



Issue: The Question of Yemen

Forum: Security Council

Position: Deputy Chair

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Introduction

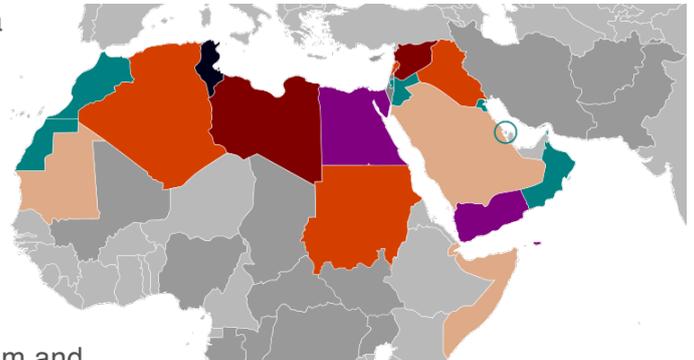
Yemen is the stage of one of the deadliest wars at this moment in the world. Starting with the Arab Spring, the conflict really ignited in 2015 when the Houthi Muslims took over the Yemeni capital Sana'a and made the president and parliament resign. Since then, the conflict has been detrimental to all military parties involved, in which the Islamic State also entered the fight, and above all, to the Yemeni population. A Saudi-led coalition and the United States have conducted airstrikes in the region, which still has not led to a solution to a problem, but only caused more civilian deaths.

Background

Before we focus on the country of Yemen, we first look at what lies at the basis of the conflict: the Arab Spring that started in 2011.

The Arab Spring

Authoritarianism, unemployment and poverty are a few of the most important causes that led to what is now known as the 'Arab Spring'. Besides these causes, human rights violations and political corruption further ignited the anger of the people among many of the Arabic countries. The protesters of the Arab Spring pursue more democratic rights such as (free) elections, more economic freedom, jobs in general, more secularism and human rights.



From smaller protests in Tunisia, the methods to achieve those goals evolved into region wide demonstrations, mutiny and riots, some leading to violence, some facing strong suppression by the government and some resulting in political changes. In Saudi-Arabia for example, it sparked the women rights movement, leading to the possibility for women to engage in politics in 2015 and the women's right to drive in 2018. In some countries such as Oman, the demonstrations led to the leader meeting the demands of the protesters. The Omani Sultan created 50.000 new jobs, set up a new state audit committee and introduced



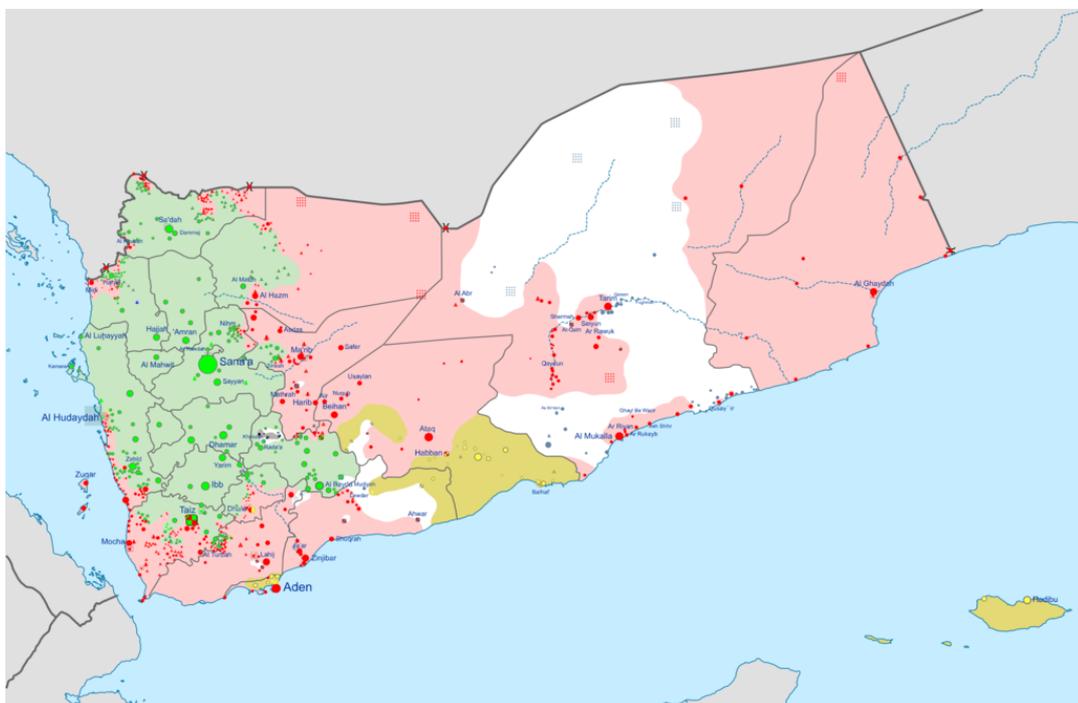
grants to benefit students and tackle unemployment. Since the introduction of these measures, protests have calmed down in Oman.

Opposed to these changes, more violent consequences became visible in for example Egypt. The Egyptian protests led to the resignation of president Mubarak, even despite his effort to combat the protests by shutting down the internet, so social media could not be used to prevent new rallies, after which the Egyptian military took over, after which a series of popular elections followed, which are thought to have been tampered with, after which the right-wing, religious and social conservative Muslim Brotherhood party delivered the first democratically chosen president of Egypt: Mohamed Morsi, after which Morsi got overthrown and his party got declared as a terrorist organisation, after which the current president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won the latest elections. During this extremely chaotic period, many civilians had been killed, by the different government administrations and the police.

The start of the chaos in Yemen

If one thinks the example of Egypt is a complete chaotic doom scenario, it is now time for us to focus on the poorest country in the Arab region: Yemen.

A quick overview: The Yemeni civil war officially started on the 19th of March 2015 and is still ongoing. Until now, the Houthis have taken control of Yemen's capital city, Sana'a, the former president Ali Adullah Saleh is Killed, the Southern Transitional Council has captured the city of Aden and a Saudi-led coalition intervene in Yemen to restore the Hadi-led government.



Military situation in Yemen on 28 July 2019

Green: controlled by the Houthis, **Red**: controlled by the Hadi-led government, **Yellow**: controlled by the Southern Transitional Council, **White**: controlled by Al-Qaeda, **Grey**: controlled by ISIL

Facts

- In 2019, the number of Yemeni people facing hunger has increased by 45%. 3.2 million women and children are suffering from acute malnutrition.
- According to *Save the Children*, already 84,701 children died from starvation.
- 2,556 people died due to a cholera outbreak from April 2017 until October 2018
- Over 100.000 people have been killed in the conflict, of which 12.000+ civilians
- 49,960 people have been wounded overall, of which 10.768 civilians
- In total, 3,154,572 people have been displaced because of the conflict.



Major Parties Involved

Houthis versus the Hadi-government

The Houthis is a Shia Muslim group with its origins in the region around the Saudi-Yemeni border. One of their leaders was killed in 2004 by the government as a response to his anti-government policies. This conflict cooled down, became heated again for a few times and then finally cooled down once more.

Then, in 2011, the Arab Spring also made its entrance in Yemen. The Houthi leader declared the support of the Houthis for the protests that called for the resignation of the President Saleh. Later that year, the Houthis even laid siege to village in northern Yemen. In 2014, the Houthi group fought the Yemen Army and seized control of Sana'a. They forced the government to resign. The National Dialogue Conference tried to come up with a solution for the new situation and suggested the country to split into six federal regions. But the Houthis did not accept the idea and demanded president Hadi to resign instead, in 2015. The Yemeni parliament dissolved.

Iran

As both Iran and the Houthis follow Shia Islam, mutual support between the parties has been suspected. The United States and Saudi Arabia have alleged that the Houthis receive weapons and training from Iran, while the Houthis and the Iranian government have denied any military affiliation.

United States, Saudi-Arabia, UK, Persian Gulf countries

Saudi Arabia provided financial aid to Yemen until late 2014, before the Houthi takeover of the capital. The United States was a major supplier to the Yemeni government, whereas the United Kingdom has also supplied weaponry used by Saudi-led coalition to strike targets in Yemen.



Timeline of Key Events

January 2015	Houthis take over the capital Sana'a and overthrow the president
19 March 2015	In the Battle of Aden Airport, troops loyal to Hadi clashed with those who oppose him.
20 March 2015	Houthis declare war on the Hadi-government and Al-Qaeda. President Hadi declares Aden to be Yemen's temporary capital.



22 March 2015	Houthi forces take over Yemen's third-largest city Taiz
24 March 2015	Heavy fights erupted between the Houthis and pro-Hadi fighters in the region close to Aden. The minister of Defence is captured by the Houthis. The Houthi commander boasts that his forces would invade the larger kingdom and capture Mecca and Riyadh too. The day that followed, Saudi Arabia started their military intervention together with 8 other Arab countries and the support from the USA
25 March 2015	Start of the Battle of Aden
2016	IS conduct suicide bombings in Aden.
20 August 2016	Mass demonstration in Sana'a in order to support the Houthis. The UN quickly rejected the crowd's demands and meanwhile, Saudi planes bombed above the demonstration, killing an unknown number of civilians.
29 January 2017	The Yakla raid, designed by the Obama administration, but executed by the Trump administration. US soldiers killed 14 Al-Qaeda members, along with 14 civilians, of which 9 children.
March 2017	The US kills hundreds of Al-Qaeda militants in 45 airstrikes.
2 December 2017	Former Yemeni president Saleh, who first supported the Houthis, formally splits and calls for a dialogue with Saudi Arabia.
4 December 2017	Saleh is killed by the Houthis
2018 - present	Saudi-Arabia conducts many more airstrikes, killing hundreds, after which the Houthis also conduct many airstrikes. The conflict intensifies and becomes the most devastating war in the world at the moment.
13 March 2019	The US Senate votes in favour of ending US support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. President Trump vetoed this decision, a veto the Senate could not override, as it lacked a qualified majority to do so.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

In 2015, neighbouring country Oman proposed the Omani Initiative, a 7-point-plan to settle the conflict between the Houthis and the government. The Houthis accepted the plan and the proposed peace talks, but the government refused any negotiation. The initiative included the following points: the Houthis withdraw from all Yemeni cities, the president Hadi and the government should be restored, immediate parliamentary and presidential elections, the conversion of the Houthi movement into a political party, an international aid conference attended by donor states, Yemen entering the Gulf Cooperation Council and an agreement that is signed by all Yemeni parties.



In 2019, Kuwait suggests its country to host peace talks. They also hosted Yemen peace talks for three months in April 2016. The negotiations failed.

In 2019, the Riyadh Agreement on Yemen was signed, taking a few steps towards peace.

Possible Solutions

This five-year on-going war should be ended through diplomatic means. The United States and Saudi-Arabia have been the leaders in participating in the conflict, however their actions led to many humanitarian horrors and civilian deaths. The first step to curb the horrific consequences on the Yemeni population, all foreign parties should step back and stop their military actions.

The Security Council could take the Omani Initiative as a stepping stone to further tackle the issue, as the Houthis already were prepared to engage in that solution, so the next step would be to ask oneself how the Hadi-government could be convinced, if not forced, to accept a certain resolution. The country should be able to function again, with a functioning government and parliament, in compromises should be sought after, to settle this devastating dispute.



Appendix/Appendices

Dutch TV host Floortje Dessing visits Yemen during the war

https://www.npostart.nl/floortje-naar-het-einde-van-de-wereld/04-01-2018/BV_101385629

Article on the influence of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the war

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/26/yemen-daily-struggle-for-survival-behind-divided-lines>

Bibliography

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