



PORG Model United Nations 2018

Arab League Research Paper

The War in Yemen

Prepared by Malina Witzenrath, chair of the Arab League

Content

Introduction.....	2
Definition of Key Terms.....	2
General Overview.....	3
Major Parties and Their Views	6
Timeline of Key Events	8
Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue.....	9
Appendix.....	9
Bibliography.....	10

Introduction

Since March 2015, more than 49000 people have been injured, while over 8600 of them were killed in the conflict referred to as the Yemen War. The civil war is the result of a failed government transition. After an uprising, Yemen's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was forced to hand power to his more liberal deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. When he came to power, Yemen was facing several political, economic and social problems. The Hadi government was therefore an easy target for the Houthi rebels, a group consisting mainly of members of Yemen's Shia Muslim minority, devoted to the promotion of the Shias. They soon took control of northern Saada province, supported by many frustrated Yemenis. The conflict escalated, when Saudi Arabia, backed by a coalition of eight, mostly Sunni Arab states, got involved. This was a consequence of the Saudis' belief that the rising Shia movement was supported by the world's biggest Shia nation, Iran. They have completed several air strikes since March 2015, killing many civilians. Moreover, the crisis has led to what could be the worst famine in 2017, as stated by the UN. The coalition also received aid from several Western nations. In December 2017, the alliance fighting the Hadi government weakened. This could potentially lead to new negotiations. Seeing as the Yemen War affects many member states of the Arab League, the issue is of great relevance to this committee. At this year's Porgmun conference, the AL will work on explaining their country's position in this conflict and, hopefully, reaching a possible solution to the problem. The following research report will serve as a means of preparation and guidelines for the delegates.

Definition of Key Terms

GCC

The Gulf Cooperation Council was founded in 1981. The following countries, which are geographically located very close to each other, are part of the GCC: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain. The council was funded to enable economic growth due to trade agreements, as well as cooperation in defence.

Coup d'état

This word can be translated into English from French with the "overthrowing of the state". Another word for it is "Putsch". A coup d'état is usually carried out by the military or other militant groups which seek to replace the government.

General Overview

a) History

Yemen was divided into Northern and Southern Yemen in the 19th century. Both regions have slightly different histories. Yemen converted to Islam around 630 A.D. and has been ruled by imams since then.

Both in the 16th and 19th century, Northern Yemen was subject to Ottoman control. After the fall of the Ottoman empire in 1918, the imams regained power. However, after two coup d'états, Colonel Abdullah al Sallal took control of Sana'a and founded the Yemen Arab Republic. Later, a civil war between the Revolutionary Command Council, backed by Egypt, and the royalist forces, backed by Saudi Arabia, broke out. It lasted six years and resulted in the victory of the Revolutionary Command Council.

Meanwhile, what is nowadays known as South Yemen was greatly influenced by the colonial power of Great Britain. The Yemeni city of Aden became a crown colony in 1839, while the other territory was made a protectorate. Due to the effort of left-wing groups such as the Marxist National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY), the People's Republic of Yemen was created in 1967, after the departure of the British occupants.

b) Factors leading to the conflict

i. Religion

A major factor, that can be seen as having a large impact on the war, is the religion of Islam. Over the course of history, two major Islamic branches, the Sunni and Shi'a, have developed. These divisions both have different opinions on who may interpret the Qur'an.

Consequently, Sunnis and Shias have fought several wars against each other. The Sunni branch became dominant, as a majority of the Islamic population belongs to this branch. The current Shia minority mainly lives in Iran, Iraq, Albania, Pakistan and Yemen.

In the Yemen War, this factor plays a major role, as the two adversary parties belong to different religious branches. Whilst the Hadi government is a part of the Sunni branch, the Houthi rebels are part of the oppressed Shia minority. However, Yemeni Sunnis have also been reported to support the rebels, mainly because of frustration and disillusionment.

ii. Political transition

When Southern (YAR) and Northern Yemen (PDRY) stopped fighting each other, the Republic of Yemen was declared on May 22nd, 1990. The unified Yemen was based on a new constitution and Ali Abdullah Saleh was made president and held the majority in parliament with the General People's Congress party.

In the thirty years of Saleh-rule that followed, there was a lot of unrest in the country. This was mainly due to weakening economic conditions. As a result, a three-year civil war, which ended in 1994, was fought between the Saleh government in Sana'a and a self-established Democratic Republic of Yemen in Aden, which was not internationally recognised. In the end, the government military regained power over Aden and ended the war.

The outcome of the civil war was devastating. The nation that had already been economically unstable beforehand, now faced even more social, political and economic problems. This led to an uprising during the Arab Spring, a movement which started in 2010, in other Arab countries. On the 27th of January, more than 16000 protestors demonstrated peacefully against the government. The rulers answered with violence. In 2012, Saleh was forced to resign, and power was given to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Western nations expected him to restore stability and democracy in Yemen, however, he did not quite succeed at first. Yemen received no international financial support to create a stable democracy and so Hadi was not able to solve the nation's basic problems. Adding on to this, many news outlets that were owned by private people portrayed the new president in a negative light.

c) The current civil war

i. The beginning of the civil war

In order to regain power, former president Saleh joined forces with the Houthi rebels who had started to gain territory in Northern Yemen. This allowed Saleh to influence a large part of the military under Hadi. Additionally, he still had authority over the military from when he was in office. Seeing as the Hadi government did not manage to put the uprising under control, the Houthi-Saleh alliance took over the country's capital, Sana'a, near the end of 2015. Hadi was pushed to sign his resignation, as well as the dissolution of parliament and escaped the town soon after. The Hadi government was then moved to Aden to ensure security. Moreover, several GCC nations formed an alliance, led by Saudi Arabia, to support the Hadi government in the fight against the Houthi-Saleh alliance.

Saudi Arabia launched the "Decisive Storm" air strikes on 26 March 2015. All of the GCC member nations had voted in favour of an intervention without the agreement of a UNSC resolution. The only Arab country which stands against the air strike interventions is Iran. The UK and the US also joined the Saudi coalition, however, the US only sent their ground troops to Yemen.

ii. The current military situation

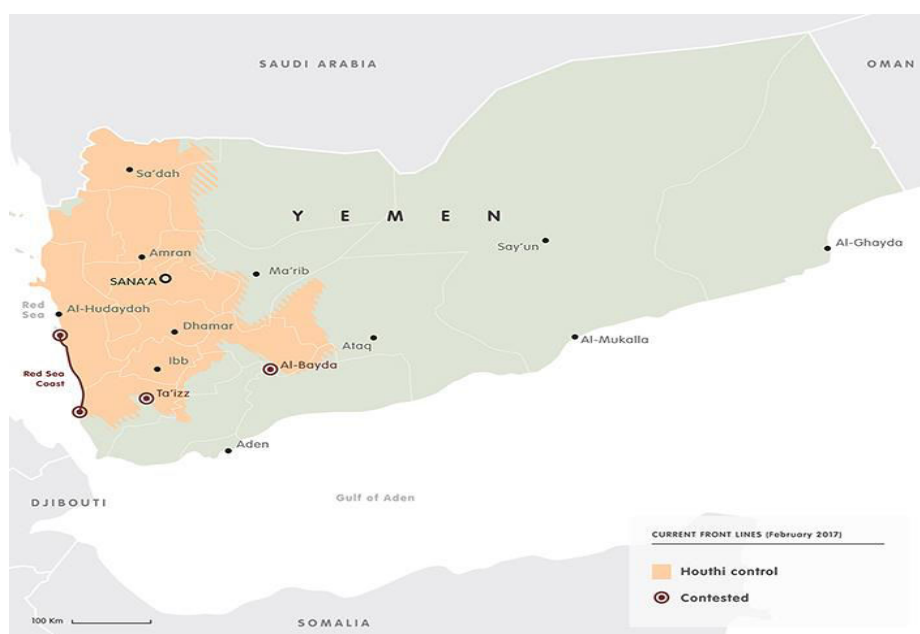
Despite the Houthi-Saleh alliance's refusal to surrender and their continuing supply of weapons and ammunition, the GCC/US coalition has regained power over some territory, including Aden, the temporary capital. Nevertheless, proper government has not been reinstalled.

The UAE is taking care of local armed groups to facilitate security. These groups, however, are too disjointed to function properly. Meanwhile, the GCC air forces have carried out more than 90000 air raids over Yemen. Many of these have hit medical establishments, schools, markets and shops.

Recently, the military situation changed radically. Around the end of November 2017, instabilities in the Houthi-Saleh coalition started to show, leading to armed disputes in Sana'a. On December 2nd, Saleh declared the division of the coalition and, furthermore, expressed openness for dialogue with the opposing parties. According to the Houthis, Saleh had been communicating with adversary forces for a while.

On December 4th, 2017, Saleh was killed by Houthi fighters. His death has a great impact on the civil war. The air strikes on Sana'a have intensified and they are also spreading to other regions. Additionally, Saleh supporters will most likely seek revenge on the Houthis, possibly with the help of the international alliance.

Current territorial situation in Yemen :



<http://www.ecfr.eu/mena/yemen>

iii. The current humanitarian situation

One of the biggest humanitarian problems that the Yemeni population is facing, is the famine, which is said to be the worst famine of 2017. About 7 million people are currently close to starvation and about two thirds of the population (19 million) are in urgent need. Due to the GCC blockade, which was implemented to cut off the Houthi's supply of weapons and ammunition, hardly any goods are entering the country, complicating the acquirement of nutrition. 17 million people are food-insecure. Moreover, the population cannot afford the food that does enter the country, as most Yemeni are bankrupt and cannot earn enough money to feed themselves and their families. Furthermore, 400000 homes and 300 health facilities have been destroyed, resulting in 3 million internally displaced persons and an ever-growing infant mortality rate. Additionally, the war has a large impact on the education of children. 2 million children cannot attend school and girls are married off at a very young age. The loss of human lives due to the war is also very large. According to a UN estimation in January 2016, 2800 civilians have already been killed. 60% of them died in air strikes by the GCC/US coalition.

The Mounting Civilian Costs of Yemen's War

2,800

CIVILIANS KILLED
AS OF JANUARY 2016

6

CHILDREN HAVE BEEN KILLED
OR MAIMED DAILY

60%

OF CASUALTIES CAUSED BY
SAUDI-LED AIR STRIKES

21.2 million

OR 4 OUT OF 5, ARE IN NEED
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

5.3 million

MORE THAN BEFORE THE START OF
THE SAUDI-LED INTERVENTION

7.6 million

AT RISK OF STARVATION

14.1 million

LACK ACCESS TO
ADEQUATE HEALTH CARE

600

HEALTH FACILITIES HAVE CLOSED

63

HEALTH FACILITIES ATTACKED

Sources: UNOCHA, UNICEF, UN Panel of Experts, IOM Credits: David Foster, Zachary Laub

COUNCIL ON
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

<https://www.cfr.org/background/yemen-crisis>

Major Parties and Their Views

a) Hadi Government

Hadi came into office to ensure Yemen's political stability and safety. Seeing as Hadi failed to accomplish this, many Yemeni citizens do not trust him and therefore do not believe in his government. His supporters, on the other

hand, argue that Hadi needs to stay in office long enough to ensure adequate stability and security for a proper election. Currently, Hadi is already in office longer than was initially planned. Furthermore, Hadi resides in Aden after returning from exile in Saudi Arabia in 2015. The majority of the power he holds comes from the international coalition backing his government, however, it is debatable how much power Hadi truly has over his own army.

b) Houthi-Saleh Coalition

After Saleh's death on December 4th, one can no longer truly speak of a "Houthi-Saleh coalition". Both parties never entirely shared the same views. They were opponents when Saleh was in office. The only thing that united them was the contempt for the Hadi government. That is why they formed an alliance when Hadi came to power. However, the parties' motives for opposing to Hadi were different. While Saleh had different political beliefs, and wanted to regain power, the Houthis fought for their religious minority, the Shias.

It was only a matter of time, before cracks started showing in this alliance. When they did, in November 2017, the international community first hoped that this could lead to new negotiations. However, after the murder of Saleh, it seems that the war will further intensify, due to the fights within the coalition itself.

c) Saudi Arabia

As one of the richest and mostly Sunni states of the Arab world, Saudi Arabia felt threatened by the Shia movement, the Houthi rebels, that were rapidly gaining power. Furthermore, they believed that Iran, as the largest Shia state, was supporting the Houthis. The Saudis therefore decided to form a coalition with several other GCC states to support the Hadi government. It was not difficult for them to find allies due to the large number of countries indebted to Saudi Arabia.

Initially, the Saudis were happy to lead a GCC coalition to prove to the US that they did not require their help to solve a military conflict. Nevertheless, the US joined the coalition later.

Saudi Arabia has completed many air strikes over Yemen, especially the region of Sana'a. These air strikes have intensified after Saleh's death.

d) AQAP

AQAP is ranked as the most dangerous al-Qaeda affiliate by the US government. It has benefitted greatly from the political instability in Yemen caused by the civil war. Due to the threat that the Houthis are posing, the Yemeni military is starting to loosen the control on AQAP. Furthermore, AQAP has managed to ally with several Sunni-tribes that fear the Houthis and have thus expanded their territory and even taken control over some parts of Aden.

e) US and UK

Both the US and the UK are part of the international, Saudi-led coalition backing the Hadi government. Together with France, these international powers were reluctant to get involved at first, but participated more and more as the war continued. While the US started by giving only financial support, they soon began drone strikes, as well as providing weapons and special forces on the ground.

Although both nations see themselves as major donors to humanitarian aid in Yemen, they gain much more money by selling weapons in the Middle-East than they spend on humanitarian aid.

The USA's biggest interests in the Yemen war are a free passage through the Bab al-Mandeb used for oil export and the establishment of a government in Sana'a, that will cooperate with the US's counterterrorism policies.

f) Iran

The majority of the Shia minority lives in Iran. Even though the Iranians and the Houthis believe in a different school of Islam, Iran is the Houthi rebels biggest international supporter. Iran does not only provide verbal support, but also military support, including the provision of arms.

Timeline of Key Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
2010	Begin of Arab Spring
2011	Saleh hands power to his deputy, Hadi, due to the uprising in Yemen
January 2014	a new constitution is agreed upon by the National Dialogue Conference (NDC)
September 2014	Houthis take control of Sana'a (capital)
February 2015	Hadi flees to Aden
26 March 2015	Begin of GCC air strikes
2016	UN-sponsored negotiation talks
January 2017	14 AQAP militants, including their children are killed during US commando raid
2 December 2017	Saleh declares that the Houthi-Saleh

coalition has come to an end whilst on television

4 December 2017

Saleh is murdered by Houthi rebels

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Several humanitarian and political measures have already been taken to end the Yemen war, or at least to ameliorate the situation for the Yemeni civilians. Until now, none of them has been very successful. In 2016, a UN Verification Inspection Mechanism was established. It was supposed to ensure the arrival of necessities in Yemen, but failed.

Another measure taken was the raising of money for humanitarian aid. The UN's goal was to reach USD 2.1 billion, however, this sum will probably never be reached, as only 60% of the required USD 1.6 billion was reached this year.

The UN security council has passed two decisive resolutions on the issue of the Yemen War. In resolution 2051, which was passed on June 12th, 2012, the UNSC underlines the importance of supporting the Yemeni government during the political transition from Saleh to Hadi. It also details the necessary measures. Nevertheless, considering that the Hadi government was not able to tackle prominent issues in Yemen, which was also due to the lack of financial aid from the international community, and therefore lost the population's trust, one could say that this resolution failed to be efficiently implemented.

On April 14th, 2015, another resolution, 2216, was passed. It passed with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). The resolution clearly states several demands towards the Houthi rebels, including leaving the occupied Yemen territory and ceasing to complete duties of the Yemen government. Furthermore, it places several weapons embargos on the Houthis and Saleh. It is internationally debated whether these embargos may also have lead to the famine in Yemen. Moreover, the resolution was condemned by the Houthis. They are not willing to comply.

Appendix

- UNSC resolution 2051
- UNSC resolution 2216
- Mapping the Yemen conflict-European council of foreign relations

This document gives a clearer view on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen and provides numbers and diagrams.

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