process, a brief explanation of the role played by both the GCC and the UNSC in such developments is necessary. In 2011, the political settlement that followed the ten months of protests and clashes between government forces and rival factions was promoted by the GCC with the support from the UNSC's five permanent members plus the European Union. As the negotiations succeeded, both the GPC and the opposition, grouped into the Joint Meeting Parties, signed two agreements: the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the Agreement on the Implementation of the Transitional Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative. Such agreements delineated the framework for a two-phased transition process: the first would consist of a presidential election to be held on February 21, 2012, and the second consisted in a broader political, electoral, military and constitutional reform, which has not been completed so far (IFES 2011).

The UNSC soon demonstrated its support for the transition process through the approval of Resolution 2014 (UNSC 2011). In what became a constant in subsequent resolutions adopted by the Council, it stated the view that the signature and implementation of the provision stipulated by the agreements was the only way to achieving an inclusive, peaceful and orderly process of political transition, urging all parties to abide to its provisions. Later UNSC resolutions' centered in attaining to such proceedings, and establishing punishment mechanisms for the individuals and parties that deviated from such guidelines.

After the successful presidential election that legitimated Hadi's ascension to power, Resolution 2051 (UNSC 2012) reiterated the next steps to be taken by Yemen, according to the GCC Initiative and its implementation mechanism. Those steps included the convening of the National Dialogue Conference, the restructuring of the Armed Forces and the constitutional and electoral reform, establishing a deadline for it to be completed in 2014. The United Nations Secretary-General has also appointed Jamal Benomar to act as the UN Secretary-General special envoy to Yemen, aiming to mediate negotiations between the conflicting parties and to provide reports directly to the UN Secretary-General and to UNSC (UNSC 2012).

As demonstrated above, the National Dialogue Conference was held in January 2014. Resolution 2140 (UNSC 2014) was adopted following its conclusion, endorsing the resulting agreement's provisions:

- (a) Obstructing or undermining the successful completion of the political transition, as outlined in the GCC Initiative and Implementation Mechanism Agreement;

- (b) Impeding the implementation of the outcomes of the final report of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference through violence, or attacks on essential infrastructure; or
- (c) Planning, directing, or committing acts that violate applicable international human rights law or international humanitarian law, or acts that constitute human rights abuses, in Yemen (UNSC 2014, 6).

The Houthi advance from January 2015 onwards was strongly criticized by UNSC members. Resolution 2201 (UNSC 2015a) urged an immediate suspension of hostilities by all parties and demanded that the Houthis retreat from the government buildings in the capital. It also asked for an acceleration of negotiations to form a new government. A presidential statement was approved by the Council on March 22 reiterating such provisions (UNSC 2015c).

On March 24, a letter from President Hadi was delivered to the President of the Security Council, stating that he had

“requested from the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the League of Arab States to immediately provide support, by all necessary means and measures, including military intervention, to protect Yemen and its people from the continuing aggression by the Houthis (BBCNews 2015).

Two days later, a letter signed by the representatives of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE was delivered by the Qatari representative, stating that the signatory countries had decided to answer to the appeal by President Hadi, even through the use of force (UNSC 2015d). On that same day, Operation Decisive Storm began, prompting negotiations over a new UNSC resolution. Three days later, the 26th Arab League Summit resulted in the signing of the Sharm el-Sheik Declaration, expressing support for Operation Decisive Storm as the means of restoring the legitimate Yemeni government against the Houthis (SUSRI 2015).

The position of GCC members has been represented inside the Security Council by Jordan, which urged for a more assertive stance against the Houthis. It has drafted the document that was approved as Resolution 2216, on April 14th, which established an arms embargo against the Houthi and its allied pro-Saleh forces. It also expanded the sanctions regime designed by Resolution 2140, targeting Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi and Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, the son of the former president. Russia has proposed an alternative draft, asking for an unrestricted arms embargo, against all parties, the calling for immediate ceasefire, and the proposal of humanitarian truces (UNSC 2015e). Although

the ceasefire demand and the non-selective arms embargo have been rejected vehemently by Jordan, the asking for humanitarian truces was adopted by the Resolution (Security Council Report 2015).

A specific dynamic has developed over discussions regarding Yemen in the UNSC in the last years, which have been drawing a certain amount of criticism. There has been a formidable influence exerted by GCC members, mainly through Jordanian mediation, reaching a point in which the most recent and significant Resolutions, namely 2201 and 2216, were initially drafted by parties in the conflict, as Jordan. Such trend has evolved with the auspices of P5 members: while the UK is the penholder on Yemen, it has only circulated the text among the entire UNSC after previous negotiations between the GCC and the P5. Other non-permanent members, especially Venezuela, have frequently expressed their disapproval of such practices (Security Council Report 2015).

As the negative consequences of the military intervention accumulated, with an absence of any advance toward continuing the transition process, Jordanian proposals have been encountering much less support from other UNSC members (What's In Blue 2015b). One of such proposals was the promotion of the GCC-organized Riyadh Conference, which took place by the end of May. As the Houthis have refused to participate in any dialogue on a non-neutral territory, they have reportedly not having been invited, resulting in an evident failure to reach its aims of providing a roadmap for a peaceful and negotiated transition (What's In Blue 2015c). A more fruitful attempt to initiate peace talks was conducted on Geneva, from June 15th to 19th. Despite reported statements from both sides expressing the desire for a ceasefire followed by a withdrawal, no agreement was reached (What's In Blue 2015d).

The reason for that in the preconditions for negotiating posed by both sides: while the government-in-exile stresses the need for Houthis to implement the withdrawal stipulated by Resolution 2216 (UNSC 2015e), the Houthis demand the talks to be referenced on the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), signed on September 21, 2014 between Yemen's major parties following the Houthi takeover of Sana'a. Despite the frequent UNSC statements recognizing the PNPA importance, Hadi and its supporters argue that such document was signed under coercion, therefore not being valid (What's In Blue 2015b).

4 BLOC POSITIONS

The United States of America is one of UNSC's most directly involved countries in Yemen, having considerable interests at stake in the region. With

the fall of Hadi's government, the US lost its most collaborative partner in its counterterrorism strategy in the region, as the governments of both Saleh and Hadi provided intelligence, cooperation and bases to drone strikes (Stohl and Dick 2015, Rosen 2015). Before the Houthi advanced, Obama declared that "[t]his strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years" (Obama 2014). This strategy was based on conducting drone strikes on terrorist targets which reportedly pose threats to US national security and on training and arming Yemeni local forces to degrade AQAP's activities (Zimmerman 2014). The drone strikes conducted by US caused several civilian casualties and were very unpopular among the local population (Raghavan 2012). After the Houthi takeover, the counterterrorist campaign has faced several problems, due to the chaotic situation and the absence of contact and cooperation between the US military and the Houthi leadership, although both have common enemies in AQAP and ISIS. In addition, Washington withdrew the remaining military personnel from Yemen, which have been moved to US bases in Saudi Arabia and Djibouti (Pearson 2015). Although these difficulties, it continues to strike high value targets in Yemen with drones based on military bases in neighboring countries (Rampton 2015), and, by mid-June, killed Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the top AQAP's leadership which was assigned to succeed Zawahiri as the main Al-Qaeda leader, in what has been described as the largest/most important/greatest blow to Al-Qaeda since Osama bin-Laden's death (Deutsche Welle 2015).

In accordance with President Obama's speech at West Point¹⁵, Washington is actively supporting the GCC-led campaign in Yemen, providing logistical support, weaponry and intelligence, yet with no direct military action. In addition, US military has been supporting the assault by others means, such as search-and-rescue missions and aerial refueling (M. Zenko 2015). Furthermore, US blocked several Iranian ships from reaching Yemen and sent an aircraft carrier to enforce the embargo imposed by the Saudi-led coalition (Parry 2015). The reasons to support this intervention are mainly: the security of Bab Al Mandeb strait, to deter what it perceives as an Iranian presence in Yemen through the support to the Houthi (Khan, Vela and Malek 2015), to defend Saudi Arabia's border, to protect Yemen's legitimate government (M. Zenko 2015). Also, NATO has a strategic partnership, known as the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), with some GCC members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates). This initiative has as

15 In this speech, Obama stated that the United States would no longer act solely on its own to fight terrorism, but would rather cooperate and effectively support regional partners against regional instabilities and terrorism (Traub 2015).

main goals to fight terrorism and maintain the stability and security of the Gulf region (NATO 2014). Lastly, some analysts say that the United States support to Saudi Arabia was to comfort its traditional ally after the nuclear negotiations with Iran (Parry 2015).

The **United Kingdom** believes that the security and stability of Yemen is the interest of everyone in the international community. Therefore, UK supports the Council's response to the crisis through Resolution 2216, which called for a political solution and imposed sanctions on Houthi's leaders, which, according to the UK government, are the main responsible actors in destabilizing the country. In response to the humanitarian crisis, the United Kingdom increased its aid and urges others countries to do the same (Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2015). After the terrorists attacks in the Yemeni capital, UK, alongside with United States, withdrew its special military forces in Yemen, which were training local forces on counterterrorism and protecting embassy personnel (Pearson 2015).

Although seeing a political solution as the best for the situation, London supports the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, on the basis that it has been legitimized by President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour's request (Aguilar 2015). According to the Foreign Secretary, United Kingdom supports the assault on Yemen "in every practical way short of engaging in combat" (Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2015). This includes support in infrastructure and maintenance of the British-built aircraft utilized in the campaign (Foster, Loveluck and Mojalli 2015). It is important to remember that the UK keeps providing Saudi Arabia with precision guided weapons, however the British government was assured that the weapons will be used according to international law (Press TV 2015).

France shows great concern with the deteriorating situation of Yemen, thus, it was a sponsor of Resolution 2216 (2015), which condemned the unilateral actions by the Houthi rebels that destabilized the country and minored the ongoing political transition. Through the Resolution, Paris seeks to achieve an end to the crisis, the resumption of an inclusive political dialogue, an agreement on the formation of a national unity government and a phased reconstruction of the Yemeni transition process. The country also calls for protection of civilians and the unobstructed access to aid by those (France 2015).

According to France, the menace posed by the Houthis to unity, integrity, stability and sovereignty of Yemen only benefits terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh/ISIS (France 2015). These groups were perceived as a threat to national security of France in two episodes. First, the declaration by an AQAP member that France has surpassed the US as the main enemy of Islam. Second, the group

also claimed responsibility over the attack on the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January, provoking a massive popular commotion (Russia Today 2015). In addition, a French national was kidnapped by an yet unknown group in Yemeni territory (O’Grady 2015).

As United Kingdom, France supports the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen. In fact, in May, President Hollande was the first Western leader to take part in a GCC summit. This enhanced the cooperation between France and the GCC members in a new “strategic partnership”, based on five pillars: political coordination to address regional and global issues; military cooperation; security cooperation to combat terrorism; economic and energy cooperation; and cultural engagement (Aluwaisheg 2015). Also, as a member of NATO, France has a partnership with four members of the GCC to fight terrorism and maintain the security and stability of the Gulf region (NATO 2014). Furthermore, France and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement to boost Saudi Arabia’s military capabilities, especially regarding the provision of fighter jets by France (Deutsche Welle 2015).

The **Russian Federation** is against the coalition’s military intervention in Yemen, arguing that this action is a direct violation of international law (Barmin 2015). At the same time, Moscow encourages dialogue among the fighting factions in Yemen and supports the official government, to avoid a new failed state and a terrorist heaven in the region (Saunders 2014). Despite recognizing President Hadi as the legitimate government, Russia maintained negotiations with other parties in the conflict, such as the Houthis and the Southern separatist movement, in order to achieve a negotiated solution to the crisis. In spite of that, it has ignored the request for support from the Southern separatist movement, which has asked Russia for support in the attempt to secede from North Yemen, and later refused to grant official recognition to the Houthis as the legitimate Yemeni government, which has been proposed by a Houthi delegation to Moscow, in exchange to economic benefits to Russian companies (Suchkov 2015, Saunders 2014).

Russia proposed a draft resolution demanding humanitarian pauses, calling all parties to end hostilities and for a general arms embargos, not just targeting Houthi leaders (What’s In Blue 2015a). It is the UNSC member which has most vehemently condemned the Saudi-led intervention, being the only country to oppose Resolution 2216 (2015) by abstaining to vote it, which was later drafted by Jordan (Voltaire Network 2015). Lastly, the main objective of Russia in the Yemeni crisis is to contain Sunni extremists groups, such as Al-Qaeda (Saunders 2014).

The **People’s Republic of China** has major economic interests in the region, since Gulf countries are important economic partners, providing half of its oil

imports and possessing several Chinese companies' investments. Also, the "New Silk Road" passes through the Red Sea, which gives a greater strategic dimension to the region (Bhadrakumar 2015). In Yemen, China has several investments, most in oil industries (Chinese companies are responsible for eight percent of the Yemen's oil production), infrastructure and telecommunications. Furthermore, Beijing has provided millions of dollars to Yemen in humanitarian aid and economic assistance (Rakhmat 2014).

Beijing responded to the crisis evacuating almost 600 nationals and 225 foreign nationals from the port of Aden. The evacuation was undertaken by Chinese naval frigates, which were conducting anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Somalia. It was the first time that China helped to evacuate foreign citizens, and only the second time that China has used warships to evacuate its own citizens - the first one was in Libya, in 2011 (BBC 2015). Also, although condemning its unilateral actions, China negotiated with the Houthis, proposing potential economic development plans committing itself to protect Yemen's national interest (Banco and Masi 2015). Lastly, China believes that the chaos in Yemen represents a threat to the region's peace and stability, thus calls all parties to end hostilities and to achieve a political, inclusive and peaceful solution to the crisis. The government also takes note on humanitarian issues, expressing concern with the difficulties to deliver humanitarian assistance and to evacuate expatriates (Voltaire Network 2015).

Angola believes that Houthis' unilateral actions jeopardized the political transition that, despite all problems, was maintaining its course in Yemen, based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative. Also, Angola urges all parties to accept the UN mediation and to abide to the Security Council's Resolutions to put an end to the conflict. Furthermore, Angola seeks a peaceful solution to the crisis and expresses deep concerns with the humanitarian crisis and the rise of terrorist activities in Yemen (Voltaire Network 2015).

As others countries, **Malaysia** is deeply concerned with the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with most of its civilian population lacking basic needs, such as food, medicine and water (Voltaire Network 2015). Malaysia emphasizes the situation of Yemeni youth, as almost a quarter of the killed in the conflict were children. Also, the recruitment and use of children as a military force, mainly by the Houthis, is unacceptable, and Malaysia calls for a severe response for such international law violations (What's In Blue 2015a). Malaysia believes that the only legitimate path toward a democratic, stable and inclusive Yemen is the one based on the GCC Initiative and Implementation Mechanism, on the National Dialogue Conference and the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, those

which were jeopardized by Houthis' attacks (Security Council Meeting Coverage 2015). Furthermore, the country praises the efforts of GCC and UNSC members to reach a peaceful and negotiated end to the crisis (Voltaire Network 2015).

In May, a controversy arose when a Saudi newspaper announced that Malaysia was joining the Saudi-led military coalition to intervene in Yemen, with troops already in Riyadh. However, this information was later denied by the government, which said that the troops were there for rescue of its nationals and humanitarian missions (The Malaysian Insider 2015).

As Malaysia, **Spain** is deeply concerned with the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The country calls all parties involved in the conflict to promote an inclusive solution, with consensus and dialogue as means to reach a democratic and stable political transition in Yemen. Madrid also stresses the need to avoid any military action in the country to prevent an escalation of the conflict and the suffering of Yemeni population (La Moncloa 2015). As many others, the country shows grave concern with the increasing terrorist activity in the region. Furthermore, Spain points out the importance of transparency during negotiations inside the Council, since discussions about the draft resolutions were limited to a few members, excluding non-permanent ones (Voltaire Network 2015). Finally, as the United States, France and the United Kingdom, Spain is a NATO member, thus integrating the ICI with some Gulf countries (NATO 2014).

Chad, a close partner of the US and France in the struggle against terrorism, has a prominent role in the fight against terrorism in Africa and has been watching closely the recent events in Yemen (Schmidt 2013). In 2013, it supported with troops the French intervention in Mali and, in early 2015, it sent a brigade to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria and Cameroon (Allison 2015). Additionally, the headquarters of the French-led regional alliance against terrorism called Operation Barkhane is located at its capital, N'Djamena (Larivé 2014). Chad condemns the unilateral use of force against the legitimate government of Yemen, represented by President Hadi, especially by Houthis. Chad seeks cooperation between the international community and the Gulf Cooperation Council to prevent the collapse of Yemen. Furthermore, the country praises the efforts of the GCC to restore the government and peace in Yemen (Voltaire Network 2015). The country also calls all factions to stop military action and restore the political stability in line with the Gulf Cooperation Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the National Dialogue Conference outcomes and the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (Security Council Meeting Coverage 2015). Lastly, Chad reinforces all parties' obligations to respect international humanitarian law and to avoid targeting civilians.

Chile calls for an immediate cease-fire in the conflict and the release of political leaders under house arrest. The country criticizes the lack of attention given by the international community to the growing levels of deaths among the younger Yemeni population, including the children (Voltaire Network 2015). Also, Chile encourages all parties to avoid unilateral actions and to join talks mediated by the UN (Security Council Meeting Coverage 2015). Finally, joining Spain and others, Chile calls for a more transparent negotiation process in UNSC.

Lithuania stresses that the Security Council must call all parties in Yemen to come back to negotiations and to the transition process that was going on before the Houthis' aggressions, since this could save many innocent lives and avoid the escalation of the humanitarian crisis (Lithuania 2015). Lithuania call all sides of the conflict to observe and to comply with the international humanitarian and human rights law, emphasizing that humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those in need without obstacles. Lithuania believes that the Council's message to the crisis should be that a political solution must be found, that violence is not the answer, and that those who continue the aggressions will be punished with sanctions (Voltaire Network 2015). Lastly, Lithuania is a member of NATO, which have a partnership with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the fight against terrorism and to achieve a peaceful and stable situation in the Gulf region (NATO 2014).

New Zealand values the Council's message to end the hostilities, to promote a return to dialogue and to an inclusive political process as agreed previously by the GCC initiative and National Dialogue Conference. New Zealand is deeply concerned with the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and reminds all parties from the obligation to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law (New Zealand 2015). New Zealand condemns the unilateral actions by the Houthis, which conducted a coup d'état against the transition process that had been previously endorsed by the Council. The country also stresses the need to focus also on the long term humanitarian, social and economic consequences of the crisis, which has been disregarded. Finally, New Zealand praises the efforts from Jordan, United Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council members on the search for stability and peace in Yemen (Voltaire Network 2015).

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela sees the Security Council as having the responsibility to encourage a peaceful and negotiated end to the conflict in Yemen. This mediation by the UN should respect Yemen's sovereignty and territorial independence (Telesur 2015). Caracas supported the draft resolution proposed by Russia, claiming for humanitarian pauses and for an arms embargo on all parties (What's In Blue 2015a). Venezuela is apprehensive with rising

terrorist activities in the region, especially from Al-Qaeda and ISIS, which are taking advantage from the current conflict. Lastly, the country agrees with Spain and Chile about the lack of transparency of negotiations inside the Council (Voltaire Network 2015).

Nigeria is deeply concerned by the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situation in Yemen. The country sees dialogue and negotiation as the only paths to peace and stability in Yemen. Nigeria urges all parties to return to the transition process in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and Implementation Mechanism, and by the National Dialogue Conference (Voltaire Network 2015).

Jordan has been one of the most active countries in the discussions regarding Yemen. As a GCC pending member and a close ally, it was the introducer of Resolution 2216 (2015) that was initiated by GCC, Resolution which has imposed sanctions on Houthi leaders and demanded that they unconditionally end the use of violence (What's In Blue 2015a). In addition, Jordan joined the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen with F-16 fighter jets, in support of President Hadi's government, against the Houthis. According to the country, the main reasons to this military engagement were the Arab world's national security and its territorial integrity that was being perceived as violated by Iran in Yemen and other countries, such as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon (Omari 2015). Furthermore, Jordan stresses that a deteriorating political, humanitarian and security situation in Yemen, exacerbated by Houthis' unilateral actions, are a serious threat to neighboring States (Voltaire Network 2015). Lastly, the government urges all parties to join United Nations-brokered negotiations and to restore the political transition process as a means to promote peace and stability in Yemen (Security Council Meeting Coverage 2015).

5 QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Can Yemen's situation be considered as part of a broader regional dispute or it can be dealt with separately?
2. How can the Security Council avoid an escalation of the war and assure that the transition process can move on?
3. Is it the sanctions regime directed towards Houthi and pro-Saleh leadership an effective manner of containing the escalation of violence and forcing the parties to abide to a peaceful and negotiated political transition?
4. Is the air bombing campaign led by the GCC the best manner to promote

the return of a status quo ante and from thereupon, to continue the political transition process?

5. What can the UNSC prevent and/or remediate the negative humanitarian effects of the coalition airstrikes?

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