

Committee: Arab League

Issue: Measures to resolve the civil war in Yemen

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Introduction:

Yemen's civil war began in 2014 when the Houthi insurgency took control of Yemen's capital and largest city. After failed negotiations with the group, the rebels seized the presidential palace in January 2015, resulting in the president of the time, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi and his government resigning. In March 2015, along with the support of the US, a coalition of Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia launched a campaign to air strike and economically isolate the Houthi insurgents. The intervention of regional powers in Yemen's conflict, including Iran, and Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia, drew the country into a regional struggle. There has been some militarisation of Yemen's waters with Iran dispatching naval convoys in 2015, which caught US interest. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have launched twenty-five thousand air strikes. The Houthis responded to that with drone attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This has also caused an economic crisis as, in 2019, the conflict splintered the economy into two broad economic zones, one controlled by Houthis, and one by the Saudi-backed government. This also led to a sharp depreciation of Yemen's currency. This ongoing conflict is complicated with many different parties and vastly opposing viewpoints.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Gulf states:** States of the US that border Mexico: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas
2. **Civil war:** A war among parties of opposing views in the same nation.

3. **Coalition:** A temporary alliance formed for combined action, mainly of political parties forming an amendment.
4. **Houthi Movement:** An Islamic political and military organisation that emerged from a Yemeni government in the 1990s.
5. **Ceasefire:** A temporary suspension in fighting between opposing parties, ceasefires are usually used only in certain regions of an area of conflict.

Background Information

When the Houthi movement seized control of Sana'a in 2014, they demanded a new government and cheaper fuel. This marked the beginning of Yemen's civil war. Following the seizure of the presidential palace in 2015, the Houthi group has been the target of numerous acts of violence and attacks. Hadi retracted his resignation in 2015 and, as a result of pressure from the Houthi group, was compelled to flee the nation in search of safety in Saudi Arabia, where he continued to serve as president.

Along the regional Sunni-Shia divide, there was another conflict that was stoked by Iran and the Gulf states under Saudi Arabia's leadership. Saudi Arabia also attempted a naval blockade to prevent Iran from supplying to the Houthis and Iran's response further elevated the military situation. The United States also took interest in the sudden militarisation of the seas and sent in its own Navy to seize weapons coming into Yemen from Iran, However, the blockage of trade further worsened the humanitarian situation.

In the nation itself, the Houthis continued to spread their movement pushing south in the early months of 2015 but the involvement of Saudi was successful in pushing them back and minimising their progress. The UN stepped in to facilitate diplomatic discussions and peacekeeping talks. Around 2016 the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) group grew in presence and stood against both the Yemen government and the Houthi movement,

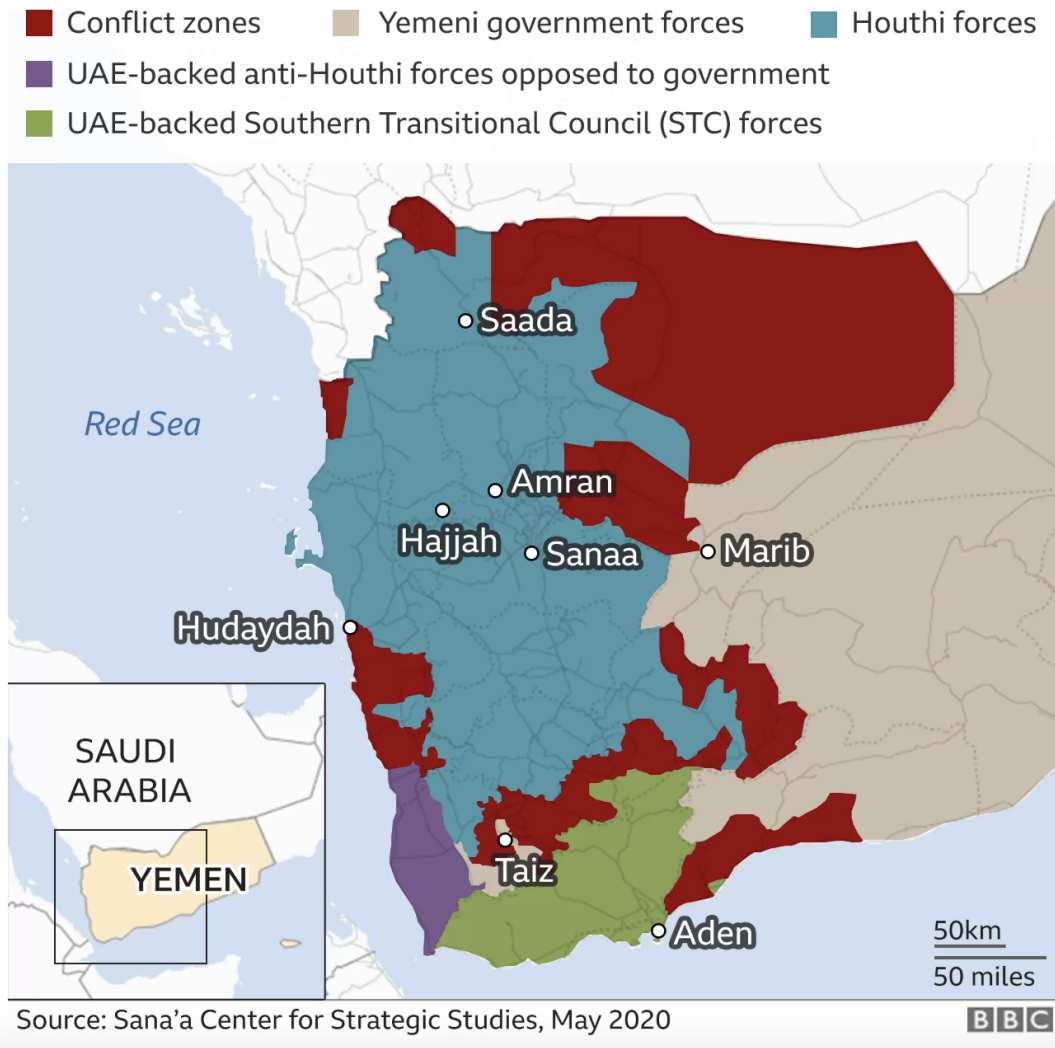
Also in 2016 the Houthis and Former president Saleh attempted to form a political council and act as a government in many parts of northern Yemen but in 2017 former president Saleh turned against the Houthis and called for all of his followers to do the same and stand against them, this ultimately leads to his death and his rebellion to the Houthis was short-lived.

In 2018 the attack led to a ceasefire for parts of northern Yemen that was mostly upheld and in 2020 the UAE pulled out of Yemen but they still maintain a huge influence on the country and are a major party involved.

In 2021 the crisis experienced a major setback for any peaceful solutions when the Houthi rebels conducted airstrikes targeting oil facilities and international airports in Saudi Arabia. and Saudi Arabia hit back launching even more attacks in Sana'a. This was one of the deadliest attacks in a few years and killed hundreds of troops.

Current Situation

Yemen: Areas of control and conflict



Fighting and conflict in the Yemen civil war between Houthi Rebels and Saudi Coalitions that back the internationally recognized government has significantly reduced, however, the issue still remains. Involved parties have tried to negotiate a peaceful solution, yet, these diplomatic discussions have yielded little to no progress and have been followed by continued violence. The STC (Southern Transitional Council) has also continued to advocate for an independent South Yemen state, which has further complicated the issue. As the chaos in Yemen continues, the AQAP group have only increased attacks and widened their presence. Furthermore, the issue of the humanitarian situation remains unsolved and worsening by the day.

The UN has stated around 233,000 died, however, they say this is mostly from ‘indirect causes’, 131,000 people have died from these so-called indirect causes such as lack of food, ongoing famine and lack of healthcare and adequate facilities and infrastructure, however, this is all related back to the war. Currently, in Yemen, thousands of people are living in famine-like conditions, and there are six million people who are on the verge of famine. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that Yemen was in “imminent danger of the worst famine the world has seen for decades”. Moreover, around 4.5 million people have been displaced, and 80% of the population are in need of humanitarian aid and protection. All these facts combined make resolving the civil war necessary, and the recognition that action needs to be taken.

Saudi Arabia is a country majorly involved and is one of the main opponents to the Houthi group and although some troops have been deployed along the borders and in some Yemeni provinces, It mainly fights the battle through airstrikes against Houthi-held areas. Saudi Arabia has also provided a base in exile for Hadi and logistical support for the ground fighting in northern Yemen.

All parties in the Yemen Civil war have violated human rights and International Humanitarian Law. This ongoing situation has led to protests in southern Yemen.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Republic of Yemen/Yemeni armed forces

The internationally recognised government of Yemen and its military are heavily involved due to this conflict occurring *against* the Yemeni government as the Houthi group aims to govern all of Yemen. The Republic of Yemen views the Houthis movement as a threat to national stability and something that undermines the government’s authority. The Government itself has been a strong

advocate for the ongoing humanitarian issues and has put a lot of effort towards attempting to improve the situation by calling for ceasefires and diplomatic discussion. They have also emphasised the importance of counterterrorism against groups like ISIS and the AQAP. However, within the Yemen Armed Forces, we do see some contrast in perspectives. Ever since the 2014 Houthi Rebels advance we have seen an internal divide. Sections of the Republic Guards were reported to have sided with the rebels, while currently the forces remain loyal to President Hadi and are backed by the Saudis and engage in efforts to resist the Houthis advancements.

Houthi Movement

The Houthi Movement took control of the capital, Sanaa (2014), and other parts of Yemen. Since taking control of the Capital the Houthis movement has launched numerous attacks and sought to gain control of other regions in the nation. They are reportedly supported by Iran, however, the extent of Iran's involvement is unclear. The Houthis Movement and Iran's alliance is due to many factors including the fact that they religiously align with them both being Shia Muslims and also both have the desire to spread and expand their influence and seem to strategically align as well. Yet, the Houthis long-term strategy is unclear. Furthermore, The Houthis' goals seemingly have shifted throughout eight years of conflict, but the ultimate aim is to take control of Yemen. Moreover, their perspective goes against Israel, the US and Saudi Arabia. The ongoing conflict in Yemen is widely viewed as the Iran-Saudi proxy war, which is further explained in this report.

Southern Transitional Council (STC)

A southern separatist group seeking greater independence for South Yemen. At

times, they have been aligned with the Yemeni government and against the Houthis, but they have also clashed with the Yemen government over issues of southern independence. The Southern Transitional Council won't move back to the way it was before the 1990s when South Yemen existed on its own, having its own sovereignty. In the current situation, the STC are against the Houthis Movement as they view their presence in the north as a threat and something that could undermine their cause. The STC is also willing to settle just for gaining greater autonomy, and they advocate for equity of distribution of resources and ultimately try to maintain the stability of their region.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)

A Sunni terrorist organisation formed in 2009 that has taken advantage of the chaos to expand its presence in Yemen. It opposes both the Yemen government and the Houthi rebels. It also took advantage of the chaos in Yemen to create mini-states in remote eastern regions and launch numerous attacks against them. This group was originally split into two different AQ (Al Qaeda) groups that existed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. When Saudi Arabia managed to push an AQ (Al Qaeda) group into Yemen, this group combined with an AQ in Yemen, this new group was named AQAP. The group overall has the broad goal of removing foreigners from the Arabian Peninsula (which is a group of countries including Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE). The AQAP is mainly against the Houthis Movement as there are both groups that support different ideologies, with the AQAP being Sunni and the Houthis movement being Shia, and the AQAP has been pushing back against the religious Shia laws that the Houthis rebels and Iran implement.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

These Gulf countries have led a coalition of Arab states in support of the Hadi government. Their involvement is mainly against the Houthi rebels, whom they view as being aligned with Iran. Sudan also backs Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Western nations such as France and Great Britain. However, Saudi Arabia is the most involved member nation. Saudi Arabia first got involved in the conflict due to a request from President Hadi after the Republic of Yemen's military forces were beaten by the Houthis rebel group in Sana'a. In March 2015 Saudi led its first coalition of 9 other countries (Mainly from West Asia and North Africa). Ever since then, Saudi Arabia has provided a lot of military support for Yemen, mostly through airstrikes. Saudi Arabia's attention to the civil war stems from the further conflict they have with Iran and their fear of the spread of Iranian influence in the region; they also aim to protect the Saudi borders. While supporting the Republic of Yemen Saudi Arabia has faced a lot of criticism for violating international laws.

Iran

Iran has been accused of supporting the Houthi rebels with weapons and financial assistance. While Iran denies direct military involvement and the funnelling of weapons into Yemen. However, it acknowledges political support for the Houthis. Both Iran and the Houthis rebels share religious ties (both being Shia). The Yemen Civil war is in many ways fueling the Iran-Saudi proxy war that exists because of several geopolitical issues. Iran and Saudi Arabia are both fighting for regional influence and power and oil exports and relations with Western countries like the United States are a big part of their conflict. Iran views the Yemen Civil War as a method to spread their influence in the region and gain an advantage over Saudi Arabia.

USA

The US has provided support to the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi rebels. However, there has been criticism of US involvement due to concerns about civilian casualties and the humanitarian impact. The USA has also reportedly led several counter-terrorism operations in the area. In late 2020 U.S. President Joe Biden halted U.S. support to the war and made ending it a priority of his foreign policy amid an uproar over civilian casualties by the coalition's bombings.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has been frequently enforcing the fact that military solutions can not be used for this crisis and moving on to peaceful negotiations is the more appropriate approach to resolve this. The UN has also assisted Yemen in terms of finance as they provided Yemen with \$4.3 billion in 2023, which is nearly double the \$2.2 billion that the UN-funded Yemen in 2022 for its humanitarian program. The UN has also assisted by providing support towards the Yemeni-led political transitions through advertising participation of civilians,

In addition to the funding, the UN created a mission known as the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA). Established in January 2019, the UNMHA connects civilians, military members as well as police officers to be in favour of UN parties when conveying their obligations of the Stockholm Agreement.

- UNMHA, 10 July 2023 (S/RES/2691)
 - This resolution extended the UNMHA procedure to continue till 14 July 2024. This allows the mission to continue and for the people of the country to be in favour of UN parties for a longer period of time.
 - The implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement faced significant challenges, which decreased its effectiveness, such challenges include violations, delays, and ongoing hostilities. Nonetheless, The UNMHA has remained committed to working to fulfil its responsibilities of overall violence reduction.

Furthermore, the UN has provided support towards the political transitions led by the Yemeni. In order to do this, the UN promotes the participation of civilians, inclusive of previously insignificant groups such as the Houthis and Southern Hirak. Through this, the political decisions made are more democratic, allowing more people to have a say. This is beneficial to the country as it decreases reasons for civil war.

Possible Solutions

1. Supplying Humanitarian Aid

Help the refugees regain their human rights: food, shelter, cash assistance, registration services, and legal aid.

2. Reconstruction of the region

Focusing on rebuilding infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and housing. However, this would only be able to be applied in a ceasefire or safe zone.

3. Creating Ceasefire Zones

This relates to rebuilding the region and is about creating safe areas where innocent civilians can live in a functional society with their basic needs being met.

4. Imposing Sanctions

The creation of international sanctions against parties violating human rights and encouraging conflict could be effective, however it would be necessary to make sure sanctions don't have any negative externalities and aren't affecting civilians in any way.

5. Organising Diplomatic discussions and peace negotiations:

In order for this to be effective there would have to be representatives from all major parties involved. These discussions would probably have to be facilitated by the UN to ensure effectiveness and that debate is on-topic and relevant.

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