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The Yemen Civil War

By Noa Ifrah



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I) Background Information

“Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory for Islam”.

Here is one of the slogans of the **Houthis**, a revolutionary group in the **North of Yemen** that has control of a third of the **Yemeni territory** and more than half of the population of the country. Yemen is located in the southwest of the **Arabian peninsula**, between **Saudi Arabia** and **Oman**.

Map of Yemen



The place of **religion** in Yemen is really important, and it's one of the reasons for the division. Effectively, **45% of the population is Shiites** (especially in the North) and **55% is Sunnis** (the rest). Despite this fact, in **1990**, the **North** and the **South** of Yemen reunited to create the **Republic of Yemen**, and since this event, many things have happened. First, in **1994**, a **civil war** exploded because of separatists in the **South**, and after that, in **2004**, a first action led to the situation we know today. The leader of the **Houthis** and creator of the slogan above, **Hussein Badreddine al-Houthi**, was killed by the government of Yemen, which inflamed the fire of the **insurrection** of the **Houthis**. After the **Arab Spring** and the fall of the president, a new president was elected with **99% of the votes**, but many manifestations happened during **August 2014**.

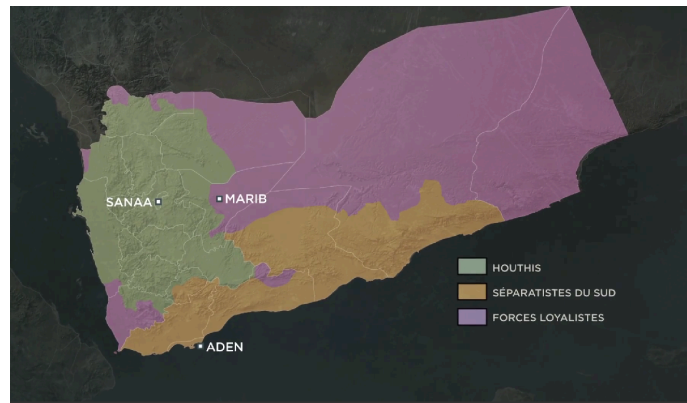
In **2014**, the **Houthis** took the **capital** of the country, **Sanaa**, and that really started the internal conflict. After several months of violent fighting, the **Houthis** really took control of the city, and the **government of Yemen** moved to **Aden**.

Even though **Yemen** is the **poorest country in the Middle East**, it has a preponderant place in **international trade** because of its control over the **Gulf of Aden** and the **Port of Hodeida**. The problem of the **Houthis** attacking trade ships disrupted international trade and the use of the **Suez Canal**, which was providing money to many countries and especially **Egypt**. Before the conflict, over **12%** of the commercial boats passed by this road, and they now go all around **Africa** to finish in **Europe**.



In consequence, **Saudi Arabia** reacted and created, in **March 2015**, the **Coalition of 9** with **8 other Arab countries** to support the official government. This coalition was also created to face **Iran**, which was helping the **Houthis** to take control over all the country.

After those events, the country was divided into **three parts**: a first one in the **northwest** of the country for the **Houthis**, another one in the **South** for the separatists, and a last one for the **government** with the rest of the country.



This conflict shows globally the **geopolitical situation** in the **Middle East** with the opposition of two major powers: **Iran** and **Saudi Arabia**.

II) Current Situation

The war in **Yemen** may no longer be at its peak intensity, but the situation remains urgent. Despite some reductions in fighting and occasional **peace talks**, the **humanitarian crisis** continues to worsen, with millions still displaced and in need of aid. The conflict has left deep scars on the country, and a lasting resolution is still elusive. The need for international support, a **political solution**, and a sustained commitment to **peace** is more critical than ever to prevent further suffering and instability in the region.

One of the challenges of this war is all the **resources** in Yemen that are threatened. **90% of their GDP** comes from **petrol**, and they try to survive the best they can with that, but it's getting more and more complicated since the beginning of the civil war, and especially since the **attack of October 2022** on the facilities of **petrol**. **Marib**, one of the biggest cities in the country and that produces a lot of petrol, is the battlefield of the fight between the **Houthis** and the **government**.

This conflict also has a massive **humanitarian aspect**. They face **3 major problems**: first, **education**. **4.5 million** or **39%** of the children can't go to school, either because it's too dangerous or because it's too expensive, with the cost of the furniture. This joins the second problem, which is **poverty**. As mentioned before, **Yemen** is the **poorest country** of the **Arabian Peninsula**. **80%** of its population is under the poverty line and can't live properly. Finally, the biggest problem the population is facing is about **starvation**. **20%** of the population is undernourished, and this number might just get bigger. In **2024**, the goal of the **UN** was to collect approximately **2.7 billion** to help the citizens, but they "only" collected less than **500 million** (this act is considered as a

sanction by the **Houthis**). All those issues are showing how urgent it is to act and to find a long-term solution.

Moreover, the **civil war** is a key part of the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict** because of their control over the **Red Sea**. The **Houthis**, in support of **Palestine**, have already stopped **Israeli** commercial ships, such as the **Galaxy Leader** and others. That's why recently **Israel** sent many missiles to **Sanaa**, the capital of the country. That's not the only country that is bombing **Yemen**. **Saudi Arabia** has been bombing the north of the country since the beginning in **2014**, especially land of food culture and citizens.

About the **separatists** in the **South**, they supported the government, and their army joined the loyalist army. On a **political** aspect, they act with a **parallel government** and act like an independent region of **Yemen** with their own president. Even with that, many manifestations happened during the war, and so their support and dedication aren't complete. The most important aspect is their control over **Aden** and its **port**, which is one of the biggest challenges in an international way.

Finally, the conflict can't be solved without **exterior help**, and the need for international support is urgent, with, for example, the giving of money or sending food for the poorest.

III) Main Actors

Government of Yemen:

It is directed by **Rachad al-Alimi** and is globally one of the two sides of the conflict. It is majorly composed of **Sunnis**, which mark a first opposition with the **Houthis**. They consider them as proxies of **Iran** to disturb the geopolitical balance in the region and that wish to destroy their **democracy** and **republic**. They are, under the eyes of the **UN**, the **legitimate government** of the region and ask for **sanctions** and **pressure** from international actors of the world to the **Houthis**. Also, they want to have a **democratic transition** and have further discussion with the **Houthis** to ensure the **security** of the citizens.

Houthis

The **Houthis** are a **Shiite** group that took control of the **North of Yemen** in **2014** with the capture of the **capital Sanaa**. They are exercising **authoritarian power** on the people of Sanaa and the North of the country, following the laws

of the **Quran**. There is a big influence and communication on their part. They are using many **influencers** to show moments of manifestation or combat against their enemies, such as **Israel** or the **United States**. Their biggest ally is **Iran**, which gives them **money**, **weapons**, and sends **military advisors** to help them. Even with that, they are still struggling to fight against the **government** because they have fewer weapons and soldiers, so they are pretty much dependent on the help from **Iran**.

Iran

Iran's involvement in the **Yemen conflict** has been marked by concrete actions aimed at strengthening the **Houthi rebels' military** capabilities. The **Iranian government** has provided significant **military support**, including the supply of **advanced weaponry** such as **missiles**, **drones**, and other forms of **ammunition**. These weapons have been used by the **Houthis** in their attacks on both **Yemeni government forces** and neighboring **Saudi Arabia**. In addition, **Iran** is believed to have trained **Houthi fighters** and offered **strategic advice**, further solidifying their position in the conflict.

Furthermore, **Iran** has been accused of using its influence over the **Houthis** to disrupt **maritime trade** in the **Red Sea**. The **Houthis** have attacked **commercial ships** and **tankers** in these waters, which is seen as an attempt to exert leverage over regional shipping lanes. **Iran's** actions have sparked concern among the international community, as these attacks not only destabilize **Yemen** but also have broader implications for **global trade** and **security**. Through these concrete steps, **Iran** has played a critical role in prolonging the conflict, complicating efforts for **peace**, and contributing to the broader **regional tensions**.

Saudi Arabia (and the Coalition of 9 countries):

This coalition, as mentioned before, was created by **Saudi Arabia** to create an alliance with those countries: **United Arab Emirates**, **Qatar**, **Egypt**, **Jordan**, **Morocco**, **Kuwait**, **Sudan**, and **Bahrain**. This alliance has, in **2020**, intervened with **Operation Decisive Storm**, which aimed to stop the war and give back the capital and the country to the legitimate government. Since the attack, no objectives have been accomplished, and this led to the departure of 3 major countries of the **Coalition**: **United Arab Emirates**, **Qatar**, and **Jordan**.

About **Saudi Arabia** itself, the country is really involved in the conflict due to the huge presence of **Iran**. They have directed many **airstrikes** to bomb cities and destroy fields. They also, in **2015**, started a **blockade** against Yemen that was qualified by many countries in the **UN** as a **war crime**. Finally, they are the first allies of the **government** and invest a lot in their victory.

United Arab Emirates:

The position of this country is kind of ambivalent. On the one hand, they supported the intervention by the coalition in **2015**. They sent soldiers until **2020** and then they removed them, but they still sent many **weapons** to different groups in the conflict. But on the other hand, they try to install themselves in the **South** of the country to get a better position in **international trade**. In order to achieve this, they strongly supported the **separatists** in the **South** and sent a lot of different things such as **medicine**. One of their major goals is to have complete control of the **Aden port**, which is the key to the **Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb**.

United States

The **United States** has played a complex and significant role in the **Yemeni Civil War**, particularly in its support of the **Saudi-led coalition** that backs the internationally recognized **Yemeni government**. While the **U.S. government** has provided **military aid**, including **weapons** and **intelligence**, to **Saudi Arabia** and the **UAE**, these actions have faced criticism due to the coalition's involvement in **airstrikes** that have resulted in **civilian casualties** and contributed to the **humanitarian crisis**. The **U.S.** has also offered **logistical support**, such as **refueling aircraft**, and provided **training** to military forces in the region, further entangling the country in the conflict.

However, **U.S. policy** has evolved over time. Under the **Biden administration**, there has been a shift towards reducing direct support for **offensive operations** in Yemen. In **2021**, **President Biden** announced an end to **U.S. support** for **Saudi-led airstrikes** on Yemen and emphasized a greater focus on **diplomatic efforts** to reach a peaceful resolution. Despite this, the **U.S.** continues to engage in **counterterrorism operations** in Yemen, particularly targeting **Al-Qaeda** in the **Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** and **ISIS** affiliates, which are active in the region. Additionally, the **U.S.** has imposed **sanctions** on individuals and groups linked to the **Houthi rebels**, further complicating the dynamics of the conflict and signaling its continued involvement in the **Yemen crisis**.

European Powers

European powers, particularly the **United Kingdom** and **France**, have had a notable but often controversial role in the **Yemeni Civil War**, primarily through their support for the **Saudi-led coalition** and their involvement in **arms sales**. The **UK**, for example, has been one of the largest suppliers of **arms** to **Saudi Arabia**, providing **weapons**, including **bombs**, **fighter jets**, and **helicopters**, which have been used in the coalition's **airstrikes** on **Houthi positions**. This support has faced heavy criticism due to the widespread **civilian casualties** and the devastating **humanitarian crisis** caused by the **airstrikes**. Despite international calls for an **arms embargo**, the **UK government** has continued its **arms sales**, citing the importance of maintaining strong **bilateral relations** with **Saudi Arabia** and its **strategic interests** in the region.

France has similarly been involved in **arms exports** to the coalition, although it has positioned itself more cautiously compared to the **UK**. French **arms exports** have included **missiles** and **military vehicles**, which have been used in combat in **Yemen**. While **France** has publicly called for a **political solution** to the conflict and has pushed for **humanitarian aid**, its continued **arms sales** to **Saudi Arabia** and the **UAE** have raised concerns among **human rights organizations**. In addition to **arms sales**, **European countries** have also provided **humanitarian aid** and **diplomatic support**, advocating for **peace talks** and supporting the **United Nations' efforts** to mediate the conflict. However, the role of **European powers** in the war remains complex, balancing **arms sales**, **strategic interests**, and calls for a **humanitarian resolution** to the crisis.

The BRICS

The **BRICS nations**, particularly **China** and **Russia**, have adopted a **neutral** and **diplomatic stance** on the **Yemeni Civil War**, focusing on advocating for a **political solution** and opposing **military escalation**. **China** calls for **dialogue** and **negotiations** among all parties and emphasizes **non-interference**, maintaining ties with both **Saudi Arabia** and **Iran** without directly supporting either side militarily. Beijing prioritizes **stability** in the region, supporting **UN peace efforts** and providing **humanitarian aid**. **Russia**, while sharing the call for a **political resolution**, balances its relationships with both **Iran** and **Saudi Arabia**, criticizing the **U.S.-led**

coalition's military actions as destabilizing. **Russia** advocates for a more **inclusive diplomatic process**, urging external powers to refrain from exacerbating the conflict, while promoting **dialogue** through the **UN**. Both nations' positions are shaped by their broader **geopolitical interests** in the **Middle East**, as they seek to influence the region without becoming directly involved in the conflict.

IV) Actions Taken

- The **UN** has supported the discussion between all the sides of the conflict in **2021**, which led to the signature of an agreement that was supposed to be respected in **2023**.
- The **UN** has tried to collect as much **money** as they could to help the citizens who are starving, even though they didn't collect as much money as they thought.
- Many **NGOs** have tried to act to solve the **humanitarian problems** in the conflict, such as **La Croix Rouge, Action Against Hunger...**

V) Possible Solutions

Many solutions are possible to stop the conflict :

- Divide the country in three parts and put a permanent cease fire: One of the solutions could be a division of Yemen with the actual borders (map p4). This could satisfy the separatist in the south but some tensions could still exist between the current government and the Houthis, even with the cease fire.
- Military interventions from powers of the UN to give the legitim government their land: Countries like USA or Saoudie arabia, that are directly involved in the conflict, might enter the country and take back the town under the control of the Houthis such as Sanaa. This solution

won't be liked by countries like the Brics or Iran, but the question is will they be ready to act in that case ?

- Provide more important help from UN: With all the humanitarian issues in place, a bigger help from the UN with more money collected for the citizens and the sending of the blue helmets to distribute food and to compensate for the lack of competent hospital services in place. This solution is only a temporary thing and will not really give a solution to the conflict it-self.
- Put economic pressure on the Houthis: This solution can solve the conflict passively without real fight, but could also kill a big part of the citizens in place and might destroy the people, rather than weaken the Houthis.

Source:

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