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The Great Yemeni Chess Game

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The Great Yemeni Chess Game

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List of Abbreviations

ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AQAP-Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
BBC-British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN-Cable News Network
GCC-Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP-Gross Domestic Product
IED-Improvised Explosive Device
NATO-North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO-Non-Governmental Organization
PHR-Physicians for Human Rights
PPE-Personal Protective Equipment
STC-Southern Transitional Council
UAE-United Arab Emirates
UK-United Kingdom
UNICEF-United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UN-United Nations
USSR-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
U.S.- United States
WHO-World Health Organization
WFP-World Food Program
Abstract

Since the establishment of a unified and internationally recognized country in 1990, Yemen and its people have struggled to reconcile their differences, leading to numerous civil wars. The most recent civil war, which officially started in 2014, has decimated the nation and its people as it continues unabated. Yemen’s geo-strategic location as well as the political and religious nature of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran’s rivalry has led them to back opposing sides in Yemen’s civil war. Both parties’ involvement in the conflict has intensified and prolonged the fighting. As a result, Yemen’s key infrastructures, such as their economic, health, and education sectors, have failed. Both sides continue to violate international humanitarian law. The prolonged war has exacerbated an already existing climate crisis that involves both a serious water and food security issue. The decimation of Yemen’s health sector has left its people vulnerable to diseases like Cholera and Covid-19. The actions and involvement of Saudi Arabia and Iran have created the greatest humanitarian crisis in modern history.
Figure 1 highlights the geographical location of Yemen in the South of the Arabian peninsula. Its neighbors are Saudi Arabia to the North and Oman to the East. 

(https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/yemen.htm)

**Thesis Statement**

Although Yemen certainly had underlying conditions that have exacerbated the current crisis, ultimately the situation in Yemen would not be as dire if it were not for the involvement of third-party actors fueling the ongoing conflict, specifically Saudi Arabia and Iran.

**Methodology**

This thesis is unique from most generally accepted theses because it is a contemporary crisis profile, meaning that the events which I have decided to research are still unfolding. Due to
the ongoing nature of the Yemen crisis, the vast majority of this thesis was written using contemporary sources. Articles from public journals like Aljazeera and the Washington Post, to maps and statistics from the State Department and international organizations such as the United Nations (U.N.) and the Human Rights Watch, were used to establish a timeline that documents the events that are unfolding in Yemen. I set out to profile the events that preceded the current civil war in Yemen, the events that have transpired since the civil war began, events that continue to develop, and who exactly is to blame for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Mounting Tensions

A Nation Forged in Fire (1990-2000)

Yemen became officially unified in 1990 under President Ali Abdallah Saleh. The unification of Yemen came after decades of on and off violence and civil wars between the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen in the South and the Yemen Arab Republic to the North. The incessant fighting between the North and the South was not just a matter of Yemen being a fundamentally divided country, it was a full-blown proxy war, one that would continue to haunt Yemen well into its future.
On the surface, the proxy war was between Iran and Saudi Arabia, one of many given the two nations’ rivalry in the region. As if the proxy wars that preceded Yemen’s unification were not complicated enough, there were a few other countries with skin in the game. The USSR, after its occupation of Iran, began backing the Iranian government in an attempt to spread communism throughout the Middle East. The Soviets, well on their way to their demise, decided to back the radical Iranian government seeing it as their best option in the region for the spreading of communism to other young, unstable nations such as Yemen. The USSR supplied Iran with weapons and money to carry out its operations in foreign countries. Such weapons and money eventually found their way to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, per the Iranian government, as they were already an established communist party vying for control of Yemen. In backing the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, the USSR hoped that the South could beat out the Saudi-backed North, establishing Yemen as a communist nation.
Similar to the backing of Iran by the USSR, Saudi Arabia was backed by the U.S., not for the spread of their government ideology, but rather for the Saudi’s access to oil. “The U.S. would buy oil from Saudi Arabia and provide the Kingdom military aid and equipment. In return, the Saudis would plow billions of their petrodollar revenue back into Treasuries and finance America’s spending.”¹ The deal between the Saudi’s and the U.S. was a win-win for both sides, the U.S. received Saudi oil, and in exchange, the Saudi government received military grade arms and training. The Saudi government would then use the U.S. dollars received for their oil to put right back into U.S. owned industries, creating an infinitely beneficial cycle allowing for the U.S. to accrue as much crude oil as they wished and for the Saudi government to stockpile as many arms as they could. Such U.S. grade firepower was then given by the Saudi government to the Arab Republic of Yemen in attempts to neutralize the Soviet and Iranian backed Democratic People’s Republic of Yemen in the South, bringing the proxy wars and their actors full circle.

Per the unity agreement between both warring states in 1990, Ali Salim al-Beidh, the president of the South, would become Ali Abdullah Saleh’s Vice President. Saleh, the former President of the North, would preside as the President over all of unified Yemen. Sanaa, Yemen’s most populous city, would act as the new nation’s political capital in the North, while Aden, Yemen’s leading city in imports and exports, would still act as the economic center to the South. The unification of Yemen’s two warring states into one government and one nation was a massive step in the right direction for the young country.

However, the newfound peace did not last long for the young nation. In 1994, “Southern separatists tried to secede from the north. Their forces were beaten. More power and resources flowed to the northern capital, Sanaa.” Nationwide food scarcity paired with political gridlock between the Northern democrats and the Southern socialists incited a short-lived two month civil war. Neither the Northern or Southern Yemen armies had integrated when the two governments had in 1990, and thus were both still loyal to their respective sides of the unified government. Vice-President al-Beidh led the communist party’s movement to secede with support from the Iranians and former Soviet Union. Once the war had ended in early July of 1994, increasing pressure from the winning party forced many leaders of the socialist party to defect from Yemen, including al-Beidh. Five years after the attempted secession by the communist South, Saleh became the first ever legitimately elected President of Yemen, officially establishing Yemen as a purely democratic nation. Shortly after the 1999 election in Yemen, the Treaty of Jeddah was signed in 2000. The treaty was between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and it served as establishing exact coordinates for the land and maritime border. Provisions for the pastoral rights of shepherds, placement of armed forces, and future natural wealth extraction along the border for both nations were also agreed upon.

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Rise of Insurgencies (2001-2010)

With Yemen firmly established as a new democratic nation, and President Saleh at the helm, the newly elected President attempted to further extend his powers. In 2001, Saleh pushed a bill through the government to extend his presidential term from five years to seven, which parliament passed. The bill resulted in retaliatory tribal warfare against Yemen national forces in the Southern region of the country. Just as fast as the uprising began, it was put down by the government and their forces. Not long after, a U.S. naval vessel, the U.S.S. Cole, was blown up via suicide bomber off the coast of Yemen. The attack was claimed by Al-Qaeda, it marked the first activity in Yemen on behalf of the terrorist organization.

In 2004, yet another insurgency that had existed in Yemen since the ‘90’s rose to power. “In the far north, some of the Zaydi sect of Shi’ite Islam chafed as their heartland became impoverished. In the late 1990s, some Zaydis formed the Houthi group, which fought Yemen’s army and grew friendly with Iran.” The Shia rebels had orignially claimed discrimination and corruption against Saleh and other members of the government as their reasoning for wanting to oust them from power. Similarly, losers of the failed secession predating Yemeni unification, primarily Southern Shi’ites, sympathized with the Houthi rebels and thus chose to join their cause. The leader of the rebellion was Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, hence the name Houthi

5 Angus McDowall, “Why Yemen Is at War.”
rebels. President Saleh ordered al-Houthi be killed after they began operating in the South of the country as well, sparking the Houthis rebel offensive backed by Iran nationwide.

Figure 3

Figure 3 is of the Iranian-backed Shi’ite extremist group known in and around Yemen as the Houthi rebels. They are one of two mainstay insurgencies active in the country and are actively backed by the Iranian government. (https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemens-hadi-threatens-boycott-peace-talks)

At the same time the Houthi rebels were on the rise in Yemen, another new insurgency was rising as well. “The Muslim Brotherhood and other Sunni Islamists gained strength, particularly under General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who built a power base in the army. Jihadist fugitives formed al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).” 6 Many of the leaders of AQAP were Sunni Saudi nationalists released from Guantanamo Bay. President Saleh himself even released several former members of al Qaeda, who then went on to join AQAP after their release. However, while AQAP would eventually go on to become the terrorist organization we know

6 Angus McDowall, “Why Yemen Is at War.”
them as now, they actually began by backing Saudi and Yemeni security forces in the region in order to suppress the Houthi offensive. With the Houthi offensive being put down, partially thanks to AQAP, the organization decided to make Yemen its home base, firmly establishing yet another terrorist organization in the war-torn state.

![Fig 4](https://insidearabia.com/assessing-the-position-of-al-qaeda-in-the-arabian-peninsula/)

This image is of the other mainstay militant insurgency in Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP.

**Yemen: A Bleeding Nation**

**The Arab Spring and Continued Instability (2011-2014)**

In 2011, the call for true democracy from the people ran rampant throughout the Arab world. There were mass protests, violence, and coups from Tunisia and Egypt to Libya, Syria,
Bahrain, and even Yemen. On the coattails of President Saleh’s proposed new bill that would pass the presidency to his son, as well as a massacre by the national police, the people of Yemen decided they no longer wanted Saleh as their president. “When pro-democracy mass protests broke out in 2011, some of Saleh’s former allies turned on him. The army split. Separatists rallied in the south. The Houthis seized more areas. Yemen’s Gulf neighbors persuaded Saleh to step down. Deputy president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was elected in 2012 to a two-year term to oversee a democratic transition.”  

Originally, Saleh declined to step down. After reaching an agreement with neighboring gulf countries, his violation of the agreement was met with staunch resistance from AQAP. They began to launch coordinated missile strikes all throughout Sana’a. Finally, AQAP targeted the presidential palace in the city, destroying it and badly injuring Saleh, forcing him to step down and flee to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. Hadi stepped in for Saleh, but was unable to appease both pro-Saleh and AQAP sides. “Hadi was widely considered weak and his administration corrupt. Saleh’s allies undermined the transition. AQAP set up a mini-state and hit Sana’a with ever bloodier bombings.”

In late 2014, the Houthis seized Sana’a with help from pro-Saleh army units, forcing Hadi to share power. The Houthis and southern separatists rejected a proposed federal constitution.”  

In rejecting the newly proposed federal constitution, the Houthi rebels forced Hadi and his regime to vacate Sana’a. Hadi went to the Southern city and economic capital of Yemen, Aden, where he declared it to be the new capital of Yemen and called on all loyal government and military members to join him. While Hadi moved the Yemen government and 

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7 McDowall, “Why Yemen Is at War.”
8 Ibid
9 Ibid
capital to Aden, AQAP continued to bomb Sana’a in opposition of the Houthi rebels that now controlled it.

Later that year, after pushing Hadi and his forces out of Sana’a and to Aden in the South, the Houthis made their move on all of Yemen once more. The rebels made advances southward towards the economic center and port city of Aden, but “Saudi Arabia and allied countries intervened in March 2015 with air raids on the rebels.” 10 The western aligned coalition and their all out air assault was successful in slowing the advance of the rebels to Aden, their first direct military action in the Yemeni civil war. By the time the rebels had reached Aden, Hadi had already been safely extracted to Saudi Arabia. The Houthis claimed victory and control over all of Yemen, and established Sharia law not long after. However, even after the Houthis claimed control of Yemen there was still a nationwide power struggle. AQAP, the Iranian backed Houthis, the Western coalition backed Hadi forces, and even forces still loyal to Saleh continued to duke it out for control of different areas of Yemen. It was a civil war of the likes this world had never seen. It was not a nation divided between two rival groups vying for dominance and control, but rather a war in which there were four to five groups fighting for control. A civil war on a magnitude the world had never seen led to the potential for the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21st century.

This map depicts exactly how Yemen was divided amongst the various warring parties once Hadi had fled in 2015.

It also shows crucial cities that were contested such as Taiz, Aden, Sanaa, and Mukalla.


**The Carnage of War (2015-Present)**

Decades of ongoing violence and civil wars in Yemen have left both the people and the nation itself reeling and vulnerable. The incessant violence has led to much death and displacement, economic hardships, severe blows to both the national health and educational infrastructures, severe famines and food insecurity, and even pandemics. Per The Armed Conflict and Data Project, or ACLED, the civil war in Yemen has been directly responsible for the deaths
of over 100,000 people since garnering international attention in 2015. One such reason the war has been so deadly for unsuspecting Yemeni civilians has been the use of landmines by the Houthi regime, which the West suspects have been supplied by Iran. Per David Kirkpatrick, a reporter for the New York Times, “A Western mine-removal company hired by the Saudis estimates that the Houthis have laid more than a million mines, more than one for every 30 Yemenis…” Not only have the Houthi rebels violated the globally recognized laws banning the use of anti-personnel mines under the Geneva Convention, as established at the Landmine Convention of 1997, but they have also littered Yemen with unmarked improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as well. The issue with using unmarked landmines and IEDs is that they are indiscriminate weapons of war, meaning that they frequently linger long after wars end and wind up causing much more damage and death to unsuspecting civilians than they do to their intended military targets. Houthi minefields surrounding their stronghold of Sanaa have indeed proved effective against the advancing Saudi backed Yemeni forces, “all but grounding it to halt, stuck for three years in virtually the same position.” The landmines have already caused their fair share of death and destruction to the Yemeni civilian population, as many of the landmines and IEDs are buried underground and activated by pressure sensors or are disguised as fake rocks and activated by motion sensors. Houthi landmines and IEDs have already accounted for the deaths of “as many as 920 civilians and wounded thousands more” The effects of such weapons of war have already begun to appear in Yemen, killing ordinary people who are simply trying to

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13 Ibid

14 Ibid
survive, people simply trying to get an education, food, or water, and the war is no where near coming to an end.

Even worse, ACLED has reported that at least 12,000 civilians have been killed in attacks in which they were directly targeted since 2015. Both the Saudi backed coalition and the Houthi regime are to blame for targeting civilians. The ongoing Saudi air campaign in Yemen has routinely targeted schools, hospitals, and even wedding parties, killing thousands of citizens. The Houthi rebels have used drone and missile strikes to target soft Saudi backed targets in the nation and even shipping vessels in the Red Sea, also contributing to the civilian death toll. Continued attacks on civilian rich targets by both sides has also led to the displacement of millions of people. Per The BBC news, “Fighting on the ground and air strikes on rebel-held areas by a Saudi-led coalition backed by the US and UK have displaced more than three million people.” While the war continues to wage on in Yemen between both sides, one thing is certain, neither side seems too concerned about breaking universal rules of engagement, leading to the death of thousands and the displacement of millions of innocent civilians.

Seen here is a large pile of landmines that had been dug up and disarmed by the western backed Saudi coalition. Such landmines have proved lethal to both the Saudi coalitions advance towards the liberation of Sanaa and to the civilians of Yemen.


As if the death and displacement of so many Yemeni civilians was not enough for the war-torn country and its population to endure, the warring has also led to severe economic hardships. The ongoing war has not only further inflated Yemen’s poverty numbers, but has made it nearly impossible for the country and its people to recover as well. Since the conflict began in 2015, “the economy has seen US$89 billion in lost economic activity.” 17 The lack of economic activity in Yemen, due to the paralysis of the majority of its economy, has resulted in a lack of federal revenue typically used for things such as social services and programs.

Furthermore, “Gross domestic product per capita has plummeted from US$3,577 to US$1,950...Yemen is now ranked as the world’s second most unequal in the world in terms of income, surging past 100 other countries in inequality levels in the last five years.”  

The sharp decrease in GDP per capita, as well as the drastic jump in income inequality in Yemen highlights just how detrimental the war has been to the economy and development of Yemen the past five years. With no national revenue, a lack of an established government in Yemen, and therefore obsolete national social services, the people of Yemen rely solely on international aid to help them in their current poverty ridden situation.

The war has also wreaked havoc on the nation’s health infrastructure. According to Dr Ahmed Shadoul, the World Health Organization Representative for Yemen, “The health system is on the brink of collapse.” As previously stated, Western coalition forces, headed by Saudi Arabia, have targeted hospitals several times in coordinated air strikes during the conflict. Such airstrikes have severely hamstrung Yemen, as there are currently very few hospitals that are actually able to function at normal capacity or even function at all. Such airstrikes, poor upkeep, and close vicinity to targets of military interest have shut down upwards of 25% of healthcare facilities across Yemen. As if roughly 25% of healthcare facilities being shut down across the country wasn't bad enough, there is a growing shortage of healthcare workers at facilities that are operating. Healthcare workers have been, and continue to be, targets of all of the known warring parties. According to the Physicians for Humanitarian Rights (PHR), “There were 120 incidents across 20 of Yemen’s 22 governorates between March 2015 and December 2018, including

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18 “Prolonged Conflict Would Make Yemen the Poorest Country in the World, UNDP Study Says.”
20 Ibid
airstrikes, ground attacks, military occupation, and assaults on health workers.” 21 Because of such lethal attacks that target healthcare workers specifically in Yemen, many of the remaining healthcare workers there refuse to practice, out of fear for their own lives. Such attacks have only further added to the pre-existing issue of a shortage of healthcare workers in the region. Lastly, Yemen’s healthcare infrastructure is at severe risk of collapsing all together due to a shortage of medical supplies. Before the war broke out, Yemen had already relied heavily on imports for medical grade equipment and drugs. Imported equipment and drugs accounted for over 95% of the readily available medical materials in Yemen. 22 However, since the war has begun, Saudi-led naval blockades have made it nearly impossible to import equipment and supplies into Yemen. Even the fraction of the supplies that do find their way into Yemen rarely find their way to the doctors and other medical staff that need them. Houthi rebels often seize and loot land-based shipments at gunpoint, confiscating any and all supplies they deem to be valuable to the opposition. So if people in Yemen are fortunate enough to find medical staff who are willing to risk their lives and practice, and have the facilities to do so, most likely they will be treated with outdated and rather rudimentary equipment and supplies.

22 “Health System in Yemen Close to Collapse.”
This is one of Yemen’s many damaged/destroyed medical facilities. Such facilities have regularly been targeted by all sides fighting in an attempt to cripple the nation's key infrastructures and its people as well. 

([https://apnews.com/article/8cae880768a849158756a03deefc1ee2](https://apnews.com/article/8cae880768a849158756a03deefc1ee2)

Not only has the ongoing war in Yemen created economic gridlock and practically collapsed the already dilapidated healthcare system of the country, it has had an adverse effect on the nation's education system as well. According to Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative of Yemen, “An entire generation of children in Yemen faces a bleak future because of limited or no access to education...” 23 The war has led to many issues for kids trying to get an education; the destruction or repurposing of schools, a nationwide shortage of teachers, the lack of access to education for girls in rebel controlled areas, and a generalized fear amongst parents of sending their kids to school. According to UNICEF, over 2,500 schools are inoperable or destroyed, two thirds of the schools deemed usable are badly damaged from attacks, and the other third have

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been repurposed for military use or to house displaced families from the war. Even though there are some schools still deemed to be operable for the education of the future generations of Yemen, there is a nationwide teacher crisis ongoing. The vast majority of teachers in Yemen receive their salaries directly from the Yemeni government, with no one government strictly in control, teachers have gone well upwards of a year without seeing a penny of their salaries, giving them little to no incentive to risk their lives to educate the children. Similar to the teacher's dilemma, parents face a difficult decision in sending their kids to school, as schools continue to be targeted in military campaigns by both sides. Each day parents choose to send their kids to school in Yemen, could be their last day on Earth, making the decision to keep their kids out of school a rather easy one for most. The issue with keeping kids out of school in Yemen is that it has “pushed children and families to dangerous alternatives, including early marriage, child labour and recruitment into the fighting.” Lastly, as the Shi’ite Houthi rebels continue to make advances in varying regions of Yemen, they have begun implementing strict Sharia Law. Under such law, the education of females is strictly forbidden, putting immense pressure on girls of schooling age and their families.

24 “Children's Education Latest Victim of Yemen Conflict”
25 Ibid
26 Ibid
Figure 8 depicts the hardships that teachers and students face every single day in Yemen. Just like medical facilities, schools are being badly damaged or destroyed in the civil war as well. Schools like the one pictured here, even though clearly damaged, are often the best available option for those who still dare to pursue an education amidst the conflict.


The loss of life and collapse of key social and economic infrastructures were not the only things that the people of Yemen have had to endure due to the ongoing war. The non stop violence also further exacerbated famine and food insecurity that had plagued the country since its unification. Per the WHO, Yemen imports 90% of its food. Similar to the collapse of the nation’s medical infrastructure, the war has caused issues with the supply of food. 27 Due to the aforementioned ongoing war and extenuating circumstances, such as blockades set up to limit imports received by Yemen, the food crisis has only worsened. It is now estimated that over

27 “Health System in Yemen Close to Collapse.”
200,000 Yemeni civilians have died due to starvation, malnutrition, and other health effects onset due to famine and food insecurity. Of the 200,000 plus people that have died, over 60% of them have been below the age of five. Not only is Yemen’s inability to import food an issue, but the prices of food that currently exist in Yemen have skyrocketed as a result as well. The uptick in prices, combined with the fact that many families' savings have dwindled due to a lack of work and compensation, has made what food is available in Yemen unattainable for most, only further fueling the famine. With food insecurity and famine rates higher than ever, “Both sides are using food as a weapon of war, but the crisis is caused primarily by a brutal air, land and sea blockades imposed by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition,” according to CNN, which added that the blockade “has cut the amount of desperately needed food getting into the country by more than half, according to aid groups.”


Figure 9 highlights just how critical the food crisis is becoming in Yemen as more and more children are becoming acutely malnourished and are starving to death.  

Such maps highlight the varying degrees of food shortage being faced across the country. The comparison of the two demonstrates just how fast the situation regarding the food crisis can escalate, especially in the more densely populated and war torn areas located in the Western portion of the nation. 
(https://bennorton.com/us-saudi-war-yemen-famine-food-security-emergency/)
The Climate Crisis (2015-Present)

While the carnages of war have certainly decimated Yemen and its population, there is a new threat looming on the horizon. It has been said time and time again that climate change will be the fight of our generation, that especially holds true for people from poor and famished third world countries such as Yemen. Every issue that the Yemeni people have faced that have been exacerbated by the ongoing violence in the region are set to become much worse in the upcoming years, thanks to climate change. In fact, rapid climate change in the country has already begun, and it has only further worsened the Yemeni people’s situation.

Yemen has already begun to experience a rapid and unprecedented increase in its annual national average temperature. In the upcoming years, “Yemen's average temperature is expected to increase by 1.2 to 3.3 degrees Celsius.”  30 The drastic increase in the average temperature will result in a myriad of other physical issues for Yemen, further putting stress on its economy and people. The increase in temperature will obviously result in a hotter and more arid climate, but a greater average heat will also result in less predictable but more violent rain falls as well.  31 A less predictable but more severe rainy season will spell disaster for Yemen, as it will likely shorten their typical farming season and will also lead to an increase in flash floods and a prolonged monsoon season across the region. Increased extreme weather events will lead to things such as soil erosion during periods of high precipitation and desertification during periods of prolonged dryness, meaning that Yemen’s already scarce arable land will begin to disappear even quicker. A drier climate, paired with less predictable but more intense rains and floods will

31 Emily Atkin. “Climate Change is Aggravating the Suffering in Yemen.”
cause farmers to lose some, or even all, of their crops due to prolonged heat waves or increased monsoons. In some rural regions of the country, subsistence farmers in villages have still been able to grow basic necessity foods such as corn and wheat during the rainy season. However, the issues caused by climate change have shortened growing seasons and limited the amount of crops that are actually able to be harvested. In the past, villages would be able to “store enough food to last for three or four months in times of emergency...In recent years less rainfall, resulting in reduced harvests, means little if any food is stored for periods of crisis.”

The fact of the matter is, Yemeni farmers have already begun to lose some or all their crops in harvests, leaving them with minimal to no surplus to fall back on during hard times, only further worsening the level of food insecurity and famine already seen.

Another ongoing crisis the Yemeni people are facing is a lack of clean water due to the rapid climate change the region is experiencing. Yemen, due to its geographical location as well as the natural topography of the land, has always been a rather arid place, meaning the country never had much natural clean water to begin with. However, rapid increases in the temperature of Yemen has only further exacerbated the nation’s issue with a limited supply of clean water, as it is now diminishing faster than ever before. A lack of an established government to regulate the distribution of such natural resources such as clean water has only further worsened the issue.

Per Hajjah Zuhra of the World Bank, “In Sana’a and Taiz, people have piped water once a week at most. Otherwise, they have to buy it, and for the ordinary worker, it’s pricey. For others, fetching water is a daily challenge. “In our area, which is not served by piped water, we spend up to five hours a day fetching water.”

The clean water crisis is not just reserved to Yemen’s

32 Emily Atkin. “Climate Change is Aggravating the Suffering in Yemen.”
population in the countryside, it is even an issue in its biggest cities. However, the challenges that people face in the rural regions of the country are unique in the fact that they have to walk several hours to the nearest clean water source. In doing so, these people exert immense amounts of energy and time, typically living off of one meal a day at most. They also leave themselves vulnerable to attack whether it be from the Saudi led air campaign or the Houthi led ground campaign. In Yemen, all warring parties realize the importance of the diminishing natural clean water resources, such as rivers and lakes, to their campaigns. While the civil war itself has many motives, “underlying all other motives is the ongoing need by all parties to secure access to the diminishing water supply.”  

Similar to the famine and food security issue in Yemen, all parties realize that if they are to continue to fight they must be able to hydrate their armies as well.

![Fig. 11](https://www.oxfam.org/en/crisis-yemen-helping-people-access-clean-drinking-water)

Figure 11 represents the challenges of gaining access to clean water all throughout Yemen. Families routinely must wait in lines or travel large distances to access clean water for drinking and bathing. Such clean water is rationed in an attempt to cut back on excess usage and to assure there is enough of the scarce element to go around for all who need it.

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34 Emily Atkin. “Climate Change is Aggravating the Suffering in Yemen.”
Outside of urban centers where access to clean water is even more difficult to come by, smaller more tribal conflicts have begun to pop up frequently. In rural areas, “when wells run dry, social tensions escalate into local conflicts.” Simply, when one village well runs dry the easiest solution is for that village to take water from other villages wells, or from natural resources such as lakes and rivers. As seen, water is a very scarce resource in rural Yemen, and therefore villages have begun to arm themselves in an attempt to control or defend their resources and other natural resources from other villages and tribes.

Furthermore, the sea level is expected to rise by more than half a meter in accordance with the global sea level rising as a whole. In doing so, more than 50% of Yemen’s coastal areas will be at risk of flooding, and over 55% of the country's coastal population will be directly affected. Rising sea levels will result in the displacement of a large percentage of the population of Yemen, as their coastal cities and homes will become uninhabitable. A large shuffling of the population of Yemen will result, as those people will be forced to move further inland and to potentially more dangerous and marred areas of the ongoing conflict. One such reason that coastal cities and villages will become uninhabitable due to rising sea levels is because of the lack of access to clean water. The vast majority of clean water in coastal cities and villages in Yemen actually comes from the sea itself. Such cities and villages use large scale aquifers to filter out the salt from the sea water, thus making it potable for the inhabitants. However, aside from flooding coastal cities and villages all across Yemen, “Sea level rises will also result in saltwater intrusion, rendering coastal aquifers brackish and undrinkable,

35 Foad al Harazi. “Future Impact of Climate Change Visible Now in Yemen.”
36 “Environment and Global Climate Change.”
exacerbating the country’s already-serious water scarcity issues.” 37 The salt-water intrusion of coastal water supplies will eventually force Yemen’s coastal population to move inland, packing the country’s entire population in relatively the same areas, further putting stress on the nation’s already diminished clean water supply. Internally displaced refugees from the ongoing water crisis will only further fuel small inter-village conflicts as increased population density in certain areas means that the water supply will diminish even faster than before.

Yemen currently uses more water than it produces, and with a rapidly growing and shifting population the issue will only become worse. As of 2010, “Yemen used 3.9 billion cubic meters (bcm) against a renewable supply of 2.5 bcm.” 38 In order to counteract the 1.4bcm deficit, Yemen has begun to tap into its underground water reserves and reservoirs, using tube wells and boreholes to gain access. The primary reason for this water use deficit seen in Yemen, aside from its population growth, is the cultivation of qat. Qat is a shrub that offers semi-narcotic effects when being chewed, similarly to the effects of marijuana, and it is heavily used amongst the Yemeni population. The issue with cultivating qat is that it “covers 38 percent of Yemen’s irrigated areas; in places, food crops are being uprooted and replaced with it. Since 1970, the amount of irrigation has increased by 15 times, while rain-fed agriculture has declined by nearly 30 percent. Because of water shortages, more than half the investments made in rural Yemen last no longer than five years.” 39 Simply put, Yemeni farmers are uprooting critical food crops during a nationwide famine and replacing them with a shrub that offers zero nutritional value. To make matters worse, the very same farmers are then using what little water supply they have access to in order to water their qat plants. If Yemeni people cannot see the issue in cultivating qat on such

37 Foad al Harazi. “Future Impact of Climate Change Visible Now in Yemen.”
38 Ibid
39 Ibid
a large scale in place of critical food crops, and wasting their ever so precious water on such crops, then not only is the famine going to get much worse but so will the critical water situation in the conflicted nation.

This is a khat farm in a remote province of Yemen. As is seen, the climate surrounding the farm is quite arid and most of the water in the area is allocated to the growing and caring of the khat plants. Such land could very easily be converted to farmable land for food crops to help with the ongoing food crisis, however, farmers opt to grow khat for its favorable profits.

Human Rights Crisis (2016-Present)

Since the 2011 revolution in Yemen, and the emergence of the Houthi rebel movement culminating in their takeover in 2014, certain minority groups have come under attack in Yemen. More specifically, the Houthi rebels have been targeting the Baha’i people of Yemen. Baha’is believe that there has only ever been one God, but that he is called different names in different religions. Due to this fundamental belief, Baha’is believe that it is important to acknowledge every religion and to accept everyone no matter their religion. 40 The reason that such a seemingly peaceful religion and its followers are being antagonized by the Houthis in Yemen stems from the rebels’ ties with Iran. For starters, “In Iran, the Baha’i community is the biggest non-Muslim religious minority group with a population of over 300,000 people.” 41 After the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, the Iranian government and Shi’ite sect of Islam began to persecute the Baha’i people to rid them from Iran. Per the Middle East Institute, or MEI, “Baha’is are also seen as an existential threat because their religion is not scriptural, and as such, they are labeled as “infidels” and enemies of Islam. The minority group is not acknowledged as a religion by Iran but is denigrated as a “satanic movement.”” 42 Due to this view of Bahaism on the part of the Iranian government and Shi’ite sect of Islam, officials in Iran have severely restricted the political, economic, cultural, and religious rights of Baha’i people within Iran.

Similar to the situation Baha’i people have been facing in Iran for decades, other members of the religion are now facing in Yemen, but this time at the hands of the Houthi rebels. Essentially, Iran and the Houthi movement are synonymous, Iran supplies the weapons, money and materials to the rebel group, and in return the rebels seemingly carry out Iran’s agenda in Yemen. Per Iran and the Ayatollah’s discretion, the Houthis have taken the persecution of Baha’is to the extreme. The population of Baha’i followers in Yemen is estimated to be around 2000, with the majority of them living in the Houthi controlled capital of Sanaa. However, since the Houthis took over Sanaa in 2014, the situation for Baha’is has become bleak. Per one Yemeni Baha’i who was arrested then freed by the rebels, “Houthi interrogators had confirmed his arrest was due to his religious beliefs—and because the Baha’is were promoting peace during a time of war.” Simply, Houthi officials are arresting Baha’is on a massive scale under false pretexts such as “being spies for western nations” to mask the true reason for their arrests. Iran and the Ayatollah do not agree with their differing religious views.

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44 Ibid
Fig. 13 is of Baha’i Yemenis protesting the Houthi regime's oppression of their people. The banner translates to “(We are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, and the drops of one sea.) Praise be to God - the most holy.” This banner alone demonstrates the basis for the Baha’i faith, and also why Iran and the Ayatollah denounce their religion as a whole.

(https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/houthis-ramp-up-war-against-yemen-s-baha-i-minority-1.716444)

As if being arrested for simply having differing religious views than others wasn't bad enough, Baha’is face terrible consequences at the hands of the rebels. Baha’is detained by the rebels have been known to be “beaten and electrocuted, forced to sign documents while blindfolded, accused of being a “destroyer of Islam and religion” and of being a spy for Israel.”

45 The rebels unlawfully detain and torture Baha’is to try to break them, forcing them to admit to crimes they have not committed. After breaking the Baha’i people and forcing them to admit to

45 Baha’i National Center. “Electrocutions, Beatings and Mass Arrests…”
ridiculous crimes, the rebels hold “trials” for them. As seen in the case of Hamed bin Haydara, Yemen’s Baha’i religious leader, the “trial” is far from lawful and is illegitimate in every way possible. By word of Mina Aldroubi of The National News, “A number of trials against Mr Haydara have taken place including the imposition of his death sentence, which took place in his absence, and his lawyer was not given the opportunity to contest the evidence presented against him.” Mr. Haydara faced a very similar fate as all other Baha’is in Yemen. It is sadly typical for the rebels to hold the trials of Baha’is in secrecy so not even the defendant can attend his or her own trial, and for the defendant to be denied a lawyer, or to not allow the lawyer to present a defense on behalf of their client or clients. Every single thing about the persecution of Baha’is in Yemen is immoral, illegal, and in blatant violation of global fundamental basic human rights. The persecution of the Baha’i people in Yemen on behalf of the Houthis and Iran inherently infringes upon the Baha’i peoples rights to freedom of religion, opinion, and expression. The manner in which the rebels have been detaining and treating Baha’is violates their freedom from slavery and torture. The manner in which the Houthis have been conducting their own trials against the Baha’is is a violation of universal due process and the right to a fair trial. Lastly, the death penalty that almost every single Baha’i person has received from said trials is a violation of the universal fundamental right to life and liberty. Regardless of the fact that to this date not a single Baha’i has been publicly executed at the hands of the rebels and their sham trials and falsified convictions. Every Baha’i member that has been arrested and tried by the Houthis thus far have either been released or are still being held captive by the extremist group.

While “the United Nations and other international human rights organizations often condemn and report on systematic persecution of the Baha’is in Iran and Yemen, little has been

46 Baha’i National Center. “Electrocutions, Beatings and Mass Arrests…”
done to mitigate their suffering or hold to account those responsible for their harassment.” 47

Other nations and even international organizations such as the UN or the Humanitarian Rights Watch are largely unable to hold the rebels accountable for their actions due to the lack of an established government in Yemen and due to the lack of stability caused by the ongoing conflict. The Baha’i people will continue to suffer scrutiny and persecution in Yemen unless the conflict can be brought to a swift conclusion, and an established government is able to hold the Houthi regime and their allies accountable for their actions.

Cholera Outbreak (2017-Present)

Before 2017 it was safe to say that the situation in Yemen was severe. There was an ongoing proxy war between not only two of the strongest countries in the region, but those countries were being backed by some of the most powerful countries in the world. Yemen and its people were suffering from total collapses of its economic, health, and educational sectors due to the civil war. There was an ongoing famine that statistically ranks as one of the worst the world has ever seen, and there was a clear shortage of natural resources such as water. Both the famine and water crisis in Yemen were also being further exacerbated by both the war and climate change in the region.

However, in 2017 Yemen and its people were dealt yet another grave blow. Due to intensified fighting, a depleted health sector, and a blatant lack of clean water and other sanitational measures amongst the Yemeni people, the nation experienced the worst Cholera

47 Ahmad Majidyar and Lama al Jarallah. “Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels Step up Persecution of Baha'i Minority in Yemen.”
outbreak ever recorded in modern day. Now, Cholera is widely considered to be non-life threatening or a non-serious issue in many countries, as vaccines cost roughly ten U.S. dollars per person. Furthermore, Cholera outbreaks tend to only occur when there is a clear lack of sanitation and access to clean water, making it a non factor for many more industrialized countries around the globe. However, for countries such as Yemen who have seen their sanitation levels, medical infrastructures, and access to clean water all but vanish amidst a brutal civil war, Cholera poses a very real and serious threat.

The outbreak began in October of 2017, but “the U.N. wasn't able to distribute cholera vaccines to Yemen until May 2018.” 48 The U.N. at one point had the actual vaccines in Yemen, but ultimately decided against distributing them due to complications from the ongoing war, which made it unsafe for aid workers to distribute them on the ground. Had Yemen’s health sector not been so badly damaged amidst the war, the vaccines could have been given to them for distribution. Since there was and still is virtually no health system in Yemen, that was simply not an option. In waiting nearly nine months to finally distribute the vaccines to the Yemeni people, the outbreak ran rampant. By May of 2018 when the vaccines finally reached those in need, “the outbreak had produced more than 1 million suspected cases...killing nearly 3,000.” 49 The situation was only further worsened by the ongoing famine, as many contracted Cholera lacked the strength and health to fight it off. Of the some one million cases recorded in those nine months, “children under five represented 23% of the total suspected cases, and accounted for

49 Ibid
58% of the deaths.” 50 While vaccines were eventually administered, and the outbreak was brought under control with help from an unusually cold season, it was not over.

**Fig. 14**

This graphic demonstrates the projected cholera risks of varying areas throughout Yemen. As seen, the outbreak was projected to be much worse in heavily populated areas and large cities such as Sana’a, Taiz, Lahj, and Aden which are located in the western region of the country. Such a projection makes sense as those areas and cities have seen some of the hardest fighting and have the most damage to their sanitary infrastructures that would normally help prevent the spread of diseases such as Cholera.

(https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/disease-vector)

The outbreak came soaring back in 2019, with over 5,000 people contracting the illness every day. 51 Statistically, the outbreak was similar to the first wave in 2017, well over a million


51 Maggie Michael. “Why Didn't Vaccine Reach Yemen...”
cases, with children under the age of five making up for a large portion of cases and deaths due to the still on-going famine. While Yemen had access to vaccines for the second outbreak in 2019, there were still multiple internal issues that allowed for the second wave to become severe. As previously discussed, Yemen has a severe lack of proper medical facilities due to the fact that nearly half of all pre-existing facilities were destroyed amidst the bloody conflict. Furthermore, the nation also has a shortage of medical professionals due to the government cutting public health funding. Many doctors and nurses have not received their salaries in years and some have decided to turn to the private health sector rather than work for free amidst one of the worst humanitarian crises the modern world has seen. As if the depletion of Yemen’s entire public medical sector was not reason enough for the Cholera epidemic to run wild, both the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels have made things even more difficult for organizations such as the U.N. and Red Cross to intervene effectively. Corruption has largely stifled international organizations attempts to control the outbreak on the ground as “the Houthi government in the north and the U.S.-backed government in the south have skimmed off money and supplies for cholera vaccination and treatment and sold them on the black market. In some cases, treatment centers existed only on paper even though the U.N. had disbursed money to bankroll their operations...” 52 Such corruption has made it nearly impossible to accurately get aid to the people of Yemen who actually need it, as neither side can be trusted to actually distribute such aid or to use it to actually treat the epidemic. Instead, both sides seem to be swindling aid both in the forms of vaccinations and equipment, as well as money, to further finance their war against one another. Such foul play by both sides, on top of the fact that Yemen no longer has much of an operational health sector, are two of the most important factors for as to why Yemen even to this

52 Maggie Michael. “Why Didn't Vaccine Reach Yemen...”
very day has not gotten the Cholera outbreak completely under control and why it still continues to run rampant in the ever so desperate nation.

Yemen Today (2018-Present)

Currently, things in Yemen are looking bleak. The nation is going into its seventh year of a very bloody and messy civil war in which neither side seems keen on fighting fairly. Some of the nation’s most crucial sectors are damaged beyond repair, there is a historically bad famine, a general lack of access to sanitation and clean water, and there is a Cholera outbreak that cannot be reigned in despite plenty of efforts from multiple international parties.

Despite the lack of attention from many news outlets around the globe, the dire situation in Yemen has clearly caught the attention of numerous governments. Since the Houthi takeover in 2014-15 “...international donors gave the UN-led aid response in Yemen US$8.35 billion, including $3.6 billion in 2019…” 53 While many international organizations are currently providing aid to Yemen such as the Red Cross and the Humanitarian Rights Watch, the U.N. is by far and away the largest donor amongst international organizations. The U.N. has then been donating billions of dollars yearly to several international organizations and local NGOs. However, “the largest recipients include the World Food Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization and the UN refugee agency.” 54 Such programs have been using the monetary funding to provide the people of Yemen with the likes of vaccines, medical supplies, clean water, and food. Of all of the programs actively aiding the Yemeni people, no one

54 Ibid
is more important than the World Food Program. The World Food Program, or WFP, “provides general food assistance to more than 12 million people at an estimated cost of $837 million for six months.” Given the state of Yemen’s economy, as well as the increased percentage of people suffering from acute malnutrition and starvation due to the ongoing famine, the WFP has been able to provide families every month with enough food to get them by.

![Figure 15](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46469168)

Figure 15 demonstrates the top ten donors for the U.N. led aid plan for Yemen. It should come as no surprise that the UAE and Kuwait, both oil rich countries and allies of Saudi Arabia, are two of the top five donors. Furthermore, all of the top five donors are all involved in the conflict directly or indirectly in some way shape or form.

Despite valiant attempts by organizations such as the U.N. to pump money and aid into Yemen, the situation has continued to worsen. Due to the current global Covid-19 pandemic, many nations that have been supporting Yemen and the U.N. led aid plan have had to cut their funding to focus on internal issues within their countries stemming from the pandemic. Due to

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55 “Deadly Consequences”
internal issues donor countries are facing, such as failing economies, in early August of this year “aid agencies had received only 24 percent of the $3.4 billion they had requested for the year.” 56 The shortage of funding for this year will result in harsh ramifications for the Yemeni people suffering on the ground, in fact, some of those ramifications have already begun to surface. For example, the current funding crisis has resulted in “...the halving of food assistance to 9 million people and the suspension of support to healthcare services...” 57 Due to insufficient funding, the International Food Program has had to start providing meals to families every other month instead of monthly, and the Yemeni healthcare system simply cannot continue to operate. The suspension, or roll back of such programs, has left millions of Yemeni civilians more susceptible to starvation, malnutrition, and even death, than ever before in the conflict.

On top of a clear lack of funding for Yemen and its people, the nation is also trying to deal with the seemingly endless Covid-19 virus. Yemen, with its people already in poor health due to famine, several Cholera outbreaks, and a clear lack of sanitation and clean water, plus a nearly nonexistent health and medical infrastructure, has pathologists and aid organizations around the world worried. As of August of this year, the Yemeni government had “confirmed only 1,950 cases and 564 Covid-19-related deaths.” 58 While those numbers seem low, especially in comparison to other nations, they do not tell the entire story. Based on those two figures alone, Yemen has a fatality rate of nearly thirty percent, one of the highest in the world. The WHO has had minimal luck, if any at all, with providing tests and supplies for the virus, “since May, the Houthis have blocked 262 containers in Hodeida port belonging to the World Health Organization as well as a large shipment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the

56 “Deadly Consequences”
57 Ibid
58 Ibid
Covid-19 response.” 59 The rebels have been using the WHO containers in the port as bargaining chips in order to attempt to get other shipments passed through the Saudi coalition naval and air blockades. The seizure of such shipments has left Yemen ill-equipped to handle the virus, and has left many health officials worried about the impact the virus will have on the nation and its people. U.N. health officials have warned that the virus is likely to spread in Yemen “...faster, more widely, and with deadlier consequences than almost anywhere else.” 60 It is due to the lack of testing kits available as well as the lack of PPEs that many officials believe the actual infection and virus-related death numbers in Yemen are much higher than being reported. With a second global wave of the virus already present, if the Houthis refuse to release WHO shipments, the entire population will be without testing kits and PPEs. Such a lack of test kits and masks will only cause Yemen’s Covid numbers to climb, further exacerbating the suffering of the Yemeni population.

As if the emergence of Covid-19 in the country was not the straw to break the camel’s back, the war is raging on unabated. The Houthi rebels still have control of the nation's capital, Sanaa, and much of the northern region. While the Yemeni government backed by Saudi Arabia has control of the vast majority of the nation to the South and East. Both sides are dug in and have heavily fortified their lines and strongholds, leading to intensified fighting by both sides that has resulted in a stalemate. As it stands now, both the rebels and the Yemeni government are still being supported by their respective allies of Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, in the past two years support for Saudi Arabia from some of their western counterparts has been wavering.

59 “Deadly Consequences”
60 Ibid
Figure 16 represents the fronts of all warring parties as of July 2020. As seen, the Houthi rebels control the northern portion of the country, as well as Yemen’s most populous city, Sanaa. The Yemeni government backed by Saudi coalition forces controls the vast majority of the nation and the newly established capital and port city of Aden.

AQAP is active and still has a presence in the eastern portion of the country, specifically around the cities of Mukalla and Ash Shihr. The Yemeni government in the South has battled occupation forces from the Southern Transitional Council (STC). The STC was created in 2007 when Saleh was President of Yemen and is fighting to establish Southern Yemen as its own independent country once more. The STC has been largely inactive on any other front in Yemen other than around the cities of Aden and Lahj.


In October of 2018, U.S.-based Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Per the BBC, Khashoggi “went into self-imposed exile in the
U.S. in 2017...he wrote a monthly column in The Washington Post in which he criticised the policies of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the son of King Salman.” Khashoggi clearly believed his life was in danger staying in Saudi Arabia, enough so to seek asylum in America. After his murder, Turkey released incriminating evidence against the Saudi royal family, stating that “a team of 15 Saudi agents, assisted by three intelligence officers, arrived in Istanbul in the days before the murder” and that he was “killed in cold blood by a death squad.” Khashoggi was in Turkey to marry his then Turkish fiancee, and was at the consulate to obtain a certificate of divorce from his ex-wife who still resided in Saudi Arabia. The murder was allegedly carried out by Prince Mohammed’s former aides, who were charged in Saudi court with “instigating a premeditated murder with the intent of [causing] torment through fiendish instinct,” the royal family of Saudi Arabia has continuously denied any involvement in the murder. Despite denial of any and all allegations by the Saudi royal family, the evidence with regards to the murder of Khashoggi has created plenty of uncertainty amongst Saudi Arabia’s NATO allies. The United Nations released a report on a months-long investigation that found “credible evidence that top Saudi officials, including Mohammed, were liable for Khashoggi’s murder. The report reinforced the conclusions of U.S. intelligence officials, who concluded that Prince Mohammed ordered the assassination.” The releasing of the report by the U.N. sparked international outrage from several Saudi supporters including the U.S., the U.K, and the UAE.

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62 Ibid

63 Ibid

In fact, the UAE, who’s intentions for joining the war were “stopping the Houthis and maintaining the collective security of the GCC, not necessarily the restoration of Hadi’s legitimate authority over the country,” stopped their support of the Saudi coalition and Hadi forces in and around Aden completely. Since 2015, when the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis had begun, the UAE has been “officially supporting the Hadi government...and sustaining its opponents in the South and paving the way for secession.” The UAE in turn pulled all of its troops out of Yemen. For the UAE, their decision to fully back the STC was more so business based than anything, as “the Houthis threatened their interests in Yemeni ports (most importantly Aden), which has been a part of the UAE’s roadmap to become a major naval and commercial player in the broader region.” Simply, the UAE saw that the war had become a stalemate, and chose to support the group who could ensure that they would still have access to all of the important coastal ports of the nation. It is for that exact reason that “Abu Dhabi decided to allow the Secessionist Southern Transitional Council to execute a coup against the Yemeni president and his government.” The Coup resulted in the STC’s take over of Aden, pushing Hadi’s forces out of the new capital city and to more Western cities such as Taiz and Lahj. While the move by the UAE to support the STC and turn its back on the Saudi aligned Hadi forces may seem strictly in the best interest of themselves, it is possible that the UAE has opened up a door for a potential solution to the complex conflict.

With the war in Yemen looking as if there will not be an end anytime soon, now is not an ideal time for Saudi Arabia to lose backing from their allies, but that is exactly what is

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66 Ibid
67 Ibid
68 Ibid
happening. The Khashoggi affair was well documented and covered by almost every major news outlet, bringing plenty of public attention to the matter and to the ruling of the current royal family of Saudi Arabia. For the U.S., the Khashoggi affair marks the second detrimental act committed by the Saudi’s since their relationship began, the first being the Saudi’s role in the 9/11 attacks. While the affair has certainly tested the U.S.-Saudi political relationship, it has not broken it. Since the affair, “roughly 20 firms are registered to lobby for Saudi interests, compared with more than 25 before Khashoggi’s death.” 69 While the number of lobbying firms within the U.S. did decrease due to the Khashoggi affair it clearly was not a deal breaker on Capitol Hill, highlighting the continued partnership between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia both politically and economically.

Despite the two nations’ continued partnership, the U.S. appears to be more reluctant to get involved and support Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen. While it is true that the U.S. is still supplying the Kingdom with military weaponry, it does not necessarily mean that it condones the nation’s involvement and actions in Yemen. This is evident according to Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, who is the head Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, “Saudi Arabia’s actions in Yemen and the Khashoggi murder and attempted coverup heavily shape congressional views.” 70 While many U.S. and foreign representatives alike disapprove of the Kingdom’s involvement in Yemen, they are more so focused on Iran. Congressional votes regarding arms dealing with Saudi Arabia and the still very lively petro-dollar deal “have always been based on concern about checking Iranian influence in the region…” 71 Simply, regardless of

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69 Jonathan O’Connell. “In the Aftermath of Khashoggi’s Killing...”
70 Ibid
71 Ibid
the situation in Yemen or the Khashoggi affair, NATO nations continue to support Saudi Arabia in order to counteract and keep Iran in check in the region.

Ultimately, regardless of the atrocities happening in Yemen, and the murders and atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia, NATO countries will continue to support the Kingdom. Iran and Saudi Arabia, long pitted national and religious rivals, are vying for dominance in the Middle East. Unfortunately, for Yemen and its people they appear to merely be pawns in the global chess match.

**International Interference in Yemen**

**Tribal Strife**

One reason the ongoing war in Yemen has continued for so long unabated is the tribal structure of Yemeni society. In Yemen, tribes, which consist of several clans or families with different surnames but ultimately the same lineage, largely abide by tribal law. Tribal law is customary, meaning it can often vary from tribe to tribe and region to region within Yemen. However, “tribal law is adaptable, efficient and, in most cases, is preferred by tribesmen to both Shari'a and constitutional law.”

72 Throughout Yemen’s history, many civil wars and intertribal conflicts have been solved using tribal law. The people of Yemen often turn to their tribal leaders, or sheiks, for guidance in times of violence and when the government is weak, or nearly nonexistent as is the case with Yemen today.

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While falling back on tribal law seems logical, given that the Yemeni government does not have the capacity to enforce any sort of constitutional law currently, it has further complicated things in the bleeding nation. In a tribal society, affiliation with a powerful and charismatic leader and his network “is a means for individuals to elevate their social, economic, and—potentially—political status. Questions of ideology or religious affiliation come second.” Such desired affiliations amongst sheiks and other tribal elders have led to corruption, as they have time again pledged their tribes allegiances to the highest bidder, recently Saudi Arabia and the UAE, all in support of international short-term interests. In accepting bribes from the likes of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Sheiks have recently been doing the western-aligned coalitions dirty work on the ground. Tribes have been waging a sort of insurgency based war on the Houthis, particularly in the more isolated and mountainous region of North Yemen, as Sheiks continue to decide to trade the lives of their tribesmen for relatively small social, economic, and political gains.

While the majority of tribes in Yemen are loyal to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, some align with the Houthis. The sheer multitude of tribes has led to internal division, counteracting the hopes of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sheiks have continued to publicly call out Saudi Arabia and the UAE for implementing “policies that favor some tribes over others...causing increased tensions between the tribes themselves.” Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s uneven backing of tribes in terms of medical supplies, food, weapons, and ammunition has led to squabbling and in some cases conflict amongst different sheiks and tribes, greatly weakening them in their battle against their

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74 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “The Tribes of Yemen…”
supposed common enemy, the Houthis. In fact, recently, the Houthis “have consistently emerged victorious due to their enemies’ divisions and internal squabbling.” 75 If the Saudi-backed coalition and tribes wish to expel the Houthis from the region or to force them into potential talks of peace, they must set their differences aside and focus on the task at hand. Intertribal fragmentation, regardless of reasoning, has tipped the delicate balance of power in the region back in favor of the Houthis, further dividing tribes, governments, and Yemeni people alike. The division amongst the Houthi’s enemies has allowed for them to recently build momentum and expand their influence and capture key cities in what has otherwise been a stalemated war.

Religious Rivalry

The said rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran as seen in Yemen can best be described as “built mostly along sectarian and ideological lines - Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Sunni Muslim world, and Iran as the leader of the Shia Muslim world.” 76 Simply, Iran backed the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen in the South predating unification in 1990 because the majority of their people were Shia Muslim, and the Saudi government backed the Yemen Arab Republic of the North because they were Sunni. It is for that reason that Yemen was, and still is, critically important to both nations. Yemen has always had a diverse, yet peaceful muslim population, as it currently has a population of 30% shi’ite muslims and roughly 70% Sunni. However, with Saudi Arabia being neighbored by Iraq and Syria to the North, two predominantly

Shi’ite muslim countries, Iran figures that if they are able to get a footing in Yemen that they can put even more pressure on the Saudi’s. Knowing this, the Saudi’s have refused to lose Yemen to the Iranian backed Houthi rebels, altering the purpose of fighting in the nation all together.

What started out as backing differing parties in Yemen for separate political ideologies has now instead shifted to both governments focusing their warring efforts based on their separate religious ideologies as seen today. It is for this very reason that the civil war itself has also shifted. Houthi controlled regions such as the capital of Sanaa have experienced much stricter rules and regulations under Sharia law, in accordance with Iranian-based Shi’ite beliefs. These stricter laws and regulations have also led to persecutions of other religions such as the Baha’is. However, areas that are controlled by Saudi-backed forces have experienced all of the freedoms of religion, speech, and education that are staples of democracy. For the people of Yemen, their numerous civil wars have never been centered around religion, as Shi’ites, Sunnis, and other religions have lived in that area for hundreds of years without much, if any, conflict. However, with Saudi Arabia and Iran being involved, the two nations have seemingly weaponized the respective different sects against one another, effectively splintering the religious diversity and peace of the nation amongst its citizens.

Similarly, in Yemen's civil war today, the Saudis have continued to back former president Hadi and his forces due to the fact that his party is primarily Sunni. On the flip side, Iran has, and still is, backing the Houthi rebel regime as they are a Shi’ite paramilitary group who’s ideals align with Iran's government as well as the Ayatollah. The Houthis have been known to enforce strict Sharia law in areas in which they have strong influence in and have largely carried out
orders directly from the Ayatollah or Iranian government. However, the proxy war seen prior to Yemen’s 1990 unification, and every other one since, including the current one, seemingly transcend sectarian and ideological principles as well.

Fig. 17

The map depicted in figure 17 showcases that the majority of Shi’ites reside in Iran, explaining why it is considered to be the “leading country” of Shi’ite muslims in the region. Furthermore, the figure also shows considerable Shi’ite populations in Iraq and Yemen, helping to explain why stability in Yemen is so critical to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and why Yemen is so critical to Iran as well.

**Geopolitical Importance**

Yemen was, and is now, viewed as a strategic stronghold by both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Geographically speaking, Saudi Arabia shares a rather porous 1,770km Southern border with Yemen. Knowing that, Iran’s end game in Yemen is simple, “With a population that is 35 percent
Shia, Yemen could serve as a potentially friendly base of operations in Iran’s rivalry against Saudi Arabia. For Iran, easier access to Yemen means easier access to Saudi Arabia.” 77 An Iranian footholding in Yemen would spell a serious national security threat for Saudi Arabia, as it would become increasingly easier for Iran to back and smuggle rebels and other terrorist organizations into Saudi Arabia to carry out attacks on behalf of their government.

Furthermore, a strong hold in Yemen on Iran’s behalf would give them the “Yemen Card” and the ability to play it against Saudi Arabia. That is that “Iran would seek to pressure the Saudis to tread lightly in Iraq and Syria or risk a concerted effort to further undermine them from their southern border.” 78 Iraq and Syria act as buffer states between the Shia Middle East and the Sunni Middle East, making a strong Shia government in those states a must for Iran and their fight against the Sunni Middle East. Playing the “Yemen Card” would place the Saudi government between a rock and a hard place. The Saudis would have to choose to either defend themselves from the Iranian backed nations to the North or the one to the South, a decision they hope they never have to make. It is for that exact hope that the Saudi government chose to back the Sunni based Yemen Arab Republic in the North during the proxy war leading up to the nation’s 1990 unification, and why Saudi Arabia has continued to back the internationally recognized government of Yemen time and time again since.

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77 Martin Reardon. “Saudi Arabia, Iran and the ‘Great Game’ in Yemen.”
78 Ibid
Economic Interests

Many regional powers are involved in Yemen for economic purposes as well. As of 2016, Yemen has over three billion barrels of crude oil in their reserves, exporting nearly nine thousand barrels a day, ranking them 29th in the world. 79 The region's big oil countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran view the continued instability in Yemen as an opportunity to expand their foreign operations of production and exportation of oil. The aforementioned nations have all thrown their hats in the ring in terms of backing a side with hopes of being victorious and having access to Yemen’s oil industry. Due to a lack of infrastructure, Yemen also has largely untapped deposits of gold, copper and other valuable minerals that have further drawn international interest.

However, more important than natural resources, Yemen plays a major role in international shipping. Geographically, the deep waters of the port city Aden sit at the mouth of the Bab el Mandeb strait which links the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The strait is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes in terms of oil, as roughly 4.8 million barrels of crude oil pass through daily, much of which continues north through Egypt’s Suez Canal, which handles 5.5 million barrels per day. 80 Instability and seemingly constant violence in Yemen has threatened the shipping lane time and time again, further drawing top oil producers like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran to become involved in Yemen’s conflicts. Even the likes of the U.S., Europe, and North Africa are concerned with regard to the strait's ability to stay open, as “a full blockage of the strategic waterway would virtually halt shipment to the Mediterranean and the United States

80 Ibid
of about 4.8 million barrels per day of crude oil and refined petroleum products.” 81 Simply, if the situation in Yemen were to get further out of hand and the chokepoint of Bab el Mandeb strait were to close, not only would it hurt those oil rich nations in terms of export capabilities, but it would impact the entirety of the global oil trade and economy as well, specifically in Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

Fig. 18

This graphic demonstrates the world's chokepoints in terms of millions of barrels that pass through daily. As can be seen, the Bab el Mandeb is a critical strait and chokehold in international trade of not only oil, but trade and commerce in general, connecting Asia, East and North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.

(https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/special-topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints)

Potential Solutions

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are considering a scenario that would settle the bloody and unabated war for Yemen. The solution being mentioned by both governments is that of partition. Saudi Arabia has publicly announced that it will play host to “reconciliation meetings between Hadi and his adversaries.” 82 There is no telling if such meetings will be fruitful in ending the conflict, however, there is optimism amongst some parties. Many predict that since the Kingdom “allowed Abu Dhabi to do what it wanted in Aden, Riyadh will find it difficult to oppose the further territorial expansion of the STC.” 83 An unopposed territorial expansion for the STC would create a large sphere of influence for the STC in the southern region, allowing for them to control most of, if not all, of the key port cities in Yemen and potentially establish a new independent Southern Yemen. The deal would signify a win-win for both the UAE and the STC, as the UAE would keep all of the port cities in play for their development as an international regional power, while also providing the STC with its own independent nation that they have been fighting all along for.

82  Imad K. Harb. “Saudi Arabia Is Preparing to End the War in Yemen.”
83  Ibid
Figure 19 demonstrates what a partitioned Yemen may look like. As can be seen on the map, the Houthis would likely carve out a new North Yemen based around their stronghold of Sana’a. Pro-Hadi forces would likely retain the less populated areas in the East of the country as well as the big cities of Taiz and Hodeida to the West. The Hadi government would equate to one of two spheres of influence in what would become the new South Yemen. The other sphere of influence would belong to the UAE-backed STC, who would control Aden and other imperative port cities such as Mukalla. The STC and Hadi forces have been in talks to form a joint coalition that would govern the new South Yemen.


On the Saudi end of things, the Hadi government has been “successful in holding on to areas in the interior, such as Taiz, Dhale, Lahj, and others...effectively creating two power spheres in the south.” 84 Having two spheres of influence in the South, the STC backed by the UAE and the Hadi government backed by the Saudis, may actually play to all parties’ benefits. Per Tawakkol Karman, a torchbearer of the Arab Spring in the region and recipient of the Nobel laureate, “the STC seems to have reversed its position and agreed to work with the Hadi

84 Imad K. Harb. “Saudi Arabia Is Preparing to End the War in Yemen.”
government once again.” 85 In once more working with the Hadi government there are hopes that the two sides will be capable of meeting on some middleground and governing a new South Yemen together, establishing not only a Saudi sphere of influence in the region but a Saudi-backed state as well.

While establishing a state governed between both the STC and Hadi government seems ideal in terms of drawing the war to a close, it all hinges on one critical factor. Based on the fact that Saudi Arabia has failed to uphold its promises to the Hadi government, paired with mounting pressure from the Houthi rebels who are well established in and around Sanaa in the North, “...may force it {Saudi Arabia} to sue for peace...this most likely will result in the establishment of a Houthi-led state in Northern Yemen...” 86 Essentially, Saudi Arabia would have to take a huge hit to its government's credibility that will likely carry well into the future, and denounce its regional policy over the last decade or so. In doing so, the Houthi rebels would gain total control over a new nation, North Yemen, while Iran would have what it wants, a Shi’ite dominant government to the South of Saudi Arabia. The creation of two separate Yemens would not appease the majority of Yemeni people, as the vast majority of the nation desires continued unification. However, it would satisfy the majority of the demands from all active third parties, hopefully resulting in a ceasefire or treaty amongst the outside actors that have intensified the war and humanitarian crisis since the beginning.

While the decision to move forward with such an idea seems like a logical one given how it would largely appease most actors, many are skeptical. For one, “people in southern areas

86 Imad K. Harb. “Saudi Arabia Is Preparing to End the War in Yemen.”
reject separation, and the STC - supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE - runs Aden with the use of terrorism and violence.” 87 While the style in which the STC have controlled Aden is certainly a point of contention, ideally power would be shared with the more democratic and just Hadi government, helping to balance things out. Furthermore, there is much debate surrounding whether the Saudi government would be willing to set aside its political and religious rivalry with Iran and allow for them to establish a Shi’ite government on its Southern border. It is no secret that North Yemen would in fact be established as a Shi’ite state, as the Houthi government would assuredly establish a strict set of Sharia laws in accordance with their Shi’ite counterpart Iran.

Another point of contention regarding such a plan is that it excludes some key parties within Yemen. The nation’s fragmentation, politically, religiously, and territorially demands a review of the negotiation framework that has been used thus far. Amongst Yemen and international powers involved alike, there is a growing consensus that “the current approach also leaves out tribal groups, local authorities and a range of political parties.” 88 Such groups, specifically tribes, play a large role in attaining lasting long-term peace in Yemen. Talks between just the Hadi government and Houthi rebels on behalf of the U.N. will only create greater and intensified division in the nation amongst local authorities, differing tribes, and other more localized political parties.

In order to potentially broker a deal that would create long-term peace in the war-torn nation, it is imperative that third parties such as the U.N. recognize the significance of tribes in

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87 “For Peace and Justice in Yemen: An Interview with Tawakkol Karman.”
Yemen. Since tribes are based on lineage and generational heritage, tribes transcend religious affiliation and political ideology and therefore are no more loyal to one side than the other in the seemingly two-sided war that the U.N. paints Yemen to be. More localised groups such as tribes, regional authorities, and political groups “...prize autonomy won over the course of the war and will resist a rush to recentralise the state in Sanaa. Failure to address the social and economic grievances that sparked Yemen’s 2011 popular uprising, and contributed to the Huthis’ rise, would invite future instability and war.” 89 Simply, small parties throughout Yemen have enjoyed their spoils of the war, gaining larger territories for tribal or local governance, and will resist any attempt to take such spoils away from them in a brokered deal between the Hadi government and the Iran-backed Houthis. Sheiks and local authorities alike have made it clear that they will not tolerate territorial or autonomous losses in potential peace talks in which they are not a part of. It is critical in this instance to not let history repeat itself, “Yemen is not Sanaa: the mistakes of the Sanaa-centric post 2011 transitional process – which ultimately led to the current conflict—must not be repeated. While direct diplomacy with key actors in the Yemeni capital is crucial, such efforts must be mirrored by similar work with power brokers in key centers like Marib, Mukalla, Taiz and Aden.” 90 If international organizations wish to broker a peace deal, it must be inclusive of civil society and tribal leaders in key regions and cities throughout Yemen. A failure to do so could potentially result in an even more fragmented nation, creating more hostile political and tribal factions throughout.

89 “Rethinking Peace in Yemen”
Conclusion

Although the North and democracy had won and officially unified Yemen for the first time in 1990, Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had made their intentions known in Yemen. The two nations were previously thought to be involved in Yemen for the purpose of geopolitical and economic gain, but both sides have since seemingly weaponized the differing Islamic sects in the nation as well. Saudi Arabia and Iran’s intervention in Yemen has fueled conflict between Yemeni Shi’ites and Sunnis alike, as Sunni superpower Saudi Arabia has come to the aid and defence of several Sunni based Yemeni governments while Iran, leader of the Shi’ite muslim world, has backed Shi’ite groups throughout the country such as the Houthi rebel regime.

To make matters worse, nations that once backed the Saudi regime, specifically the U.S., seem to have lost interest with the efforts in war-torn Yemen. The U.S., once a staunch ally of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has been recently trying to sever their ties with the nation after the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi was ordered by a Saudi prince and took place on Turkish soil. Since the Kashoggi affair, many NATO nations that formerly backed the Saudi’s in Yemen have been hesitant to back them any further. More specifically though, the U.S. has seemingly only been interested in protecting their oil trade with the Kingdom. Strategically speaking, the U.S. has stationed battleships in and around the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, assuring that it can continue to operate as one of the most vital international shipping lanes for the majority of U.S. and worldly oil out of the region on a daily basis. In short, the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis appear to be internationally acceptable costs for the continued flow of Middle Eastern resources such as oil.
With events still transpiring on the ground in Yemen, and the situation looking worse with every day that passes, many officials around the globe are wondering what is next for the war-torn and ravaged nation. As it stands right now, “more than four years of fighting has set back human development by 21 years in Yemen” 91 The largely unabated civil war has lasted much longer than most anticipated, thanks to the international military aid of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. The continuous fighting has effectively destroyed what little economic sector Yemen ever boasted, ceasing the nations production and exportation of oil largely all together. The war has also leveled the educational and health infrastructures of Yemen. Schools, hospitals, and even medical workers and teachers have been targets of military operations by both the Houthis and Saudi coalition. The damage done to such infrastructure has set Yemen back numerous generations in terms of development, and will have long lasting effects into the foreseeable future.

With every day that passes in which Yemen is still embroiled in conflict, the nation moves further away from its end goal of national development. Per the United Nations Development Programme, if the war in Yemen continues through the year 2022, “Yemen will rank as the poorest country in the world, with 79 percent of the population living under the poverty line and 65 percent classified as extremely poor.” 92 Another two years of war means the nation would go from the poorest in the region to the poorest in the world, while also boasting the largest poverty gap worldwide. What's worse, if the conflict continues on throughout the next decade “78 percent of Yemenis will live in extreme poverty and 95 percent will be

91 “Prolonged Conflict Would Make Yemen the Poorest Country in the World”
92 Ibid
malnourished.⁹³ Such troublesome projections have left much of the world panicking for possible solutions to end the messy conflict as soon as possible. International organizations and governments alike have the same realization, the time is now. If something is not done in Yemen in the very immediate future there will be very little left of the nation and its people to save, as the conflict and worsening humanitarian crisis will consume the entirety of the nation and its people.

As Iran and Saudi Arabia are responsible for exacerbating the conflict and humanitarian crisis, they may be in a position to end it after a sly move by the UAE. With the recent takeover of Aden by the STC, backed by the UAE, the Saudi-backed Hadi forces have moved further inland to cities such as Taiz and Lahj. Meanwhile the Houthi rebels have a tight grip on Sanaa and much of the North of the nation. It appears the backing of the STC by the UAE and calling for a partition of Yemen has always been the Emiratis end game. Saudi Arabia has seemingly bought in on the idea as well, willingly hosting discussions between the warring parties. The partition would likely result in the creation of two separate states, one controlled by the Houthis in the North and one jointly controlled by the STC and Hadi government in the South. This scenario offers significant benefits to all sides. Iran would get an established Shi’ite nation to the south of Saudi Arabia, the Houthis would be the sole governors of North Yemen, the UAE would still have access to all of the imperative port cities of Yemen, the STC receives the South Yemen they have been fighting for all along, and Saudi Arabia and the Hadi government would still have influence and potentially shared control of the South Yemeni government. An advantage to this approach is that in stopping the proxy war, all former warring parties would be able to turn their focus to their common enemy, AQAP. While the scenario does indeed appear to appease all

⁹³ “Prolonged Conflict Would Make Yemen the Poorest Country in the World”
warring parties, there is still uncertainty regarding the formation of such states as the STC has been known to control Aden through violence, and the Houthis certainly would not be any better to the North.

In order to move forward with talks of creating a North and South Yemen, the inclusion of tribes and other more local political parties and authorities is a must. Inclusion of tribes, local authorities, and political parties in talks would drastically help in preventing a more splintered Yemen. It is imperative that the U.N. and other third parties “right-size parties’ expectations.” 94 It is unrealistic on behalf of the Saudis and Hadi to think the Houthis will surrender their arms or authority in Sana’a to Hadi. Likewise, the Saudi-led coalition will not accept a Houthi centralised government based in Sana’a, and local parties such as tribes and other political authorities will not cede gained local autonomy to a centralized government in a deal in which they had no representation. As things stand now in brokering a peace deal, “the Huthis and the government, along with Saudi Arabia, strongly oppose the addition of new parties to the UN-led process, as it would dilute their influence over final settlement outcomes.” 95 All major parties, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Houthis, and the Hadi government, oppose expanding representation of other parties such as tribes and local authorities out of fear that they will have to cede power and territory to some of the groups that are demanding inclusion in the talks.

However, including tribes and local governments in peace discussions would assure fair representation and would help quell potential worries or rebellions against either of the newly established states. Tribes and local political parties would ultimately still have a say in regional

94 “Rethinking Peace in Yemen.”
95 Ibid
politics, economics, and religious freedoms within their respective territories, signifying a compromise that all parties involved will hopefully be able to support. While such a solution is surely not perfect, nor ideal for any one party involved in Yemen, it is the best bet for potential prolonged peace. This solution for peace holds especially true considering that with every day that passes the warring parties are faced with a more daunting reality. That is that the situation in Yemen today has provoked the parties involved to make a decision, accepting “a ceasefire and an imperfect political settlement, or continuing a war that will produce more human suffering but no clear nationwide military victory for any group.” 96

Overall, regardless of which nations are involved in Yemen, one thing is certain. So long as Iran and Saudi Arabia are involved, whether directly or indirectly, the situation in Yemen will only grow worse. Both countries seem to be rather committed to their end goals in Yemen. Their clear religious differences have seemingly divided Yemen and even the majority of the Arab world on the matter. Neither country, nor their respective backed sides within Yemen seem to mind breaking traditional rules of engagement and violating international accepted rules of war, putting civilians at great risk, while also badly damaging key infrastructures of the nation for decades to come. Simply, Iran and Saudi Arabia seem to have win-at-all-costs mentalities as it pertains to their proxy war in Yemen. Both sides have everything to gain from winning yet little to nothing to lose. The people of Yemen are the ones ultimately paying the price of the war. So, yes, the civil war in Yemen would have greatly affected the nation, its people, and its key infrastructures, like any civil war. Ultimately, the situation seen still developing in Yemen would not be nearly as dire if it were not for international involvement on both sides by multiple countries, but specifically by Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is well past time that all third parties

96 “Rethinking Peace in Yemen”
operating in Yemen set aside their individual political, religious, and economic agendas and bring an end to the war and subsequent humanitarian crisis.
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