Committee: Security Council

Issue: The Situation in Yemen

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Introduction

The Yemeni Civil War has been roaring for over half a decade and there seems to be no end in sight. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, when the Houthi led Supreme Revolutionary Committee was mobilized to overthrow Hadi, who was the ruling president of Yemen at the time and is still recognized by most countries as the legitimate president, multiple factions, mainly the government forces, the Houthi Rebels, and Al-Qaeda in Yemen have been created with various foreign powers also involved, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, and even the United States.

Definition of Key-Terms

Civil War

"A violent conflict between a state and one or more organized non-state actors in the state's territory."[1]

Proxy War

"A war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these."[2]

Failed State

"A state that is unable to perform the two fundamental functions of the sovereign nation-state in the modern world system: it cannot project authority over its

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[1] Definition taken from Britannica Online Dictionary
[2] Definition taken from Cambridge Online Dictionary

territory and peoples, and it cannot protect its national boundaries."[3]

Humanitarian Crisis

"A humanitarian emergency/crisis is an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or well-being of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area."[4]

War Crime

An action committed by a state or a non-state actor that violates international humanitarian law, international criminal law, or international customary law (which are mostly outlined in the Geneva Conventions).

Legitimacy

Acceptance or justification of political power or authority. In other words, to what extent is an actor, usually a government, justified to exercise its political power on a defined territory or accepted by the related parties to do so.

Humanitarian Intervention

"Actions undertaken by an organization or organizations (usually a state or a coalition of states) that are intended to alleviate extensive human suffering within the borders of a sovereign state."[5]

Power Vacuum

A situation where a government has no identifiable central authority and is not able to control its territory, which often leads to other non-state actors controlling parts of the state.

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs)

International non-governmental organizations are organizations that work out of the sphere of any government, are non-profit, and have as a primary goal the betterment of the lives of a group/groups of people. Examples include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace.

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[3] Definition taken from Britannica Online Dictionary
[4] Definition taken from Humanitarian Coalition
[5] Definition taken from Britannica Online Dictionary

Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

Intergovernmental organizations are organizations composed of three or more states that have as a primary purpose the extensive economic, social, and military cooperation between states around the world. Examples include the UN, the World Bank, and the European Union.

Background Information

<u>Yemen and Its Recent History</u>

Yemen, or The Republic of Yemen, is a country located in the continent of Asia, and more specifically in the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east. The Middle East, in which it is located, has been one of the most turbulent regions of the globe during both the 20th and 21st

century. This turbulence has arisen in part because of the awkward borders that the great European powers, mainly France and Great Britain, set for the region, after World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

After the end of colonial rule in the 1960s, modern day Yemen split into two separate states, the North and the South. After fierce civil wars between the two opposing sides, the conflict was finally resolved in 1990 and the two countries merged, creating the Republic of Yemen we know today.

However, Yemen was not able to ensure lasting development, peace, and cooperation with other states. The president of that time, president Saleh, used the War on Terror campaign to extend his rule and power. The Shia minority was not happy with this development as Saleh's government was affiliated with the Sunnis, and (as will be explained later in the study guide) there is great tension between these two sects (denominations) due to their affiliation with different states. The Shia Rebellion began in 2004 but did not gain immediately momentum, as it was limited to attacks on government institutions and civilians. Saleh was reelected as president of Yemen in 2006, sparking further protest and uprising among the Shia

minority. At the same time, although Saleh had declared that the Yemeni would fight alongside the US military forces in the War on Terror[6], the Yemeni government was ineffective in stopping the rise of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and preventing it from creating its headquarters in Yemen.
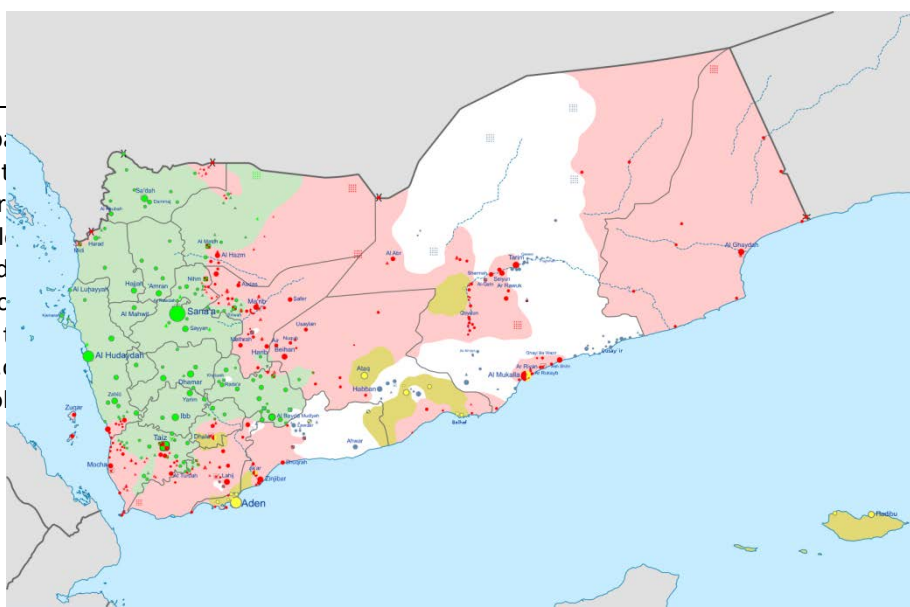
In 2001, the Arab Spring spread across the Middle East reaching the already unstable country of Yemen. Mass protests against both the government's violations of human rights and Saleh personally, who had been trying to change the constitution in order to enable his son to succeed him after his death[7], brought about further chaos. The government responded angrily by cracking down on the protests and thus started losing international support. Saleh realized he would not be able to maintain power anymore and decided to give up his position to his vice president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi.

However, even after the resignation of President Saleh, the arising separatist movement in the South of the country, the Shiite Houthi Rebels, and the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) all greatly weakened the government's ability to control the country's territory; the state was losing internal sovereignty and a power vacuum was building up. The capital city was captured by Houthi Rebels in September 2014 and President Hadi had to flee the city and eventually the country. He then resided in Saudi Arabia, where he planned the reconquest of the lost territory. Luckily for him, Saudi Arabia was very willing to help out and formed a coalition with nine other states (the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Egypt, and Pakistan) to support the Hadi government in regaining the city of Aden, which is the largest port on the Arabian Peninsula and is key to the economic development of the country. It also supplies Yemen with most of its food. In these circumstances of utter chaos, AQAP has been able to thrive and gain a substantial amount of territory along with an ISIS-affiliated organization named Ansar al-Sharia. Hadi troops were able to retake Aden, securing a major city in the government's hands; Aden was declared the temporary capital of Yemen.

Situation Today

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[6] War on Terror was a campa____
from the face of our planet t____
operations, and harsh interr____
[7] "President Ali Abdullah Sal____
to follow the dictator's hand____
introducing changes that wo____
established balances— and t____
https://www.dohainstitute.____
ullah_Saleh_or_replacing_ol____

The situation today has not changed much and is definitely not any better. The country is still broken into several opposing factions, namely the government forces, the Houthi Rebels, AQAP, and the Southern Transitional Council, which is a separatist movement in the South that has the support of the UAE. The Council was able to capture the city of Aden in February 2018, marking a major defeat of the government forces despite the large financial and military support that the government has received from Saudi Arabia and its coalition. Saudi Arabia, due to its fear of Iran's dominance in the region, has determined to defeat the Houthi rebels. They have created a naval blockade in the West and South coastal areas of the country to deprive Houthi controlled territories of supplies, which has led to a disastrous famine that killed 50,000 children in 2017 alone. Saudi Arabia's involvement is very complex and will be analyzed in the next section of the study guide. In addition, because of the limited medical supplies and the destruction of health facilities, a cholera outbreak has been plaguing Yemen for the past two years, which further endangers the civilian population having already affected one million people.

Sunni and Shia Divide

The Sunni-Shia Divide is a very important factor in understanding the Yemeni Civil War and why Iran and Saudi Arabia seem to confront each other in most civil wars in the Middle East. Since almost the beginning of Islam, there has been a big dilemma in the Muslim World: should the caliph be a direct descendant of the prophet Mohammed or someone that is known to be a capable leader but is not related to the prophet? This is where the divide between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims all started but has extended to become a major divide in the contemporary Muslim World.

Saudi Arabia, a state with a majority of Sunni Muslims, and Iran, with a majority of Shia Muslims, are the two of the most powerful countries in the Middle East and are fighting for dominance over the region. Therefore, during civil wars in neighboring or nearby states, like Syria, Saudi Arabia always assists the Sunni party and Iran supports the anti-Sunni (usually Shia) party. Yemen is no exception to this; Saudi Arabia is supporting the Yemen Sunni government under President Saleh, whereas Iran is allegedly supporting the Shia Houthi rebels. With Iran and Saudi Arabia both involved in the conflict, other major states from around the world, especially the United States of America deem it in their best interest to also intervene in the conflict, making the Yemen Civil War a proxy war with multiple

foreign states involved either directly or indirectly. How states are specifically involved in the conflict will be further analyzed in the next part of the study guide.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Shiite Coalition

The Shiite Coalition, known better as the Houthi Rebels, was the first faction to begin an uprising against the government being able to take over the capital in a matter of weeks. They control most of the west parts of the country, including Sanaa (the capital), and the port of Al-Hudaydah. They are allegedly backed by Iran financially.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), like ISIS, has taken advantage of the power vacuum created especially in the eastern part of the country taking control of a large portion of Yemen's territory. This territory has acted as a branch of the Al Qaeda in the Middle East to organize terrorist attacks in Yemen, and abroad. It acts as Al Qaeda's largest stronghold in the world.

Southern Transitional Council

Although the Council seems to have little influence in the area up to late 2017, since the United Arab Emirates started backing the movement, it has gained a lot of momentum and was even able to capture the most important arguably city in Yemen: Aden. The Council is seeking independence from the current Yemen state wishing to create a second state in the South.

Saudi Arabia Coalition

Saudi Arabia is one of the few countries that is **directly** involved in the conflict. The Saudi Air Force is bombing Houthi controlled territories in the West, including civilian hotspots, such as hospitals, mosques, schools, and even funerals. This has led the United Nations into starting an investigation against Saudi Arabia for possible war crimes. The rest of the coalition, although much less involved in the actual fighting, is assisting Saudi Arabia in the naval blockade and with other financial and military means.

United States of America

The United States' number one priority in Yemen is to ensure that this country is not going to become a safe haven for terrorist activity. Thus, the US, wanting to avoid a power vacuum, has tried to support the Hadi government. Also, as a long-standing ally of Saudi Arabia, the United States has helped Saudi Arabia in the fight against the Houthis, not only with sales of arms and military equipment, including planes

and helicopters, but more importantly by helping Saudi planes refuel in midair to double strike targets in West Yemen.

Iran

Iran, fearing Saudi Arabia's dominance in the Middle East, has allegedly backed the Houthi Rebels since the beginning of the conflict, mainly through financial means due on the one hand, to the great distance between the two countries and on the other, to the Iranians' wish to remain under the radar supporters of the rebels. In essence, for Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Yemen Civil War is just another proxy war to strengthen their domination in the region.

ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross has organized a big operation in Yemen, delivering basic supplies to civilians all over the country. In 2017, it was able to reach four million people with basic aid. The group has been advocating for an end to the civil war, working with all belligerent parties.

UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund, with the help of NGOs in the area are working all over Yemen to respond to the needs of children regardless of the faction they belong to. They have provided shelter, sanitation, education and health services to assist children in surviving the horrific conflict they were born into and eventually grow up and becoming active citizens of their country.

Timeline of Events

Early 1900s	Ottoman and British Rule.
1967	Formation of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the South.
1968	Formation of The Republic of Yemen in the North.
1990	Unification of the two states.

1999	First elections: Saleh wins.
2001	Yemen declares itself a US partner for the War on Terror.
2004	Shiite insurgency begins.
2006	Saleh is reelected. → More tensions/violence from Shiite minority.
2008	Violent bombings and attacks by Shiite opposition (e.g. on US embassy).
2009	AQAP begins terrorist attacks in Yemen, setting up its new headquarters in the area.
2011	Arab Spring begins; mass political unrest and uprising against Saleh's government. Saleh responds with violence which led to loss of international support and thus being forced to give up of his position.
2012	Saleh's vice president Hadi is sworn to office.
2014	Dissatisfaction in country; Houthi uprising gains ground. → Insurgents take over capital Sanaa and Aden.
2015	Hadi flees to Saudi Arabia.→ Counter-attack by Saudi Arabia Coalition reclaiming the country. → Aden is recaptured by government forces.
2015	Saudi Arabia begins indiscrete bombing of civilian facilities in Houthi held territories. → Possible war crimes, US supports these bombings
2017	Naval blockade that does not allow civilians in Houthi held territories to access basic supplies. → Famine ensues; cholera epidemic begins to spread in Yemen. "Worst humanitarian crisis" according to the UN[8].
2018	Fighting parties at a stalemate; No end in sight for the conflict. "Worst humanitarian crisis" according to the UN again.

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

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[8] "Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis. As the conflict enters its fourth year, more than 22 million people —three-quarters of the population— need humanitarian aid and protection." Quote from Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, 2018

26 FEBRUARY 2018
S/RES/2402
Resolution extending the Yemen sanctions regime.

23 FEBRUARY 2017
S/RES/2342
Resolution renewing the Yemen sanctions regime.

24 FEBRUARY 2016
S/RES/2266
Resolution renewing the Yemen sanctions measures until 26 February 2017, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 27 March 2017.

29 SEPTEMBER 2017
A/HRC/RES/36/31
This resolution called on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a group of international and regional experts to monitor and report on the situation of human rights in Yemen and carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses since September 2014.

4 AUGUST 2016
A/HRC/33/38
This was a report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Yemen, reiterating his previous recommendation for an international, independent body to investigate alleged violations in Yemen.

2 OCTOBER 2015
A/HRC/RES/30/18
This Human Rights Council resolution requested the High Commissioner of Human Rights to provide Yemen technical assistance in the field of human rights and to assist a national commission of inquiry.

All the above are directly taken from un.org

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Attempts to solve the issue have been carried out by numerous political actors, including international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, other members of civil society, and the fighting parties themselves.

Firstly, as mentioned in the above section, the United Nations, and specifically the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, have been closely engaged in the issue of Yemen for the past three years. The Security Council has mostly been engaged in supporting the act of INGOs, calling for ceasefires, and sanctioning parties that do not follow agreements.

Secondly, international non-governmental organizations have taken initiative in the country to help out civilians in any way possible. One example previously mentioned is the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has provided civilians all over the country with basic supplies, in all fighting parties' territories, and has called for the end of the civil war. Other examples of NGOs doing impressive work include the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Last but not least, there are the fighting parties themselves. With the help of the UN, several agreements have been made between mainly the Houthi Rebels and the Yemeni government to deescalate the conflict, including the most recent one, which is currently being negotiated between the Houthi Rebels giving up their ballistic missiles and the Saudi Arabia coalition ending its air campaign against them.

Possible Solutions

There are two different approaches in attempting to resolve the crisis in Yemen. The first one is continuing the efforts that have already been made. In other words, the UN Security Council calling for annual assessments of the situation in Yemen and writing a report, as well as resolutions that should, however, be limited to sanctions and not include any kind of military invasion or humanitarian intervention. This approach also requires the active role of civil society and IGOs in resolving the conflict, especially INGOs like the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as UNICEF, which could help to ensure a better future for both the children and the country of Yemen. Finally, the media should play a large role in this global campaign to stop the brutal war in Yemen. Unfortunately, the civil war in Syria has overshadowed the ongoing conflict in Yemen, limiting significantly the attention Yemen gets. Without awareness of the grave danger the people of Yemen are in, the conflict cannot be solved because there is no public support in favor of it.

The non-traditional approach would be seriously considering a humanitarian intervention in Yemen to restore a legitimate and democratically elected

government that protects the rights of its people. This would be a similar invasion to the one seen in Iraq back in 2003. The problem is that a humanitarian intervention could probably leave Yemen in ruins, creating a power vacuum, of which insurgents of any kind could take advantage. This was seen in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion, so the West and especially the United States, having faced the consequences of their problematic and largely unsuccessful invasion of Iraq, do not want to be confronted with a similar situation and are fairly against any sort of humanitarian intervention in Yemen.

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