



VMUN 2019

United Nations Security Council

BACKGROUND GUIDE



VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

On behalf of Jennifer, your Chair, and myself, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the delegates of the United Nations Security Council at VMUN 2019. My name is Phillip Xia and I am currently a senior at St. George's School. Since the initiation of my Model UN career six autumns ago, ardent speeches at the podium and insightful conversations with delegates during unmoderated caucuses have shaped my penchant for international relations. I view VMUN as an arena where disparate opinions are exchanged, preconceived notions are challenged, and lifelong friendships are formed. Outside of the conference room, I can be found playing the flute, cooking, swimming, and browsing political-history research journals.

The utmost objective of the UNSC is to maintain peace in the global environment and to exercise the responsibility to protect when necessary. The Council responds to acute crises concerning the security of the world and strives to deliver comprehensive resolutions to counter imminent threats. As the most advanced committee offered at VMUN, the dais team anticipates high-level debates and hopes to see a spectrum of engaging ideas presented.

The UNSC's two topics are of great international significance and encompass diverse themes vis-à-vis human rights, refugee resettlement, and armed intervention. Delegates are reminded that in-depth research on both topics is crucial for the success of the resolution-drafting process. All representatives should adhere to their respective foreign policy stances while remaining receptive to unforeseen circumstances that will unquestionably arise.

On the basis thereof, Jennifer, and I are confident that this will be an outstanding committee vibrant with intellect and eloquence. I look forward to meeting all of you at VMUN 2019!

Sincerely,

Phillip Xia
UNSC Director

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page, and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the United Nations Security Council, position papers are mandatory, especially for a delegate to be considered for an award.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by midnight on January 13, 2019.

Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email, to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as your last name, your first name — Position Paper. Please do not add any other attachments to the email or write anything else in the body.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award.

The email address for this committee is unsc@vmun.com.

The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar.....	6
Overview.....	6
Timeline.....	6
Historical Analysis	8
Past UN/International Involvement	10
Case Study: Security Council Draft Resolution.....	10
Case Study: General Assembly Resolution	11
Case Study: OIC-Sponsored Resolution	11
Current Situation.....	12
Isolationism	12
Denial of Rights and Resources.....	12
Refugee Living.....	12
Possible Solutions and Controversies.....	13
Economic Sanctions and ICC Prosecution.....	13
Invocation of Responsibility to Protect.....	13
International Aid and Refugee Resettlement	13
Bloc Positions.....	14
Myanmar	14
Western States	14
China and Russia.....	14
Southeast Asian States	15
Discussion Questions.....	15
Bibliography.....	16
The Crisis in Yemen	17
Overview.....	17
Timeline.....	18
Historical Analysis	19
Past UN/International Involvement	21

Arab League 21

European Union..... 22

United Nations 22

Current Situation..... 22

Possible Solutions and Controversies 24

 Peace Talks..... 24

 Military Intervention 25

Bloc Positions..... 25

 States Supporting the Coalition 25

 States Opposing the Coalition..... 25

 States Advocating a Diplomatic Solution 25

Discussion Questions..... 26

Bibliography..... 27

The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar

Overview

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has undergone drastic regime-level democratization in the past decade and remains in the process of transitioning society from rule *by* law to rule *of* law. However, the regime concurrently struggles with the notion of breaking free from human rights conflicts and shedding enduring political influences of the previous military junta. One of the most prominent groups suffering under the discriminatory policies of the Myanmar government is undoubtedly the Rohingya Muslim minority that resides in the western coastal state of Rakhine.¹ The prejudiced treatments against the Rohingya community are not only caused by historical ethnic and religious conflicts in the region, but also by constitutional injustice.

The recent August 2017 military crackdown on Rakhine State drastically escalated the tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities. The conflict was initiated by a chain of attacks claimed by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya ethno-nationalist insurgent group formed in 2013. The militants carried out offensives on police posts, resulting in the deaths of 12 state security personnel and more than 60 civilians. In retaliation for these perceived “acts of terrorism,” the Myanmar military launched unrelenting counterinsurgency measures which precipitated one of the largest refugee crises in Southeast Asia, forcing approximately 725,000 Rohingya refugees to seek asylum in Bangladesh.

Extensive reports on the crisis reveal indiscriminate killings, burning of Rohingya villages, and various other forms of human rights violations. As described by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), the Rohingya crisis is a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” The recent escalation resulted in a burgeoning humanitarian crisis on the bordering region with Bangladesh, where approximately 1 million Rohingya refugees live temporarily. This sudden eruption of violence instigated by the Myanmar military is reminiscent of an attack on a border checkpoint in October 2016, which killed nine security officers. Similar to recent developments, the army responded with an abrupt crackdown on innocent Muslim civilians, causing more than a thousand non-combatant deaths and prompting tens of thousands to escape from Rakhine State in search of sanctuary. Despite international condemnation, the current *de facto* leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been reluctant to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation and is constrained by the parliamentary opposition dominated by military officials. After Myanmar’s first peaceful transition of power to a democratically-elected government in two-and-half decades, the National League for Democracy has failed to recognize the self-determination of the Rohingya population, who are also not enfranchised to vote.

Timeline

1824–1948 — During this time, Myanmar is constituted as British Burma. Muslim migration from Bengal increases dramatically during the colonial era, doubling the population between 1880 and 1930.²

¹ Al Jazeera, “Who are the Rohingya?” April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

² Krishnadev Calamur, “The Misunderstood Roots of Burma’s Rohingya Crisis,” *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/rohingyas-burma/540513/>.

1941–1945 — World War II takes place. The Rohingyas, as opposed to the pro-Japanese Buddhists in Rakhine State, predominantly support the Allies.³ These historical differences in allegiance further complicate religious cleavages.

January 4, 1948 — Burma declares independence from the United Kingdom.

1948 — A Muslim insurgency occurs in Rakhine following Burma's independence. The rebels fight for citizenship rights and political autonomy but are crushed by government troops.⁴

1962 — General Ne Win seizes power via a coup d'état against the democratically-elected parliament. The military government suspends the constitution and pursues a socialist regime that incorporates elements of Marxism, ethnonationalism, and Buddhism.

1978 — Brutal military campaigns force 200,000 Rohingyas to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

1982 — The Rohingya are designated as stateless. In the 1982 *Citizenship Act* and the preamble of the 2008 *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*, the Rohingyas are excluded from the 135 officially-recognized minority groups, disqualifying them from citizenship rights and legal protections.⁵

November 13, 2010 — Opposition leader and Nobel peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest after 15 years.

June 2012 — Unrest prompted by religious extremism results in the death of 200 Buddhist and Muslim civilians and leads 100,000 more to escape via boats to Malaysia.⁶

November 8, 2015 — The first competitive elections in 25 years take place, yet the Rohingya are not granted suffrage. Aung San Suu Kyi's party claims victory and she becomes the de facto leader in a parliament split between the National League for Democracy and the military opposition.

August 2016 — A national peace conference is organized by the Suu Kyi government, intended to broker peaceful negotiations and cease the ethnic violence occurring in Rakhine state. However, the conference excludes Rohingya delegates. Later in the year, Suu Kyi charts a nine-member commission directed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to advise on the situation.

October 9, 2016 — Violence in Rakhine spikes once again as 300 Rohingya militiamen launch an offensive on security checkpoints in Rakhine State, resulting in the deaths of 9 police personnel. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army claims responsibility for the incident, which sparks rampant suppression by the Myanmar military and the evacuation of 87,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh.

August 24, 2017 — The Annan-led commission publishes its final report, only days before the latest crackdown on Rohingya minorities.

³ Al Jazeera, "Who are the Rohingya?" April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

⁴ Krishnadev Calamur, "The Misunderstood Roots of Burma's Rohingya Crisis," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/rohingyas-burma/540513/>.

⁵ Al Jazeera, "Who are the Rohingya?" April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

⁶ Eleanor Albert and Andrew Chatzky, "The Rohingya Crisis," December 5, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.

August 25, 2017 — State media outlet TV Myanmar condemns the alleged ARSA attack. The Myanmar military retaliates with a series of “clearance operations” targeted at Rohingya civilians. Satellite images by Human Rights Watch and other NGOs show convincing evidence of the military burning down villages.⁷

September 19, 2017 — Aung San Suu Kyi delivers a televised speech on the crisis. The Nobel laureate ignores the evidence pointing to the army’s alleged ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims and is harshly criticized by Western media. The military responds by justifying their actions in Rakhine as targeting domestic terrorism.

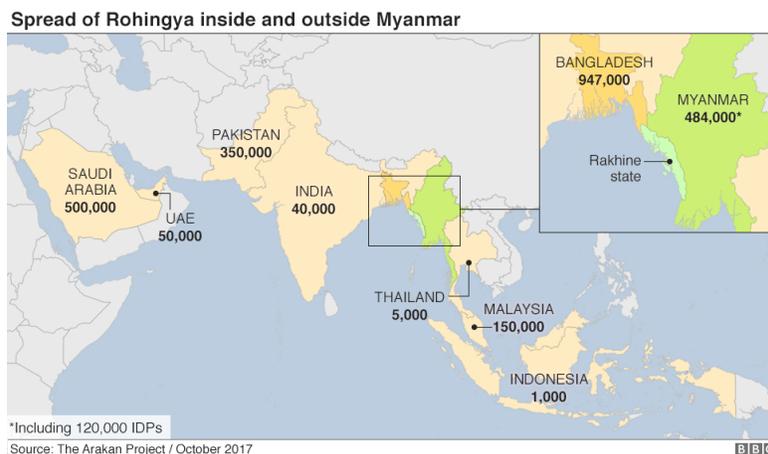
December 2017 — Approximately 655,000–700,000 Rohingya refugees have arrive in Bangladesh since August.

September 3, 2018 — Two Reuters reporters are sentenced to seven years in prison for investigating Myanmar military actions in Rakhine and “violating the Official Secrets Act.”

Historical Analysis

The Rohingya people are stateless ethnic minorities who predominantly reside in Rakhine State, Myanmar. In a country where 90 percent of the population is Buddhist, the Rohingya represent the largest group of Muslim minorities and have suffered deep-seated discrimination since the early history of their settlement.⁸

After the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1826, Arakan (modern-day Rakhine) was acquired by the East India Company, and the period of British colonization began. During this time, British policies encouraged residents of British Bengal (modern-day India and Bangladesh) to migrate into the arable and sparsely-populated Arakan.⁹ As a large influx of migrants continued to supply the agricultural sector with low-skilled labour, the boundaries between the colonies became increasingly unclear. The constant movements of diverse groups of people created Muslim communities in the bordering regions.¹⁰



Map depicting Rakhine State in Myanmar and Southeast Asia.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Al Jazeera, "Who are the Rohingya?" April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

⁹ Krishnadev Calamur, "The Misunderstood Roots of Burma's Rohingya Crisis," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/rohingyas-burma/540513/>.

¹⁰ Eleanor Albert and Andrew Chatzky, "The Rohingya Crisis," December 5, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.

The demographic trend above continued until World War II, when battles initiated on the Southeast Asian front and the Japanese Imperial Army invasion of Myanmar led to the withdrawal of British forces. Throughout the war, religious cleavages became apparent, as the pro-Japanese Buddhists clashed with the pro-British Rohingyas in Rakhine State, reigniting longstanding distrust and hatred between the two communities. Subsequently, direct confrontation between the groups exacerbated the conflict as Muslims fled from Japanese-controlled Southern Arakan to the British-controlled North.¹¹ The relocation of Muslim Rohingya communities created the phenomenon of “reverse ethnic cleansing.” Post-war Burmese independence recognized the Rohingyas’ indigenous status, and several Rohingya officials were elected to the parliament.

The status of the Rohingyas quickly deteriorated following the 1962 coup d’état staged by General Ne Win. The new socialist regime immediately launched a nationwide campaign to suppress Muslim religious minorities.¹² The government nationalized all land and property, seized the Indian community’s businesses, and incited rampant discrimination. Operation King Dragon was launched in 1978 by the military government, leading 200,000 Rohingya refugees to flee across the border to Bangladesh. This marked the first time that Rohingyas were forced to leave due to government crackdown. In response, UNHCR facilitated a repatriation agreement with the Ne Win administration and finally returned the refugees back to Rakhine State. A few years later, the 1982 *Citizenship Act* defined the Rohingya population as stateless.¹³ The Act outlined three forms of citizenship: citizenship, associative citizenship, and naturalized citizenship; associative citizenship requires an individual to provide evidence that his or her ancestors settled in Myanmar before 1823.¹⁴ The Rohingya identity satisfies this requirement; however, it fails to fulfill the second requirement which states that citizens must be from one of the following officially-recognized ethnic groups: Kachin, Kayah (Karen), Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Kaman, or Zerbadee. Moreover, Section 44 of the Act emphasizes the ability to speak one of the Myanmar’s national languages as an essential indicator of citizenship status. Unfortunately, the Rohingya language (similar to a dialect of Chittagonian) is not officially recognized. Despite evidence of Rohingyas’ extensive history of settling in Myanmar, the military regime denied their citizenship status as a means of systemic subjugation.

To this date, many people in Myanmar still consider the Rohingya “Bengalis,” while many inhabitants of Bangladesh classify Rohingyas as Burmese.¹⁵ Both the Myanmar and Bangladesh constitution are unable to recognize them as an official ethnicity or grant them the right to political participation. In addition to these constitutional injustices, access to university education and freedom of mobility have also been compromised for the Rohingya minorities. Rohingya families are forced to accept birth quotas, return the land to the central government, and are the targets of assault even in major metropolitan centres such as Yangon.¹⁶ Ultimately, historical factors point both directly and indirectly to present contemporary struggles that the Rohingya face in Rakhine State and other parts of the country.

¹¹ Al Jazeera, "Who are the Rohingya?" April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Krishnadev Calamur, "The Misunderstood Roots of Burma's Rohingya Crisis," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/rohingyas-burma/540513/>.

¹⁴ Eleanor Albert and Andrew Chatzky, "The Rohingya Crisis," December 5, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>.

¹⁵ Krishnadev Calamur, "The Misunderstood Roots of Burma's Rohingya Crisis," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/rohingyas-burma/540513/>.

¹⁶ Al Jazeera, "Who are the Rohingya?" April 18, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html>.

Past UN/International Involvement

Throughout the United Nations' extensive engagement in the Southeast Asian region since its founding, Myanmar has largely been isolated from the influence of supranational organizations due to the Ne Win regime's lack of transparency, government accountability, and rampant clientelism. From 1945 onwards, there have been only three United Nations resolutions passed, and one vetoed, on issues concerning Myanmar. The first was adopted by the United Nations Security Council in 1948, which recommended the country for United Nations membership. Between 1948 and 2007, even though United Nations involvement was largely absent, the Western world continued to impose unilateral economic sanctions on Myanmar, condemning undemocratic practices and human rights abuses. Notably, the United States classified Myanmar under the list of 31 States of National Emergency in the same era, leaving behind a 19-year legacy of crippling trade embargos.¹⁷

Even though widespread evidence indicates the military's repression of Rohingya Muslims, the Security Council was mostly passive regarding the situation until 2016. Followed by mainstream media coverage of the crisis and NGO involvement in Bangladeshi refugee camps, the UN became gradually more aware of the urgency of the conflict. The latter half of 2017 recording more meetings and discussions dedicated to the critical situation. In November of the same year, the Council published a joint statement denouncing the "widespread violence that has taken place in Rakhine State," and expressing "grave concern over reports of human rights violations and abuses." Subsequently, the most significant sections of the statement urged the Myanmar military to cease military operations in Rakhine while respecting Myanmar's geopolitical sovereignty.¹⁸ Since the release of the statement, no resolution has been passed on the issue of ethnic cleansing or the refugee situation in Bangladesh.

Case Study: Security Council Draft Resolution

In a January 12, 2007 Security Council draft resolution sponsored by the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Myanmar's military was condemned for its persecution against ethnic minorities and was strongly urged to immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

"[The UNSC] Calls on the Government of Myanmar to cease military attacks against civilians in ethnic minority regions and in particular to put an end to the associated human rights and humanitarian law violations against persons belonging to ethnic nationalities, including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence carried out by members of the armed forces;"

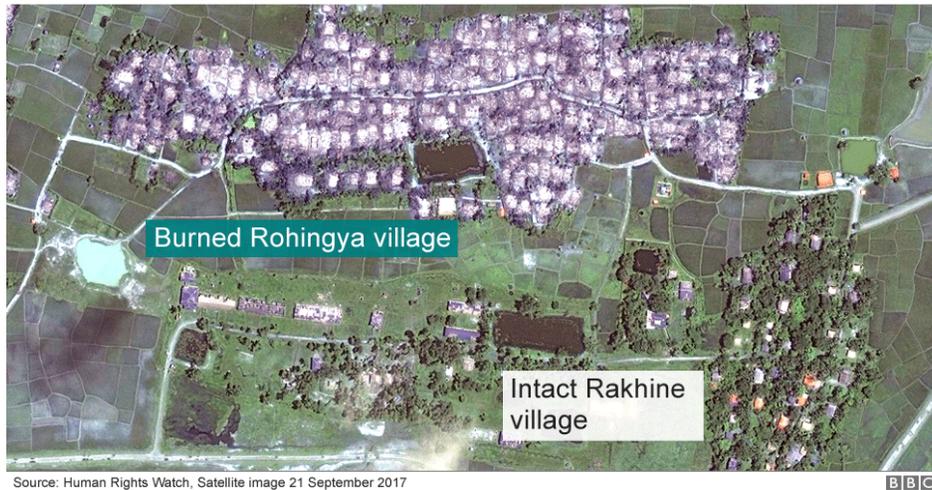
Though the draft resolution was ultimately vetoed by Russia and China, it prompted media attention at the political situation in Myanmar and set the milestone for international intervention.¹⁹

¹⁷ BBC, "Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis," April 24, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

¹⁸ Bard Wilkinson, "UN official convinced of Myanmar Rohingya 'genocide'," CNN, March 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/12/asia/myanmar-rohingya-un-violence-genocide-intl/index.html>.

¹⁹ Wa Lone, "Myanmar rejects allegations of human rights abuses against Rohingya," Reuters, August 6, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-idUSKBN1AM0DU>.

Satellite images show destroyed Rohingya village



Satellite image of a destroyed Rohingya village.

Case Study: General Assembly Resolution

In December 2015, the United Nations General Assembly Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committee passed *Resolution 70/233* on the situation in Rakhine State. In a deliberately careful manner, the General Assembly expressed concerns over the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State while reaffirming Myanmar's gradual democratization progress. In Clause 14 of the resolution, specifically granting the Rohingya full citizenship and rights was officially recommended for the first time. Additionally, fair redistribution of humanitarian assistance and reconciliatory measures were also included. Despite the identification of the crisis at hand, the resolution has failed to incite the Council's consideration to implement the responsibility to protect (R2P). China and Russia, in accordance with their opposition in 2007, voted against once again.

Case Study: OIC-Sponsored Resolution

This resolution, proposed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in October 2017, was adopted by the General Assembly Third Committee with a vote of 122 to 10 (China, Russia, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam, Belarus, Syria, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar), and 24 abstentions. On the basis of the previous two resolutions above, the resolution asked the Myanmar government to allow access for UN investigations in the currently-restricted Rakhine State, expressed sentiments regarding the refugee situation in neighbouring Bangladesh, and called for multilateral aid to accommodate a large number of asylum seekers.

Most importantly, a UN fact-finding mission was sanctioned to be carried out. In response, in August 2018, the body responsible for the mission condemned the top generals of the Myanmar military for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.²⁰

"There is sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Tatmadaw [Myanmar military] chain of command, so that a competent court can determine their liability for genocide."

Moreover, the report placed pressure on the Suu Kyi civilian administration, calling on the de facto leader to impose her moral authority and demonstrate rightful opposition to the military's actions.

²⁰ Bard Wilkinson, "UN official convinced of Myanmar Rohingya 'genocide'," CNN, March 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/12/asia/myanmar-rohingya-un-violence-genocide-intl/index.html>.

Current Situation

Isolationism

The situation in Myanmar is in dire need of advocacy and assistance from the global community, but the Burmese government has often declined to grant non-governmental charities free reign to aid civilians within Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi's regime is also disallowing free media corporations or UN reconnaissance missions from entering conflict zones to launch investigations.

Despite the perpetual efforts of the UN and transnational human rights organizations (e.g. Amnesty International) to call for free flow of information and transparency in Rakhine State, the government has continued to deny them.²¹ However, it is also important note that Buddhist nationalist groups in Myanmar are one of the root causes for such blockades of access. In 2004, Buddhist nationalists attacked Doctors Without Borders' healthcare volunteers as they were perceived to be treating the Rohingya people better. Given the state of peril and persecution for civilians and Rohingyas in the region, the global community should advocate for the alleviation of the extreme humanitarian and human rights violations in Myanmar.

Denial of Rights and Resources

During humanitarian crises, it is absolutely imperative that refugees and all others affected receive adequate support to maintain their way of life; however, the denial of such basic rights by the Burmese government has placed the well-being of these people in peril. Since the inception of the recent refugee situation in the summer of 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme have attempted to send basic survival resources to the Rakhine State, but the lack of participation on Myanmar's end resulted in approximately 250,000 people left starving and suffering from critical malnutrition.²² Pierre Peron, a spokesman for the UN Office of Humanitarian Aid to Myanmar, stated that "there is an urgent need to ensure that displaced people and other civilians affected by the violence are protected and are given safe access to humanitarian assistance including food, water, shelter, and health services."

Refugee Living

A lack of access to humanitarian aid is not the sole crisis concerning the Rohingya people, they are also facing the pressure to leave their homeland. Threatened by looming chaos and instability, the emigration of Rohingya refugees has now developed into the fastest refugee relocations since the Rwandan genocide. Since the inception of the crisis, the UN has called it as a "critical humanitarian emergency." Refugees are forced to live in miniscule bamboo huts that lack sanitation and space, have almost no access to drinking water, and possess scant resources.

Currently, though the Rohingya refugees are entering neighboring countries on the basis of seeking asylum from military atrocities and human rights abuses, de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi is pushing for the return of refugees. She argues that the Rohingyas cannot be characterized as refugees since the government claims that there is no actual government-sponsored violence in Rakhine State.²³ Negotiations with Bangladesh to deport refugees back to the Myanmar border are ongoing. Despite these developments, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have issued warnings against such actions. The "repatriation" of Rohingya refugees back

²¹ Wa Lone, "Myanmar rejects allegations of human rights abuses against Rohingya," Reuters, August 6, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-idUSKBN1AM0DU>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

to a country where their citizenship status is unknown is liable to only further complicate their collective well-being.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Economic Sanctions and ICC Prosecution

One of the primary strategies that has been adopted by the Security Council on multiple occasions involves trade embargos through indirect means. These measures have involved avoiding the possibility of direct intervention and confrontation and have rather focused on the prevention of a large-scale military conflict in Rakhine State. More direct punitive measures have involved the use of economic sanctions on Myanmar, which has subsequently led to the brokering of economic deals.²⁴

One potential solution involves the adoption of harsher economic sanctions with the stipulation of a multi-pronged inquiry to investigate the situation in Rakhine. The primary purpose of this type of stipulation is to evaluate the harms perpetrated and allow the state to be held to an international standard outlined by the United Nations. With the pressure of economic sanctions looming, tensions will rise within the region and potential radical action may be taken or threatened. Therefore, a firm diplomatic accord must be stressed in any solution paradigm and must be carefully effected to prevent large-scale conflict within the region.

Invocation of Responsibility to Protect

The authority of the Security Council and its responsibility to protect the *Charter of the United Nations* gives the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The R2P principle is characterized by three pillars in terms of implementation.

“Pillar I: The state bears the primary responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes and violations, including their incitement; Pillar II: The international community has a responsibility to assist and encourage the state in fulfilling its protection obligations; Pillar III: The international community has a responsibility to take appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to help protect populations from these crimes.”

The international community must also be prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, in accordance with its mandate, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations, if a state manifestly fails to protect its populations or is, in fact, the perpetrator of crimes.²⁵ Such action may entail coercive measures, including the use of force, where appropriate, and through the Security Council. Hence, the Council may wish to invoke this clause in the case of the situation in Myanmar.

International Aid and Refugee Resettlement

Similar to Syria and other prominent refugee crises around the globe, an international initiative to resettle Rohingya refugees is a plausible resolution. Whether it is mobilizing regional allies and actors to compromise and temporarily open up the borders, or initiating a multinational allocation mechanism, this solution would prove to be highly humanitarian in nature. Multilateral or bilateral aid can also be employed to assist with the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bard Wilkinson, "UN official convinced of Myanmar Rohingya 'genocide'," CNN, March 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/12/asia/myanmar-rohingya-un-violence-genocide-intl/index.html>.

resettlement efforts; basic survival resources such as food, water and shelter can be granted by states to Rohingya refugees to ensure their safety and replenish the needs of camps. In cooperation with other UN agencies or supranational organizations, a humanitarian resolution can be reached through discourse and compromise.

Bloc Positions

Myanmar

Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government has been reluctant to pinpoint the root cause of the conflict and has failed to recognize the military opposition's interventions in Rakhine State.²⁶ Despite calls for the Nobel Committee to rescind the de facto leader's Nobel Peace Prize, the government of Myanmar has remained inactive. Speculations of domestic backings from Buddhist nationalist groups have resurfaced, yet the government is looking forward to an internal resolution rather than international intervention.²⁷

Western States

The West has shown consistent support for Myanmar's rapid democratization process in the past decade and has gradually lifted many of their previously-established sanctions on the country following the peaceful transition of power to Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian regime.²⁸ However, the Western bloc is faced with an especially equivocal situation; reverting back to economic sanctions might impede the advancement of individual freedoms while inaction could lead to a situation comparable to the Rwandan genocide. Western countries have traditionally cooperated with one another on such decisions; it is important to note that the United States, United Kingdom, and France are highly vocal about the potentiality of such intervention. The failed UK-sponsored resolution regarding transparency and cooperation in the Rohingya crisis is the perfect proof for the preceding statement, where much of the West's hopes for actions are vetoed by China and Russia.

China and Russia

China and Russia are longstanding allies of Myanmar and have historically blocked or vetoed resolutions in the Security Council against it. China has important economic and security interests in Myanmar and is Myanmar's chief arms supplier. Recently, China has made major investments in the development of a deep-water port in Rakhine State. The port is expected to provide a connection for China to the Bay of Bengal and points to the continued importance of the relations between the countries. China has stated that the hostilities in Rakhine State have been growing for a long time and that the international community cannot expect a quick solution. The international community must recognize that the Myanmar government faces challenges and view these challenges objectively. China has advocated for continued dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar and constructive, peaceful measures to address the refugee crisis.²⁹ According to the three case studies outlined China and Russia have consistently opposed resolutions in both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

²⁶ Wa Lone, "Myanmar rejects allegations of human rights abuses against Rohingya," Reuters, August 6, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-idUSKBN1AM0DU>.

²⁷ BBC, "Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis," April 24, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Southeast Asian States

Due to the rise of crises and escalations in Southeast Asia in the past decade, it is natural to assume that regional actors are capable of aiding one another in combatting difficult situations. However, as according to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) policies, non-intervention remains the utmost priority. At an ASEAN summit in the last quarter of 2017, representatives from this supranational body reached an agreement to not intervene in the Rohingya refugee crisis and recommended that Myanmar resolve its issues domestically.³⁰ Even though the decision was faced with opposition from Muslim-majority countries (e.g. Malaysia) in the region, the organization felt compelled to adhere to its non-interventionist policies.

Discussion Questions

1. How will the political tension in the region at large affect the resolution of the conflict?
2. What measures can be implemented to ensure that peace and security are restored in the short-term while ensuring cultural reconciliation in the future?
3. Should Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government be condemned considering the positive democratic progress made in recent years?
4. To what extent should R2P be part of the Council's intervention, while respecting international laws and Myanmar's sovereignty?
5. How should a balance between effective and ethical governance be struck in Myanmar?

³⁰ Ibid.

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The Crisis in Yemen

Overview

The current crisis in the Republic of Yemen began when Houthi forces staged a gradual coup d'état in 2015. The removal of Hadi's administration was followed by the dissolution of the parliament, the establishment of a Houthi Revolutionary Committee, and the outbreak of a multi-faceted conflict. Even though the international coalition headed by Saudi Arabia and pro-Hadi forces has diminished Houthi influence to a considerable extent, re-establishing the internationally-recognized government in Sana'a has proven intractable in the status quo. Through the lens of realism, the conflict can be regarded as a part of the broader power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia; yet, from a humanitarian standpoint, the crisis has proven to be detrimental for the welfare of Yemeni citizens. Though a seemingly recent development, the Civil War in Yemen has long-winded roots and a complex history of preceding events.

Currently, the country is divided into various factions, and the power struggle among disparate groups has escalated the initial crisis into a full-scale civil war. In the North, Houthi rebel forces —primarily Zaidi Shia minorities in opposition to former President Saleh—control vast territories; in the South, forces loyal to President Hadi are struggling to maintain political legitimacy. Al-Qaeda and other transnational terrorist organizations have taken control of the coastal areas, and the United Nations has officially announced that the situation in Yemen is comparable to that of Iraq. In addition, the Saudi-brokered blockade in response to arms shipments from Iran has exacerbated the food shortage problem, resulting in widespread famine and worsening humanitarian circumstances. According to Amnesty International, over 17 million civilians face extreme hunger on a quotidian basis, 3.3 million of which are children and pregnant women experiencing malnutrition. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also estimated the internally displaced population to be 2.43 million people, approximately one-tenth of which are registered with the organization.

Western countries are reluctant to confront the situation directly at this moment, given the versatile contingencies present; they are concerned that increasing international involvement in Yemen could lead to a more convoluted conflict vis-à-vis the current state of affairs in Syria. Therefore, UN attempts to broker peace or a ceasefire in the region have been demonstrated to be difficult, and deep-seated challenges such as power distribution and political legitimacy continue to resurface. The future of Yemen is at stake: appeasing the different factions of power would undo decades of reunification goodwill, but forcefully reinstating a contentious central authority would be destructive to long-term prosperity.

Since 2015, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia, the richest country in the Gulf region, has been bombing Yemen, the region's poorest, in an attempt to quash the Houthi rebels following a request for aid by internationally-recognized Yemeni President Mansur Hadi. The Saudis are under intense international pressure to curb the aggressiveness of their offensive, which has killed more than 13,000 Yemeni civilians as of 2018. Instead of bowing to the demands of the international community, however, the Saudis have instead strengthened their resolve to crush the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. On July 14, 2015, the coalition ramped up its efforts and invaded the major Yemeni port of Aden. This operation, which was backed by coalition aircraft, manned by former officers loyal to the ousted government and supported by Saudi and Emirati commandos, managed to recapture Yemen's second largest city from the clutches of the Houthi rebels in the bloody Battle of Aden. This drastic and brutal intervention by the coalition provided a mere glimpse of what was to come; on August 2, French Leclerc main battle tanks, Russian BMD-3 infantry fighting vehicles, and American mine-resistant troop

carriers landed, along with a 3,000-strong combined Saudi and UAE infantry division, at Aden and immediately started their push northwards towards the al-Anad military base. Although this impressive array of weaponry and powerful show of strength was backed by tribal fighters who supported President Hadi's exiled government, it is without a doubt that these high-tech weapons of war were being operated by professionals. The current iteration of the coalition's intervention, Operation Restoring Hope, includes both an effective blockade of the nation and continuous airstrikes on rebel-held locations, continuing the state of desperate crisis into which the Yemeni people have been thrust.³¹ It is imperative that not only the conflict itself be resolved, but also the resulting humanitarian crisis and underlying problems. The Security Council must find a way to restore both diplomatic peace and on-the-ground stability to a country torn apart by war.

Timeline

June–August 2004 — Zaidi Shia leader Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi spearheads an uprising against the Yemeni government, claiming that to be defending his community from discrimination. Yemen asserts that Iran is financing the Houthi insurgency.

September 2004 — Al-Houthi is killed by government forces with a USD 75,500 bounty on his head.

December 2005 — More than 600 followers of the late al-Houthi, captured in 2004, are released by the Saleh administration under an amnesty deal.

June 2007 — Three years after the first shots are fired between Saleh's forces and the Houthi insurgency, Houthi rebel leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi accepts a ceasefire.

January 2008 — Fighting resumes between the Houthi movement and government forces.

April 2008 — Southern Yemenis protest against perceived northern favouritism by the government; clashes ensue with security forces.

October 2009 — Houthi rebels skirmish with Saudi border guards and condemn the Saudi government for supporting the Yemeni government in their fight against them.

2010s — The Arab Spring enters into full swing, and poor standards of living and authoritarian oppression lead many Yemeni millennials to protest against the government.

November 2011 — Authoritarian president Saleh agrees to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Hadi, and steps down as leader after large and violent demonstrations by the public.

February 2012 — Hadi is elected and inaugurated as president in an uncontested election.

September 2014 — Houthis take over the capital city of Sana'a, and the UN brokers a peace deal between conflicting parties.

³¹ "Saudi-led coalition ground forces help recapture Yemeni military base from Houthis," RT, August 3, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/311492-yemen-houthi-saudi-coalition/>.

February 2015 — Houthis seize power and claim that Hadi is to be replaced with a five-member presidential council. The Security Council denounces this move, citing the violation of an agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

March 2015 — Rebels start their advance towards the southern coastline and President Hadi flees from his hideout in Aden to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition begins airstrikes against alleged Houthi positions, a move swiftly condemned by Iran.

March 2015 — The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launches large-scale offensives in the country; Shia mosques in Sana'a are targeted, resulting in 137 casualties.

June 2015 — Diplomatic talks regarding the Yemen crisis begin in Geneva.

June 2015 — Nasser al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaeda, is killed in Yemen by U.S. drone attack.

August 2015 — The coalition launches a ground offensive designed to put an end to the conflict in a swift manner. They take much of the Sunni-dominated south, including the port of Aden, and the military base at al-Anad.

May 2016 — ISIL claims responsibility for attacks in Aden, including a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 army recruits.

June 2017 — According to the World Health Organization, a major cholera outbreak in Yemen results in 900,000 people in dire need of medical assistance and 2,100 casualties.

December 2017 — Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh is killed in Sana'a.

January 2018 — Southern Yemeni separatists, supported by the United Arab Emirates, capture major port city of Aden.

November 2018 — A ceasefire is the process of negotiation, and the UN is pushing both sides to halt military actions in the city of Hodeidah. The ongoing refugee and humanitarian crisis continues unabated.

Historical Analysis

The Ansar Allah ("Supporters of God"), now more commonly titled the "Houthis" by mainstream media, started out as a purely religious movement in the heart of Yemen. They preached tolerance, peace, and acceptance in the early 1990s, and are followers of the Zaidism branch of Shia Islam. While the Zaidis are considered moderate Shias, they are the closest Shia sect to the Sunni doctrine within Islam and comprise roughly one-third of Yemen's population.³² Although the Zaidis are widespread in Yemen, they are also present in many other parts of the Middle East, including Iraq, Iran, and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The Saada Governorate in northern Yemen is a traditional Houthi stronghold. As time progressed, the group split into two movements. The first was led by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi and promoted openness and equality whereas the second movement called for a return to more traditional views of Islam. The Zaidis wanted to promote a Zaidi revival in Saada and they, like most other Muslims, championed the superiority of their own interpretation. Supporters of this movement were later known as the Houthis, after their revolutionary leader.

³² Khalaji, M, "Yemen's Zaidis: A Window for Iranian Influence,"The Washington Institute, February 2, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/yemens-zaidis-a-window-for-iranian-influence>.

In 2004, al-Houthi proclaimed himself an imam and denounced former President Saleh for “serving American interests.” While this accusation was largely unfounded, President Saleh nonetheless did not tolerate the slight.³³ In the days following al-Houthi's statement, an arrest warrant was issued for him, and following several failed apprehension attempts, Yemeni security forces killed al-Houthi. Ultimately, his death sparked massive outrage and fuelled the start of the protest movement that continues to this day. While his death meant that a new leader had to be found, control of the group remained within his family; upon al-Houthi's death, his father succeeded him, followed by his brother, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, who is the incumbent leader. While clashes between government troops and Houthi fighters were sporadic and often deadly, skirmishes did not grow significantly in intensity until the start of the Arab Spring.

In 2011, the Houthis were among the many groups that took part in the uprising against the authoritarian Saleh; corruption ran rampant and the Office of President had sweeping powers. After Saleh's abdication, the Houthi rebels became more than just a theological movement, transforming into a military and political force as well. United under their slogan "God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. Victory for Islam," the Houthis strived to be recognized in the political sphere as a formidable force. The movement saw Yemen as an oppressed country, subjugated by the imperial forces of the United States and its regional ally, Israel.

It was during this period of turmoil that the Houthis emerged as the champions of those who saw the institutions of government as inadequate. Many anti-establishment Yemenis who were disillusioned with the political process and a lack of progress on all fronts sought solace in the Houthi movement. In the Houthis, citizens of Yemen saw people who were willing to fight for greater cooperation and openness. Forgoing international cooperation, however, the Houthis rejected the Gulf Cooperation Council's proposed idea for a new Yemeni government and promptly took matters into their own hands. Exploiting the highly insecure political situation at the time, the Houthis expanded their territorial reach immensely.³⁴ In some areas, they even achieved considerable political legitimacy, administering taxes, security, and basic local governance. The rebels, however, have not operated unscrupulously; most notably, they have made enemies of groups like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

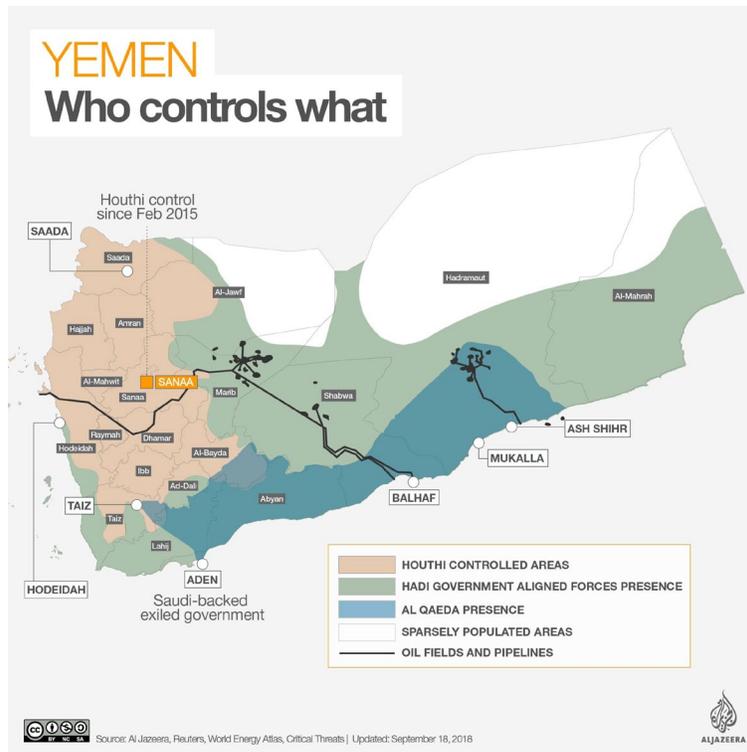
Fighting between the various combatants spread throughout the regions and roped in government forces as well as local tribes. The current Houthi control of the capital city of Sana'a is a clear sign of who emerged victorious in that round of the battle.³⁵ In the following months, the struggling government had absolutely no power to enforce or implement any of the political changes demanded by various groups. A national constitution that was supposed to be drafted by February 2014 was only finished in January 2015, and even then, did not pass muster. This disastrous delay meant that democratic elections for the next president, which could only take place after a new constitution was implemented, would have to wait. As reports of discrimination and rights abuses flooded the nation throughout 2014, tensions escalated to an all-time high.³⁶ Houthi leadership called for the immediate resignation of President Hadi and accused him of insufficient protection of the population from terrorism. Although this was essentially a pretext, it served to galvanize the people into action, and by March 2015, a significant portion of Yemen was in Houthi hands.

³³ Savoulian, R, "The Yemeni regime dissolves – and with it US policy is in ruins, February 2, 2015, <https://rupensavoulian.wordpress.com/tag/president-saleh/>.

³⁴ Al-Muslimi, F, "Yemen's New Government Retains Bad Old Habits," July 25, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/yemen-transitional-government-same-failures.html>.

³⁵ Salisbury, P, "Yemen anger grows as absent president cheers attack," August 7, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3cc4c18a-d7b3-11e4-849b-00144feab7de.html>.

³⁶ "Who Are The Houthis?" March 6, 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/913>.



Yemeni territorial control as of September 2018.

Over the succeeding years, there would be much territorial back-and-forth, but little of significance would be achieved. Saudi-led airstrikes continued to pummel rebel bases, but were unsuccessful in vanquishing them entirely, and government forces remained largely relegated to the northeast of the country. Terrorism, including the formation of splinter groups from AQAP and ISIL, continued to flourish, further contributing to the scourge afflicting the Yemeni people. In 2017, however, some developments occurred; former President Saleh formally split from the Houthi movement but was killed only days later. As well, government forces made some territorial gains in the southern part of the country, retaking areas in the Al Hudaydah and Shabwah Governorates. The following year, on May 9, Houthi forces fired a ballistic missile at Riyadh, landing mere kilometres from King Khalid International Airport. Responding to months of Saudi bombardment, this retaliation provided a renewed impetus for conflict; neither side could ignore the assaults.

Past UN/International Involvement

Arab League

International reactions to the war in Yemen have ranged from backing the coalition to warning against escalation. Many national and supranational organizations have made their positions very clear on this issue. The Arab League, most geographically relevant to the issue, concluded that military intervention was necessary, and that existing international cooperation must continue in order to bring this conflict to a swift resolution. In March 2015, the League voted to form a combined military force, although there was no specific mention of its immediate deployment to Yemen. In the following years, such a task force has not materialized, but various

members have joined and provided aid to the Saudi-led coalition. Amidst the virtual stalemate, the Arab League remains closely involved with current efforts, and remains “optimistic that progress could be achieved.”³⁷

European Union

The European Union has criticized the military intervention in Yemen as ineffective and counterproductive. Many EU members believe that escalation will not solve the crisis and worry about the regional repercussions of post-conflict rifts. The EU has reiterated its support for the UN stance on this issue. Aside from political affairs, however, the EU has actively involved itself in the provision of humanitarian assistance, working to address both the hunger and public health crises. Since 2015, EUR 314.7 million has been allocated in humanitarian aid for the Yemen crisis. A further EUR 90 million in life-saving assistance was provided to the Yemeni population in 2017, and an additional EUR 71 million has been allotted for EU development aid in Yemen in 2018.

United Nations

The UN also does not condone the escalation in Yemen, and some important members believe that a war crimes investigation into both parties is warranted. Certain nations find the civilian casualties to be of particular interest, especially those caused by the Saudi airstrike on the IDP camp. The Security Council, however, has actively debated and voted on a number of resolutions in regard to Yemen, demanding an immediate end to all violence in the country and imposing sanctions on key figures in militia operations. Also implemented have been general assets freezes and travel bans on key individuals, as well as an arms embargo. Almost all countries in the Security Council have stressed the importance of aiding the humanitarian efforts on the ground in their statements to the other ambassadors. Since, 2014, however, the Security Council has not passed further resolutions regarding the situation in Yemen, indicating a need for renewed resolve.

Current Situation

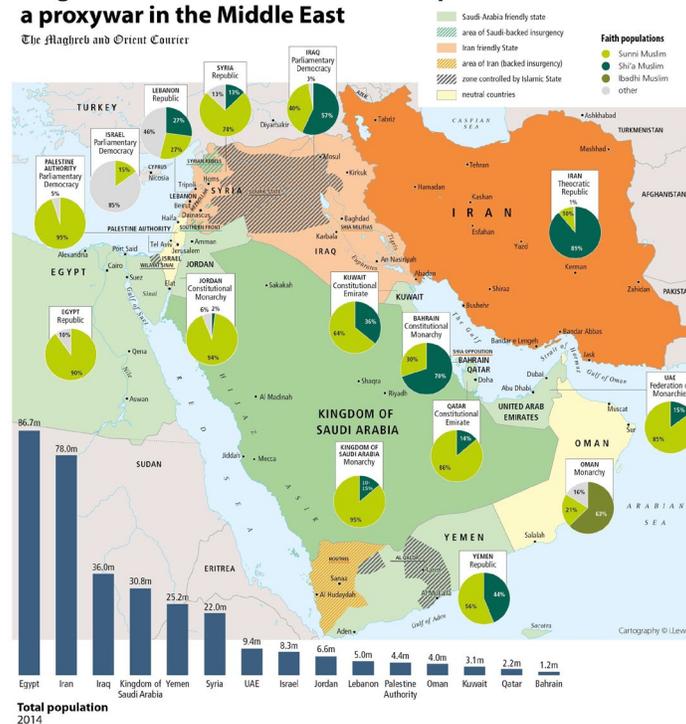
Yemen in the status quo plays host to numerous problems, most prominent among those are sectarian tensions, regionalism, and poor government. Although all these issues contributed to the rise of the current conflict, most are largely internal in nature. Rather, external considerations have exacerbated internal issues, fanning the flames of conflict. Serving as the Middle East’s regional “police,” Saudi Arabia is one of the closest allies of the West; the Kingdom receives massive amounts of arms, intelligence, and other cooperation, predominantly from the United States. On the other side is Iran, the Shia counterweight to the regional Sunni hegemon. Having enjoyed a brief period largely free from crippling economic sanctions, Iran is increasingly focused on regaining regional influence.³⁸ As such, Iran and Saudi Arabia are considered by the international community to be fighting proxy war in Yemen, each backing and funding opposing local forces. Although Saudi Arabia has now intervened directly in an attempt to end the fighting with a coalition victory, the Kingdom has been funding and supporting the Hadi administration ever since it came into power. As a major southern neighbour, the Saudis view Yemen as a major security and ideological concern. Unwilling to accept a hostile Shia-controlled state on its doorstep, Saudi Arabia has worked to regain favourable control of the divided nation, working also to counter Iran in a regional proxy battle that spans the Middle East.

³⁷ Alsharif, A, "Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of meddling ahead of summit," Reuters, December 24, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/24/us-gulf-summit-iran- idUSBRE8BN07P20121224>.

³⁸ Martin, P., Cowan, T., and McAlaster, T, "Ten maps that explain Iran’s power play in the Middle East," The Globe and Mail, April 15, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/irans-middle-east-power-play/article23845609/>.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia vs Islamic Republic of Iran : a proxywar in the Middle East

The Maghreb and Orient Courier



Geopolitical composition of the Middle East proxy war.

Saudi Arabia's concerns regarding Iran stem from two main factors: the United States' growing cooperation with Israel and Iran's international nuclear program deal. Essentially, alarmed by an apparent shift in the regional power balance with the rise of Iran and growing independent power of Israel, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to maintain status quo of its hegemony. In particular, Saudi Arabia has accused Iran of fueling unrest amongst Shias across the region, as well as in the Kingdom itself.³⁹ Home to a 10 percent minority Shia population, Saudi Arabia has repeatedly suppressed non-Wahhabi versions of Islam, especially those not Sunni. Conversely, Iran has a vast Shia majority and very few Sunnis, though has engaged more frequently in the overseas promotion of Shi'ism, including in backing the Yemeni Houthis, than in the targeted repression of Sunnis. With the Yemeni government long having been dominated by Sunnis in a Sunni-majority Muslim world, Shias in the nation were historically vulnerable to persecution, leading to the current climate of sectarian strife. In the interest of supporting fellow Shias, Iran continues to arm, fund, and otherwise support the Houthis in Yemen.

Pro-Hadi forces and the Houthis are not the only two major combatant groups in the area. Both sides have made unconventional alliances; the government loyalists with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Houthis with the Pro-Saleh forces. Although coalition forces would be loathe to admit cooperation with a terrorist organization, in Yemen they are fighting a common enemy.⁴⁰

Since 2015, the coalition's Operation Restoring Hope has conducted repeated air strikes on supposed Houthi strongholds and hideouts, despite an official proclamation that aerial intervention had ended following the conclusion of the preceding Operation Decisive Storm on April 21, 2015. Targets of operations have included

³⁹ Alsharif, A, "Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of meddling ahead of summit," Reuters, December 24, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/24/us-gulf-summit-iran- idUSBRE8BN07P20121224>.

⁴⁰ CFR Staff, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," June 15, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/yemen/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap/p9369>.

air and seaports, as well as allegedly schools and hospitals, in addition to the standard rebel bases. Yemen remains under an effective blockade, and humanitarian aid often faces challenges being delivered. Of note, according to Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières medical facilities in Yemen were attacked four times in three months in 2015.

Of significant concern, however, is the humanitarian situation in Yemen; the siege from the air by coalition aircraft has done little more than create mass carnage. Thousands of innocent civilians have been killed by airstrikes in populated cities, while even more have been seriously injured. Hospitals are overflowing with the wounded and their supplies dwindle by the hour. Blocked aid has not been able to reach most of those who need it, and aid workers are critically endangered in the process. Some 20 million people, or 80 percent of the entire population of Yemen, are in need of some kind of aid according to the United Nations.⁴¹

As well, there are allegations of war crimes committed by coalition forces, including reports of the use of banned cluster munitions. An Internally Displaced Persons refugee camp was hit by a Saudi airstrike in late March 2015, which killed 40 civilians. UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Johannes van der Klaauw, has publicly stated that airstrikes from the coalition were in direct breach of international humanitarian law, which states that it is a war crime if "an attack is launched on a military objective in the knowledge that the incidental civilian injuries would be clearly excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage (principle of proportionality)". Similar attacks on civilians and with prohibited weapons have continued unabated.

Nevertheless, coalition members are not the only ones alleged to be violating the rules of warfare. Houthi fighters have been accused of implementing an illegal levy on basic necessities such as food, water, and medical supplies, an act international observers consider to be extortion. Rebel forces have also been alleged to be "unlawfully deploy[ing] forces in densely populated areas and us[ing] excessive force against peaceful protestors and journalists." Thus, it is clear that unimaginable atrocities have been, and continue to be, perpetrated throughout the bloody conflict, both on the parts of the government and coalition, and on those of the Houthis and pro-Saleh forces.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Unlike other conflicts in the past between fervent Sunnis and Shias, the war in Yemen stands out as being much more than just a simplistic religious crusade. Delegates could approach a potential solution on this topic through polemics, fueling public discontent, or through military action and international intervention. Though there have already been high-level talks between multiple parties in the conflict, including the UN, the rebels, the formal government, and the coalition, discourse has remained largely stagnant. A potential resolution must address the economic political marginalization of Shias in Yemen, the proliferation of terrorist organizations amidst the strife, the apparent war crimes committed by the coalition and others, and the governance and underlying fragility of such a divided state.

Peace Talks

A first, diplomatic solution, is to facilitate negotiation between the various stakeholders. Convening the Hadi government and the Houthi rebels, as well as formerly pro-Saleh forces and regional backers could result in a negotiated resolution to the current conflict under the auspices of the UN. Though past attempts, such as Oman's 2015 proposal, have been unsuccessful, this does not mean that negotiation will continue to fail in the future.

⁴¹ "80% of Yemeni Need Humanitarian Aid," Bloomberg, June 16, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2015-06-16/80-of-Yemeni-need-humanitarian-aid-un>.

With proper care and stewardship, the Security Council may very well be able to affect an end to the long and bloody conflict in Yemen.

Military Intervention

A second possible solution would be to intervene militarily in Yemen, as has been done already by the Saudi-led coalition. Such intervention must focus on de-escalating the conflict and restoring security to the civilian population. Should the Security Council discuss sending either peacekeepers to the nation or endorsing the mission of coalition troops, the consequences of sanctioned military involvement must be fully considered; a war in Yemen would be very similar to the war in Afghanistan; the geography and demographics most likely leading to a war of attrition enveloping both regional and international powers.

Bloc Positions

States Supporting the Coalition

Some countries in the Security Council, most notably the United States, are supportive of the coalition's actions, agreeing that military intervention is necessary to restore stability in Yemen. However, these countries differ in the degrees to which they will support such efforts; some may provide solely financial backing while others will contribute troops and military assets. The United States has pledged intelligence and technical support to the coalition but has refused to send troops and conduct airstrikes. The UK and France have only pledged to continue providing humanitarian aid, although they have previously affirmed the coalition's actions. Many being historical backers of the Hadi government, these nations wish to see the official Yemeni government preserved, and view military intervention as the most effective route to that aim.

States Opposing the Coalition

Several states, most notably Russia, have expressed their opposition to the coalition's intervention. In Russia's specific case, being a major ally of Saudi Arabia's rival, Iran, it is a matter of national interest to oppose the furtherance of Saudi regional dominance. Other states, however, may also oppose the Saudi-led coalition on grounds of its ineffectiveness and brutality, causing immense suffering among civilians with little results yielded. Principally, these nations reject the opportunism of Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies in exploiting the situation in Yemen to further their national interests at the expense of human lives.

States Advocating a Diplomatic Solution

Among many other states, China has advocated for a diplomatic solution to the Yemen crisis. China especially has specifically stated that it believes the coalition intervention is an irresponsible escalation and completely unnecessary. Most other nations not directly involved in the conflict favour a negotiated solution that addresses the human rights abuses and structural factors perpetuating the current situation. Prioritizing regional stability in the overall security landscape, these countries and will seek justice and renewed prosperity for the embattled Yemeni people.

Discussion Questions

1. Which type of solution does your country support?
2. Does President Hadi still hold political legitimacy in Yemen? Can his government effectively administer the country?
3. How should historical discrimination against the Houthis be addressed in a future political structure?
4. How should the problem of humanitarian aid not reaching those who need it be solved?
5. Do the coalition's activities help or hinder international efforts?
6. How should the Security Council deal with the presence of terrorist organizations in Yemen?

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