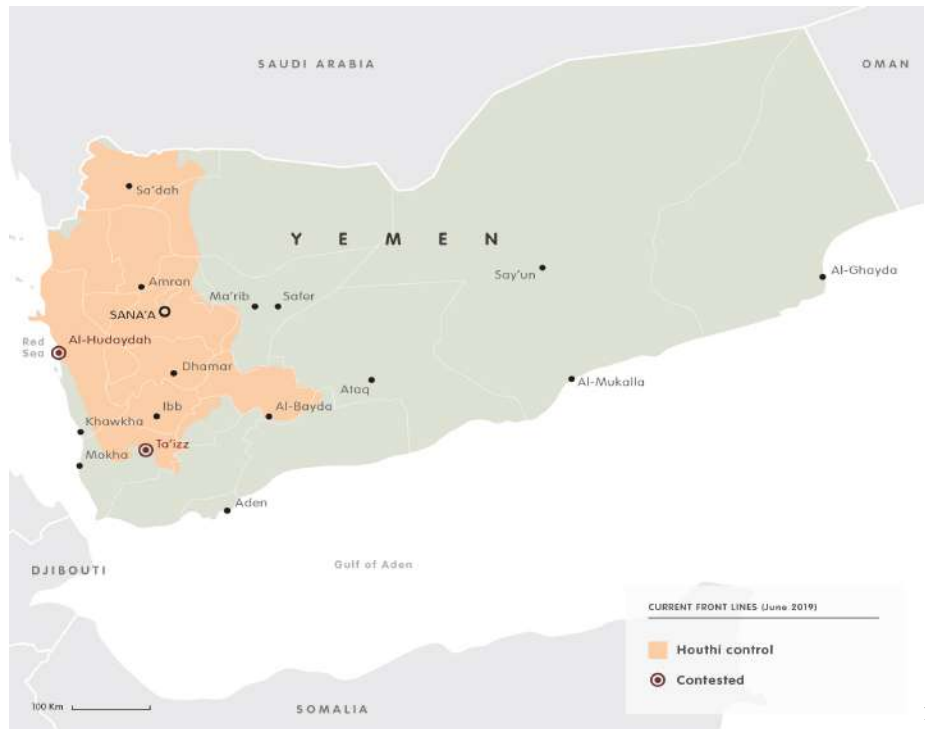


## Topic 2: The Question of Yemen



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### Topic Background

The Arab Spring, in many ways, was a success for countries like Tunisia who got what they demanded: a government that respected and represented the people. For other countries like Yemen, however, what began as Arab Spring-inspired protests led to years of chaos and unrest. The current crisis in Yemen highlights long standing ideological divides that has contributed to the world's current worst humanitarian crisis<sup>2</sup>. In 1990, "... the U.S.- and Saudi-backed Yemeni Arab Republic, in the north, and the USSR-backed People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, to the south" became modern Yemen with the military officer Ali Abdullah Saleh leading the new state<sup>3</sup>. Since its unification, Yemen has suffered from a constant divide that has led to instability and ongoing rebellions. When the Yemeni authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, handed over power to President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in November 2011, conflict and instability in Yemen only grew more. The Houthi group rebelled against the Yemeni government and eventually gained control of northern Yemen in September 2014.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecfr.eu/mena/yemen>

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032811>

<sup>3</sup> Laub, Zachary. "Yemen in Crisis." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 19 Apr. 2016. Web. 25 July 2017.

Yemen shows the world that modern cold wars and battles for imperialist rule do indeed still exist. The civil war is little more than a proxy battleground for Iran and Saudi Arabia<sup>4</sup>, the two most powerful Middle Eastern countries, to try and exert influence and place puppet leaders into office. For five years, the country has been in civil war. During most of those years, Iran has backed the Houthis and Saudi Arabia the Yemeni government. Currently, it feels as though the country is holding its breath. The war is at a stalemate, with hundreds of thousands of military and civilian casualties on both sides. While the Yemeni militia, in an uneasy alliance with the Southern Yemeni separatist movement, have saved the city of Aden from Houthi invasion while also chipping away at their front lines, the Houthi rebels still occupy much of the Northwest. Additionally, the Houthis are one united front against a fracturing Yemeni military. After civil war first broke out, the Southern Transitional Council<sup>5</sup> began to loudly advocate to become a separate, independent state from the rest of Yemen. Talk of a permanent border divide have heightened tensions to a new level within the country, amongst Houthis, civilians, and the federal government<sup>6</sup>.

Not only is the country wrought with political instability, but the civilians are suffering from grave humanitarian situations. The consequences of war have led to soldiers committing human rights violations repeatedly, against civilians. On the other hand, al -Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Houthis' long-standing opponent, continues to take advantage of the chaos within Yemen's borders to launch terrorist attacks and recruit vulnerable young civilians to join their ranks. In August of 2019, al-Qaeda continued to launch deadly attacks in Southern Yemen<sup>7</sup>, which is less protected due to all the attention in the West. In addition to suffering pure violence and war, civilians have been suffering from a devastating lack of resources and humanitarian support. The international community has implemented blockades to limit rebel groups' access to food and fuel imports; however, Yemeni civilians are suffering most from the lack of resources. Currently, Yemen is experiencing one of the worst famines in the world, as well as the deadliest cholera epidemic ever recorded<sup>8</sup>.

### **Past Actions**

The United Nations has been actively involved in Yemeni politics since 1963 when the United Nations "... Security Council commissioned the United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM) to oversee the withdrawal from Yemen of Egyptian soldiers and Saudi weapons."<sup>9</sup> The mission aimed to peacefully remove the foreign actors and weapons stockpiles to help stabilize Yemen. However, the mission did not have a strong foundation, as the "UNYOM

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ecfr.eu/mena/yemen#cap8>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/al-qaeda-launches-deadly-attack-army-base-southern-yemen-190802081549242.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

<sup>9</sup> Orkaby, Asher. "The UN's Yemen Problem." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations, 12 May 2015. Web.

withdrew from Yemen in September 1964 after only 14 months in the country [because] the mission ... could not secure sufficient funding.<sup>10</sup> The inability to maintain funding and adequately ensure peace and stability led to a weak foundation for United Nations actions and dialogues surrounding Yemeni instability.



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The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2140 in 2014 to address the civil war in Yemen. The resolution highlighted the continued instability and humanitarian crises plaguing the country and called for increased international involvement to support Yemen's political transition. Most notably, the resolution reinforced the National Dialogue Conference in supporting political transition, but addressed the need to support Yemeni citizens through increased humanitarian and economic support. The resolution also addressed the need to monitor the humanitarian crisis, efforts to pursue a political transition, and arms movement into Yemen<sup>12</sup>. Most recently, the Security Council made monumental progress by helping to negotiate a ceasefire in Hodeidah. Following that, the two warring sides also signed the Stockholm Agreement, which is largely seen as the first step toward a lasting peace treaty<sup>13</sup>. Currently, the Security Council has decided to extend its political mission in Yemen until January of 2020 in order to ensure the upholding of the Stockholm tenets<sup>14</sup>. 2018 was potentially a good year for Yemen, but the already fragile agreements are at the brink of falling apart, with al-Qaeda terrorists also placing pressure on the situation. Action must be taken immediately to make sure these peace treaties were not signed in vain.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1040221>

<sup>12</sup> "Security Council Adopts Resolution 2140 (2014), Welcoming Yemen's Peaceful Transition towards New Constitution, General Elections | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." *United Nations*. United Nations, 26 Feb. 2014. Web.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-un/security-council-members-urge-yemen-parties-to-implement-peace-deal-idUSKBN1QT1WX>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/16/c\\_138229376.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/16/c_138229376.htm)

## **Possible Solutions**

Despite all of the issues, peace in Yemen is not only attainable, but within arm's reach. Since the two parties signed the Stockholm Agreement in 2018, groups have respected the ceasefire and more importantly, are tired of war. In order to respond adequately to the crisis in Yemen, the international community must focus on providing economic stability, guaranteeing a peaceful transition of power, and supporting the citizens of Yemen. Sanctions will not work, as the people they harm the most are the ones they seek to help. While the Iranian and Saudi Arabian governments will continue to encourage violence, Yemeni civilians will continue to starve due to lack of resource access and the economic halt. There should be pullbacks of any and all sanctions against Yemen, though economic consequences for third-party militaries that add fuel to the fire may be just the incentive they need to advocate for peace as well.

Security Council members, as well as Yemeni government officials, should capitalize on the successful Hodeidah troop pullbacks<sup>15</sup> and encourage new ceasefire agreements in important northwestern cities, to be upheld by good faith and peacekeeping operations. Encouraging a gradual shave-down of boots on the ground could be just the type of slow, yet steady progress that Yemen needs. Instead of attempting to halt the war all at once, the Security Council should focus first on encouraging peace treaties for critical areas that need aid, as well as key ports, so that the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels can work on a long-term deal instead of a cold turkey one.

Many Member States have encouraged a global fund to support the economic stability of Yemen. Member States should take into account the need to stabilize the country economically to provide a strong foundation for a stable government. However, the global fund will need to be supervised by an international body in order to avoid funds being allocated inappropriately and ineffectively. The international community will need to monitor the use of the allocated funds and establish compliance standards to avoid wrongful use of funds. If the international community can guarantee economic stability in Yemen, the country can begin to respond to the humanitarian crisis plaguing the country.

## **Further Research**

Use these links to begin your research on the current Yemeni crisis:

- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/militiamen-dig-in-at-a-front-line-of-yemens-deadlocked-war/2019/08/08/f0115590-b9a5-11e9-8e83-4e6687e99814\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/militiamen-dig-in-at-a-front-line-of-yemens-deadlocked-war/2019/08/08/f0115590-b9a5-11e9-8e83-4e6687e99814_story.html)
- <https://www.ecfr.eu/mena/yemen#cap8>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

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<sup>15</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/yemen-rivals-meet-onboard-vessel-talks-hodeidah-pullback-190715081112596.html>

- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/yemen-rivals-meet-onboard-vessel-talks-hodeidah-pullback-190715081112596.html>
- [https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/hodeidah\\_agreement\\_0.pdf](https://osesgy.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/hodeidah_agreement_0.pdf)

### **Guiding Questions**

1. How can the Security Council play a role in encouraging new, productive peace talks between the Houthis and the Yemeni government?
2. What outside international actors have played a role in supporting the rival forces in Yemen? How can the UNSC stop them from further intervening?
3. What are some possible solutions for responding to the economic instability in the country?