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Abstract

The situation in Yemen is of great importance on the United Nations Security Council's agenda, being a national conflict threatening international peace and security. In fact, with a history of conflicts and instability, this crisis in Yemen endangers the Middle East. Starting with the economic crises of poverty and lack of food, extending to terrorism and national conflicts, international interventions have taken place. With international countries, especially Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, backing the Yemeni government against the Houthi rebels. Consequently, Iran's shiite regime lent implicit support to Houthis whilst sharing same aims. Conflicts not only affect the country on a national level, but are putting at risk international relations, as well as economic stability. With already ongoing conflicts and national disagreements, the situation became more sensitive when Ansar Allah, known as Houthi rebels, started their opposition against the new government of President Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi, after the overthrow of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011. The rebels have then taken control over the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, in September 2014, and exiled the new president and his government. Their growing violence forced the coalition of Arab countries, on the 26th of March 2015, to launch Saudi-led military airstrikes. Increasing the demographic loss of civilians and the destruction of public and private sectors, Al Hiraki group took its opportunity to form. The conflict was now a growing crisis between Saudi Arabia, supporting the Yemeni government and Iran supporting extremists; especially Houthis and Al Hiraki group. Thus, UNSC submitted Resolution 2216, but the situation by then, became more and more complex causing humanitarian issues. Furthermore, their scheduled UN-sponsored peace talks to convince Houthi rebels to withdraw have not yet showed positive results. The UNSC has now the goal to encourage negotiations satisfying all parties.

Introduction

Months ago, Yemen has been put into conflicts between several groups which are pushing the country “to the edge of a civil war” – UN special adviser. The fight between the two forces are what created the conflict. There are some who are loyal to the beleaguered President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi opposing those allied with Zaidi Shia rebels groups (also known as Houthis). The Houthis were the main reason Mr. Hadi was forced to flee the capital in February.

Shiite rebels historically settled in the north of the country advanced towards the capital in a few months. Last week, they marched in Sanaa. Intense fighting took place in the Yemeni capital between the rebels and the Sunni opponents which were backed by the army. They are now trying to hold a peace agreement sponsored by the UN.

I. Definition of Key Terms¹

- **Terrorism:** The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons.
- **Rebel:** To refuse allegiance to and oppose by force an established government or ruling authority.
- **Party:** An established political group organized to promote and support its principles and candidates for public office.
- **Exile:** Enforced removal from one's native country.
- **Flee:** To run away, as from trouble or danger.

¹ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

- **Sharia law:** is the body of Islamic law. The term means "way" or "path"; it is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Islam.

II. Background Information

1) Historical background

Since March 26, a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia bombed Yemen. It acted upon the request of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, driven out of the country by a rebellion and fled to Riyadh. In fact, Iran supports the Houthi rebels, the Shiites from the north as well as the bombing itself. The strikes have so far failed to significantly push back the rebels.

The violence in the country, and aerial bombardment, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), left at least 767 dead and 2900 injured since March the 19th. At least 405 civilians were killed by the strikes, according to United Nations (UN), and over 120,000 people were displaced inside the country, in addition to 300,000 other displaced people who had fled before the intensified fighting. The country lacks food, medicine for the ill, as well as fuel.

2) The cause of the crisis

President Mansour Hadi left the country in March, having been driven out of the capital, Sanaa, and the great port of Aden in the south. The Houthi militia had taken control over the capital in September. They are allied to the former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled the country until 2012.

The rebels have conquered most of the country by presenting themselves as a movement of « the deprived ». They conducted a post-revolution against the movement that had taken Ali Abdullah Saleh in the wake of the "Arab Spring." Since then, the political, military and tribal elite tore the country to redistribute power.

3) Yemen's stability before 2015

The Yemeni state has been weak for long. The country is historically divided between north and south, two regions that were unified in 1990. From the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1962, the North was dominated by Zaidite dynasty which is about 40% of the population, some Houthi rebels, and a minority group of shiites. In 1962, the proclamation of a republic was followed by a civil war between monarchists supported by neighboring Saudi Arabia and Republicans, backed by Egypt's Nasser. They ended up winning. It is in these northern mountains that was born the movement Ansar Allah also titled "Houthi" around Hussein Badreddine Al-Houthi, a former parliamentarian.

In the south, the port of Aden and its hinterland remained a British protectorate until 1967. Aden became a communist-inspired republic under Soviet influence. The Cold War had maintained the division between North and South. Since the unification, Saleh, was in power in the North since 1978, and had been able to keep supporting corruption, tribal rivalries and religious radicalism. Because of his acts he was then taken down by a revolution in 2011, in the wake of the "Arab Spring."

Foreign interference has never stopped. Saudi Arabia's long-standing weakening its neighbor policy. Since the attacks of Al Qaeda against the destroyer USS Cole in Aden in 2000, the US is making war on the jihadist groups with a lot of predator drone attacks. To allow these operations, they supported the government of Saleh, then of Mansour Hadi. Despite these attacks, Al-Qaeda is in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which led to the emergence of a main jihadist group in Yemen.

The country is plagued by underdevelopment and excessive population growth and dealing with low natural resources.

4) War between Sunnis and Shiites

Shiite militiamen protected a demonstration in support of Yemen Houthi in Baghdad in Iraq on March 31.

The religious conflict was not, in the past, an important phenomenon in Yemen. Coexistence has long been the norm between zaïdistes and Sunnis. The Houthi rebellion is Shiite, but is also originally a tribal and regional movement, opposed to the central anti-American power. The former president Saleh however stoked sectarianism supporting a Sunni Salafi movement inspired in the north, hostile to zaïdistes. The religious factor has increased intensively since 2011.

Above all, the country is stuck in the regional geopolitical confrontation between Iran, a Shiite Islamic republic, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni monarchy. Iran supports the Houthi rebels.

A broad Arab coalition (eight countries of the Maghreb and Mashreq) immediately rallied to attack Saudi Arabia and Pakistan after Saudi Arabia bombed the area.

Iran has fiercely condemned the Saudi attack, while proposing to facilitate the peace negotiations and by sending its diplomats in the region. Its concrete support to Houthi is difficult to assess.

The Zaidism is a dissident branch of Shiism Twelver (which celebrates a line of twelve Imams heirs of the Prophet), the state religion in Iran. The Houthi showed a desire for independence.

They could benefit in their fight for the support of Iranian military officers, or more likely the Lebanese Hezbollah militia. Meanwhile, their links with Iran are incomparable with those between Hezbollah and Shiite militias in Iraq in Tehran.

5) Houthi rebels protestations

Houthi rebels protesting against the resolution of the UN Security Council prohibiting any shipment of arms to their movement in Sanaa on April 16th.

6) Saudi led airstrikes

Saudi Arabia legally intervenes in the appeal of the exiled president recognized by the international community. It is obliged to respect humanitarian law applied to internal armed conflicts (the Houthi not constituting a state, but a rebellion in a national context). This implies respect of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of Additional Protocol II.

These obligations relate to the protection of civilians, targeting only military facilities, urban bombings, the protection of the belligerents who have left their weapons ... In addition to the 767 dead at the very least bombing. The organization of the Human Rights Watch identified several clear bombing civilian targets, including the first days in the center of Sanaa.

Moreover, the coalition had some support from the UN Security Council, which voted an embargo on weapons to Houthi, unanimously, with Russia abstaining. The United States admitted providing logistical support and intelligence to the coalition. Then France diplomatically supported Saudi Arabia. The UN, however, demanded Friday a cease-fire.

7) What to expect in the future

Iran is betting that the coalition is bogged down in Yemen. Saudi Arabia had already bombed Houthi in 2009, in the northwest of the country, without success. The coalition now plans to send ground troops, but Pakistan refused, and Egypt does not seem pressed. Saudi Arabia does not seem to want peace as well.

For now, the Houthi do not shrink. Bombings and civilian deaths are likely to alienate the population. Al-Qaida took advantage of the chaos to win territories.

The jihadists took Moukalla (200 000 inhabitants), where they seized an airport and an oil terminal. The Islamic state (EI) has appeared with the attacks in Yemen in Sana'a in March. Moreover, the US drone campaign continues: AQAP announced in mid-April the death of one of its chief ideologues, Ibrahim Al-Rubaish.

Today, the country could collapse in the manner of Somalia: a weak state; rulers illegitimate, leaving large parts of the country to Islamic-mafia militias; forced population displacement and exile by violence and endemic underdevelopment; war, occasionally fueled by neighboring countries.

III. Major countries involved and organizations involved

- **Yemen:** as the conflict is taking place on the Yemeni territory
- **Saudi Arabia:** Intervening and overseeing the government, especially since the overthrow of Ali Abdullah Saleh and the new president Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi. On the 26th of March 2015, allying with other Arab countries, it launched counter-Houthi air strikes. An explicit intervention by Saudi-led military was made, letting Saudi troops enter in Yemen.
- **Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Egypt:** allies with Saudi Arabia in the air strikes launched against Houthis.

- **The United States:** intervened to counter terrorism, especially caused by Al Qaeda.
- **Iran:** supporting Houthi movement, it is included in the conflict, opposing the Saudi-led military intervention.

IV. UN Involvement

Avoiding military intervention, the UN-sponsored talks' goals were to solve the Yemeni Crisis. Actually, on May 28th 2015, a meeting was scheduled in Geneva. Nevertheless, it has been postponed because of the refusal of Hauthi rebels to the Resolution 2216 about the Yemeni crisis submitted by the UNSC in April. The Resolution called upon Hauthi rebels to withdraw from the regions they have occupied in Yemen, including Sana'a. Nevertheless, the Yemeni exiled president, Hadi, refused any further negotiations with Houthis, without their implementation of UNSC Resolution 2216.

It was not before June 7th, that the UN peacekeeping talks started, calling upon all Yemeni parties to bring attention bearing in mind the interests of Yemeni people. These talks held the goal of conveying both parties of a ceasefire for a safe withdrawal plan of Houthi rebels.

V. Possible Solutions

The involvement of the UN Security Council should:

- Ensure the withdrawal of Houthi rebels in peace,
- Ensure the safe return of president Hadi;
- Find strong methods to counter-terrorism in the Middle East (Al Qaeda and other terrorists);

- Provide aid and assistance to refugees and migrants who fled their country in search of safety;
- Ensure the presence of a strong president in power.

VI. Guiding Questions

- How is it possible for the current situation in Yemen to put other countries at risk (economically, politically and socially)?
- How far can the conflict weaken the Middle East, threatening its stability?
- Is taking steps to counter-terrorism enough to put an end to the conflict?
- What are the consequences of terrorism in Yemen, how to limit its arise to international terrorism?
- What can be the possible solutions to achieve peace, suiting all parties?
- What solutions can the UN and other countries apply avoiding the need to military interventions?

VII. Useful Links

- [https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/saudi-arabia-and-iran-compete-yemen?utm_source=paidlist-a&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=*\[DATE:\]*&utm_content=Coalition+Ground+Forces+Could+Leap+into+Yemen#](https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/saudi-arabia-and-iran-compete-yemen?utm_source=paidlist-a&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=*[DATE:]*&utm_content=Coalition+Ground+Forces+Could+Leap+into+Yemen#)
- <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/01/26/yemen-is-even-more-dangerous-than-we-think/>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

- https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/how-the-yemen-conflict-risks-new-chaos-in-the-middle-east/2015/03/27/1c4e7b5c-d417-11e4-8b1e-274d670aa9c9_story.html
- <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/01/26/yemen-is-even-more-dangerous-than-we-think/>
- <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/document/2015-yemen-humanitarian-response-plan-revision>
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