Special Political And Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Committee Background Guide

Chair: Barak Huang
Co-Chairs: Gauri Kasarla

Letter From Your Chair

Hello SPECPOL delegates!

Welcome to **AHPMUN VII.** My name is Barak Huang and I am currently a senior at American Heritage. I have been doing Model UN for three years now. Outside of Model UN, I compete in Mock Trial and Moot Court and am also the Co-Founder of the school's Asian American Student Association.

In this committee, the two topics at hand are the Yemeni Civil War and South China Sea. Both topics have been largely overlooked comparatively to the many other global political issues. However, these two topics not only have been around for many years now, but have gained traction and tension in their respective areas as well as internationally. These two topic will also heavily involve the use of diplomacy, as it is crucial the parties involved in these topics reach agreements as to the different topics and underlying issues.

I am looking forward to the different ways you all approach this and the debate that will go on in committee. Due to the recency of these topics entering international discussion, there are a lot of subtopics that have yet to be talked about or investigated.

Barak Huang
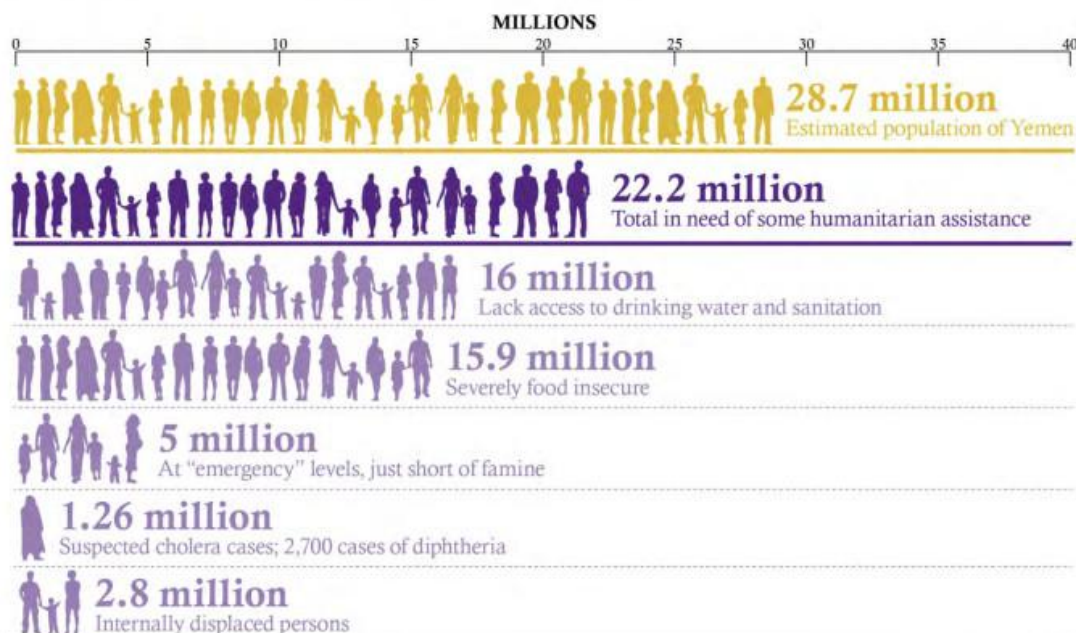
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Topic A:

Approaching and Mitigating the Ongoing Yemeni Civil War Crisis

Introduction

Since March of 2015, there has been an ongoing civil war in Yemen between the rebel Houthis and the Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi led Yemeni government. Fighting has put the death toll at between 13,500 and 80,000 people and internally displaced 2.8 million individuals. As a result of this conflict, more than 24 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection while 10 million rely on food aid to survive. To make it worse, intelligence agencies report that the situation won't improve anytime soon. Negotiations and compromise needed to end the fighting seem far from realistic, making this a clear humanitarian crisis.

Yemen Humanitarian Figures as of 3 December 2018

MILLIONS

28.7 million
Estimated population of Yemen

22.2 million
Total in need of some humanitarian assistance

16 million
Lack access to drinking water and sanitation

15.9 million
Severely food insecure

5 million
At "emergency" levels, just short of famine

1.26 million
Suspected cholera cases; 2,700 cases of diphtheria

2.8 million
Internally displaced persons

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History/Background

Back in 2010 at the start of the Arab spring, democratic movements and uprisings rose independently and spread across the Arab world. Starting in Tunisia in late 2010, the movement eventually made its way to Syria, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. For 33 years, Ali Abdullah Saleh had reigned over the country of Yemen and was being pressured by pro-democracy protesters to end rule. He however refused to resign, leading to the deaths of protesters at the hands of the military in March 2011 on the streets of the capital city. Through an internationally brokered deal, Saleh was to transfer political power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, leading to elections in February 2012.

Yemen's Zaidi Shia Muslim minority, represented by the Houthi movement, had fought series of rebellions against Saleh in the previous decade and took action with the new president's weakness. As President, Hadi struggled to deal with corruption, unemployment, and food security, leading to separatist movements in the south and a continuing loyalty of security personnel to Saleh resulting in the Houthis taking control of their northern heartland of Saada province.

In 2015, the Houthis, a Shia group who received weapons and funds from Iran, rose to overthrow Yemen's current government, primarily Sunni, and backed by Saudi Arabia. The Houthis, loyal to Saleh, forced Hadi to flee abroad in March 2015. Saudi Arabia and other primarily Sunni Arab states started to mobilize against an Iran backed Shia power with an air campaign focused on restoring Hadi's government. This coalition of mainly Sunni Arab states and Saudi Arabia are also receiving intelligence support and armament sales from the US, UK, and France. Bombings in Houthi held territories resulted in many civilian casualties disrupting the surrounding infrastructure like markets and hospitals as well as the civil society, such as a funeral event on October 8th where one strike killed 140 people.

Areas of control in Yemen

Source: IHS Conflict Monitor, March 2019
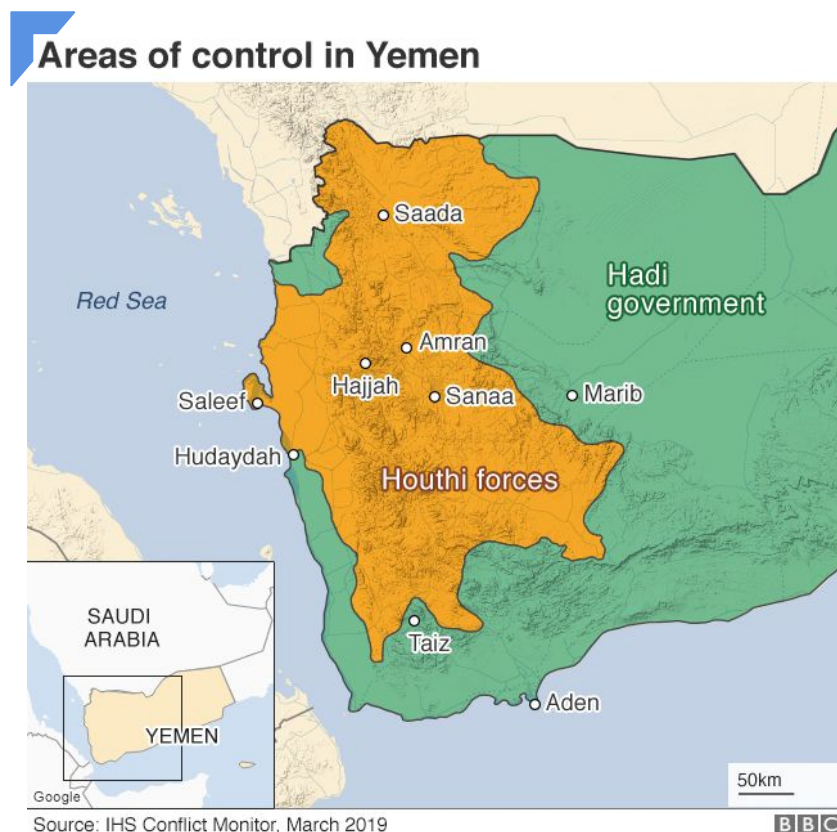
Belligerent Status

The Houthi rebels are backed by Iran while the government loyalists of former Yemeni government Abdrabbuh Mansour Al-Hadi are backed by a coalition of ten states lead by Saudi Arabia, who is also backed by the United States. Like Iran, the Houthis are Shia and the former Mansour government along with the coalition of several countries are Sunni. The US, UK and France have sold arms and weapons to the Saudi government, which have been used in the ensuing civil war. These arms include missiles, guns, drones, tanks, and aircrafts. Over billions of US dollars and British pounds have been exchanged in these sales.

Effects/Results

Although predicted to last only a few weeks, four years of military conflict has followed. The Houthis have taken control of Sanaa, Yemen's capital. The seaport of al-Hudaydah, a vital source of Yemen's food and humanitarian aid deliveries, was damaged in the bombings in August.

The UN has said that this conflict could result in the "worst famine seen anywhere in the world for 100 years". According to a World Peace Foundation report, Saudi blockades and travel restrictions have prevented aid and food from reaching Yemen, skyrocketing prices and leaving basic necessities unaffordable. UNICEF has found that 3 quarters of Yemen's 27.58 million population are reliant on aid. That is approximately 22.2 million, with 8.4 million starving, and 1.8 million of those being children. .

Questions to Consider

1. With the ongoing conflict, how can we explore different avenues to distribute aid to those who need it?

2. How do we deter and inhibit the participation of other countries in this war?

3. What are different ways we can approach the addressing of possible war crimes?

4. How can we initiate negotiations between the two sides? How does diplomacy and compromise play a role?
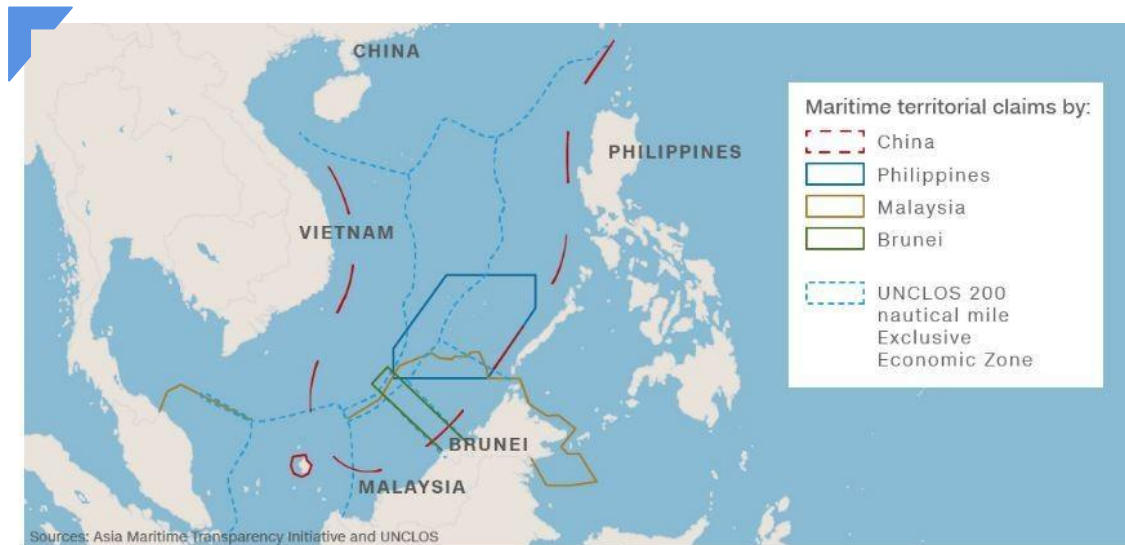
Topic B:

Establishing Maritime Guidelines and Standards in the South China Sea

Introduction
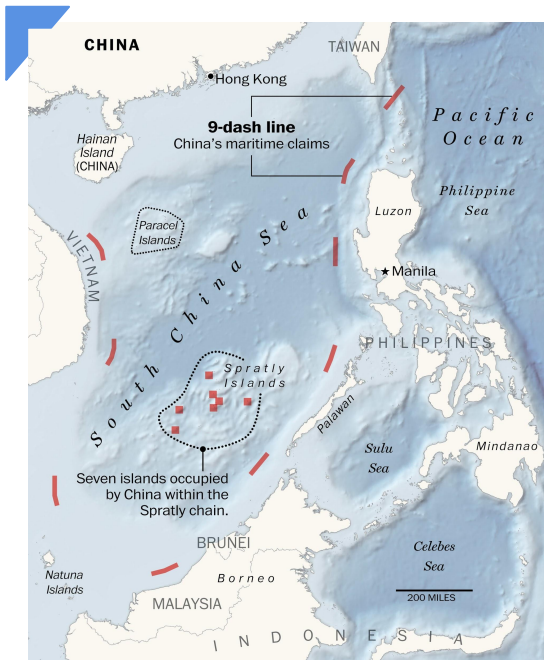
For centuries, control over the South China Sea has created disputes between Southeast Asian nations regarding territorial control of strategically important maritime areas. While this conflict on a surface level appears to be driven by the desire for territory and resources, it encompasses the growing importance of nationalism, trade routes, and dominance as a world power. While China has demarcated their control with the vague 9-dash line, such boundaries violate existing treaties such as the United Nations treaty on maritime territorial issues, proposing the question of how to establish maritime guidelines while respecting .

the sovereignty of individual nations and international territorial waters.

Maritime territorial claims by:
- China
- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Brunei
- UNCLOS 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone

Sources: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and UNCLOS

History/Background

A major concern in the South China Sea disputes is the fight over overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs), or "zones over which a state has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources." The desire to control areas of the South China Sea is heightened by the fact that these waters are highly profitable due to plentiful fishing stocks and oil reserves, as well as being one of the primary routes for international trade. The South China Sea islands also prove to be grounds for contention between the six major claimants: China, The Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and Taiwan. While the Spratyl Islands, the Paracel Islands, the Pratas Island, the Macclesfield Bank, and the Scarsborough Shoal are all disputed territories, the controversy arises not from the desire to inhabit these areas, but the desire to promote nationalism and assert dominance

on a global scale. For example, because of China's aggression in patrolling their claims and attempting to make the islands support military installations, neighboring nations have viewed this as an effort to dominate the region.

Although nations view areas in the South China Sea as chances to further their influence, some countries consider the sea an area of traditional influence and use those ties to legitimize their power over such territories. The United States has also involved its naval presence in the seas, but if decisions are not made wisely, the sea's thriving trade channels could possibly become arenas of conflict between disputing nations. Therefore, as China's economic and political ascent to power continues, the territorial disputes must be settled in such a way to manage current conflicts between nations and establish a future system to determine the extent of nations' influence in the region. For instance, many nations hold historical and cultural ties to islands in the South China Sea, but allowing a singular nation rights to large expanses of territory poses a threat to the balance of power that should be maintained to deter further conflicts.
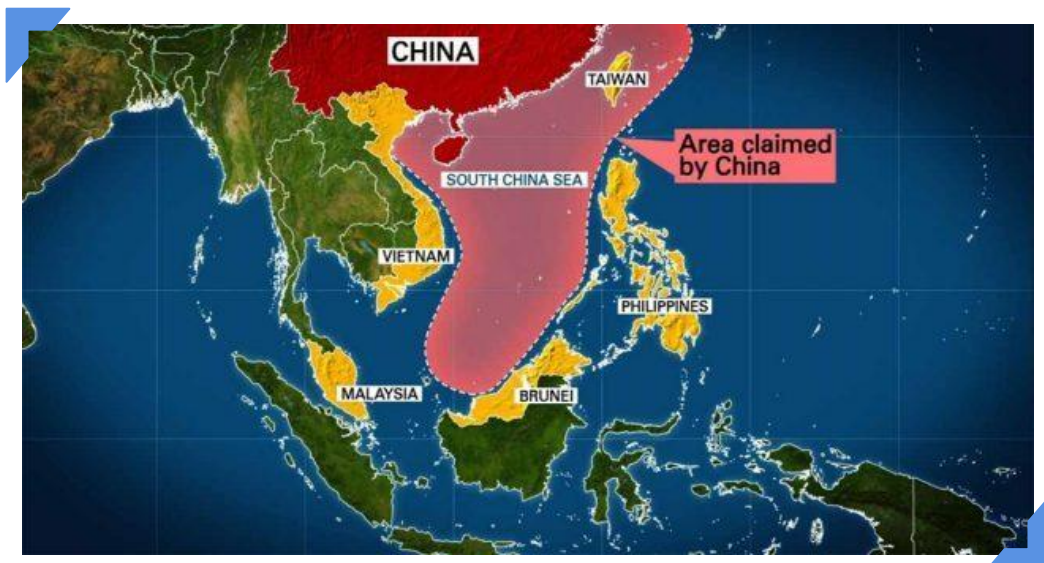
Past Solutions

Due to the impact that conflict over the South China Sea presents to the environment, the issue takes on a new urgency. The resources found in the South China Sea are crucial to the ever growing populations of Southeast Asian nations, but if not managed effectively could take a toll on the environment. Attempts have been made throughout the 1990s in the form of semi-official workshops to shift focus from sovereignty disputes to a "shared concern for resource management." However, these efforts have been met with limited success, partially due to tensions between individual nations such as the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) in response to two governments upholding the same Chinese sovereignty claim.

Questions to Consider

1. How can we enforce guidelines that are set in the South China Sea?

2. How can a solution address both maritime guidelines and sovereignty disputes?

3. How do possible environmental impacts influence the regulation of nations' rights to resources?

4. How do you efficiently distribute and manage the resources available in the South China Sea?

5. How do you efficiently distribute and manage the resources available in the South China Sea?

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