

Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)



This year, we will be debating the following:

1. Addressing the Yemeni Civil War
2. Alleviating the Harmful Effects of Cryptocurrencies

This background guide should serve as a starting point in your research, and I have included resources that will also help you delve deeper into the topic. When formulating your policy, remember to consider a multitude of perspectives: short term versus long term solutions, how has your country responded to the issue, and what is your country's intended goal. This will help you write policy papers that stay true to your country's voice. Remember that international policy is complicated and there is no clear right answer. Be creative and be ready to learn.

Committee Background

Welcome to Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC). This committee is one of six main committees that are focused on dealing with matters of *world peace*. All 193 members of the United Nations are invited to attend committee. DISEC began in 1945 with the founding of the U.N., and "deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime" (United Nations).

Addressing the Yemeni Civil War

The Yemeni Civil War began in 2015, following a century of political instability, economic hardship, and religious differences. Historically two separate states, Northern Yemen is currently under the control of the Houthis, a Zaidi-led militia movement that began in 1990. Southern Yemen is under the control of President Hadi, who is not only at war with the Houthis, but also the Southern separatists who want Southern Yemen to return its former state as a sovereign nation. In this guide, you will explore the complex history of Yemen that set the stage for what the United Nations calls one of the worst humanitarian crises ever. In addition, you will gain

insight into the importance of the Yemeni Civil War and how it affects international policy and functions within our globalized world.



A Brief History of Yemen (Antiquity to Modernity)

The Romans refer Yemen as *Arabic Felix*, happy or prosperous Arabia. Due to its physical proximity to bodies of water and Sub-Saharan Africa, Yemen was one of the financial beacons of West Asia. It was an integral part of spice trade, nicknamed *Frankincense Country*¹, Ancient Yemen was the crossroads of trade and travel and home to a diverse and flourishing society. In the 19th century, Yemen's history of being influenced by foreign powers began. With its strategic location and fertile plains, the Ottoman Empire captured Sana (the Northern capital) and its surrounding area in the sixteenth century. The East British India Company captured Aden (the Southern capital) in 1839, and the British and Ottomans agreed on a border dividing Yemen into Ottoman North and British South.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire following the first World War, North Yemen was made independent under a Zaidi* imam until 1962 when Arab nationalists toppled the monarchy's rule. This resulted in a decade of conflict in the North between Arab nationalists on one side and the royalists backed by Saudi on the other. Following the end of the monarchy rule in North Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic was formed. The Southern part of Yemen, after the British were pushed out from the region, formed The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen when Marxists took over in 1970. The new communist government was backed by other Marxist powers including the Soviet Union. The conflict between both Yemeni states began in 1972.

Despite a peace negotiation brokered by the Arab League stating that they would unify within 18 months, both nations remained separate. The 70s and 80s were marked by conflict between the Yemen states.

In May of 1990, both governments were able to sign a shared constitution after establishing a demilitarized zone along their shared border in 1988. The leader of Yemen Arab Republic, Lieutenant Colonel Ali Abdallah Salih was named the first president of a united Yemen, and the leader of The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Haydar Abu Bakr al Attas was named Prime Minister. Shortly after unification, in 1992, the two major political parties in Yemen, the General People's Congress (whose main platform was Arab Nationalism) and the Yemen Socialist Party (which followed the Marxist-Lenin school of thought) merged to create a ruling party. However, the political situation in Yemen continued to deteriorate as President al Baydh fled to Aden. Following his exile, tensions in the government escalated as politicians began to fight amongst each other. By 1994, civil war had broken out in Yemen. President al Baydh tried to declare the South as its own sovereign nation, but efforts to secede were unsuccessful because no country would recognize the South as its own country.

President Salih captured Aden, the southern capital which put a swift end to the civil war. In order to maintain peace, Salih granted the universal right to vote and banned military members from political party membership. Conditions in Yemen did not improve after the civil war, the Yemeni rial (the country's currency) was devalued, the cost of living was high, and resources (like food, electricity, and water) were scarce. The World Bank suggested ways in which Yemen could fix its economic state, which sparked a new conflict between the General People's Congress and Yemeni Islah Party (a new Islamist party that gained ground during the civil war for being loyal to Salih). Despite the ongoing unrest, Salih was reelected in 1999 and again in 2006².

What we understand to be modern day Yemen is a result of the unification of both Northern and Southern Yemen in 1990. Both states experienced strikingly different histories prior to this convergence. The contemporary borders are a result of foreign intervention, and the unification of both states has resulted in conflict, corruption, and impoverishment. As Yemen navigated being a unified nation, infighting between both regions continued and poor economic conditions exacerbated the strife. Foreign intervention by neighboring countries, the United Nations, and Britain proved unsuccessful in alleviating the issue.

Yemen and The Arab Spring (2010-2012)

In 2010, a wave of revolutionary movements arose in mostly Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. These movements resulted in regime changes, and have had lasting impacts on the region and global politics. The Arab Spring began in December 2010 when a shopkeeper, Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself on fire to protest the arbitrary seizure of his business when he could not obtain a permit³. This sparked a series of protests that brought about the first election in Libya. While the Arab Spring brought some countries closer to democracy, some nations broke out into full scale civil war. One of the countries that experienced civil war following the Arab Spring was Yemen.

During the Arab Spring, demonstrators marched the streets of Yemen calling for Salih, leader of Yemen for over 30 years, to step down. President Salih eventually conceded and said he would not seek reelection, but the protests continued - staging sit ins and daily rallies. His critics noted that he vowed not to seek reelection in 2006 which was proven untrue, therefore they did not

believe his promise to not hand power down to his son. These clashes between his supporters and opponents resulted in deaths between 200 to 2,000 people. The military was particularly violent towards the protesters, which weakened his support within the government.

The President then refused to sign a deal in which he would step down brokered by the General People's Congress and the Gulf Cooperation Council in May 2011. This resulted in heavy fighting between Salih troops and tribal militias in Sanaa, the largest city in Yemen. In June, a bomb exploded in the presidential palace in Sanaa, Salih suffered from burns and shrapnel wounds.

Finally in November 2011, Salih agreed to hand over power to his successor, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi after days of negotiation. The agreement was an international effort and stipulated that a new election would take place with Hadi as the only candidate on ballot in February 2012. The election went as planned, and Hadi was sworn in as president.



Yemen Civil War (2015 - Present)

The election of President Hadi did not end the tensions in Yemen. After his inauguration, Hadi struggled to deal with the variety of issues in the country: famine, corruption, al-Qaeda attacks, and economic hardship. Much of the military remained loyal to Salih as well. Because of the new administration's shortcomings, many Yemenis began rallying behind a new party, the Houthis. The Houthis, or Ansar Allah, began in the 1990s as a Zaidi-led opposition group to Salih. They believed him to be a corrupt leader that was supported by both the United States and Saudi

Arabia. The group is armed, and their main platform is to fight corruption, bolster the economy, and a democratic government.

With their amassing support, the Houthis used the weakened state of the government as an opportunity to take control of Saada, a northern province, and its surrounding areas. By the beginning of 2015, the rebel group had taken Sanaa, the capital. Many believe that Salih aided the Houthis as an attempt to regain power. By March 2015, the Houthis attempted to take over all of Yemen, forcing Hadi to flee abroad.

Saudi Arabia along with other Sunni Arab states and Iran were concerned that the Houthis, with the help of ally Shia groups, would take over Yemen. As a result, the bloc of countries tried to bring Hadi back to power by launching an airstrike campaign aimed at the Houthi rebels. It should be noted that the airstrike was supported and backed by the United Kingdom, United States, and France⁴.

The Hadi government is now based out of Aden, after a four month conflict. Hadi and Sunni tribesmen were able to drive the Houthis out of the Southern region. The Houthis still maintain a stronghold in the North with Sanaa. Other fringe groups, al-Qaeda and Islamic State, have taken advantage of this conflict and launched their own attacks, mainly on Aden.

In 2017, a ballistics missile was launched into Riyadh (Saudi's capital), which caused Saudi Arabia to form a coalition with its focus on launching a blockade against Yemen. The blockade aimed to stop the smuggling of weapons into Yemen from Iran, and the United Nations stated that these restrictions on trade could cause "the largest famine the world has ever seen". Although the blockade was eased, the restrictions still led to increased prices and diminished access to basic necessities.

Salih, in November 2017, tried to end the blockade by negotiating with the Saudi-led coalition. As a result, the Houthis accused Salih of betraying his alliance with them. On December 4, Salih was killed as he was trying to flee the capital, Sanaa. The leader was killed when the Houthis attacked his convoy south of Sanaa. The Houthis hailed this as a victory, and "the day of the fall of the treasonous conspiracy".

The South, in tandem with Hadi's government, have been working on seceding from Yemen. The secessionists have formed the Southern Transitional Council. A schism formed amongst the separatists and Hadi, when STC accused the government of corruption and attempted a coup in Aden earlier this year. Another schism in the conflict has formed in the Saudi coalition: Saudi Arabia supports Hadi, whereas the United Arab Emirates support the secessionists.

The United Nations has described the current civil war in Yemen as one of the worst humanitarian crises ever. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs compiled data on Yemen, which showed that about 22.2 million people in Yemen are in need of humanitarian aid, with more than 11 million of those in need of urgent care. Furthermore, 8.4 million are at risk of starvation. Yemen is also home to the largest cholera outbreak with more than 1 million suspected cases and 2,248 deaths since April 2017⁵. Since this conflict began in 2015, the United Nations has tried to intervene and host peace talks on three occasions, none of which have yielded success. As a member of the Disarmament and International Security, it is

your responsibility to help address how the United Nations is best suited to end this crisis and war.

There are a variety of perspectives that countries and experts have taken, from naming the state of Yemen a humanitarian crisis to calling it a political conflict. As a member of DISEC, it is your responsibility to think about the issue from a varied and nuanced perspective. The civil war in Yemen is not cut-and-dry and involves a variety of factors. In formulating your policy, consider your country's stake in the conflict, reference the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁶, the local dynamics in the country⁷, and what factors are leading to increased aggression in the country. By crafting policy that tackles the issue on a variety of fronts, you are giving this committee an increased chance at ending the war in Yemen.

From a humanitarian front, it might be important to consider that the Saudi-led coalition has a blockade on Yemen in which aid cannot reach those affected by the conflict. In addition, try to consider which countries would be best equipped to provide aid to the growing cholera outbreak, the famine, and helping those injured from airstrikes by the Saudi coalition. Also on a political front, the country remains incredibly divided with no government to help tackle the lack of governance and allocate resources effectively. Members of DISEC should be interested in establishing law in Yemen to put the state on a path to recovery. In order to do so, look at the dynamics within the country as well. [The city of Taiz](#) is a good example of how a bottom-up approach might also help alleviate the crisis in Yemen⁸.

Bloc Positions to Consider:

- Saudi Coalition: Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, Senegal, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, Bahrain, Iran, and Western Powers including (but not limited to) UK, USA, and France
- They are focused on restoring Hadi's presidency in Yemen
- Iran has been accused of smuggling weapons to the rebels and financially backing the Houthis - they have denied these accusations
- Iran has contributed to the Saudi coalition, but they are also using this conflict to fight the Shia Iran versus Sunni Saudi Arabia power struggle in West Asia
- Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia have also complied with the coalition's requests during the continuing airstrikes

Key Terms

- Arab Nationalism: An ideology that believes in a purely Arab society and the celebration of the language, culture, and identity of Arabs. It advocates for unity of Arab states and against Western intervention. Associated figures in the movement are Muammar Gaddafi, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and Saddam Hussein.
- Islamism: The political movement calling for full implementation of sharia or Islamic law. In the Western world, it has negative connotations due to its association with violence or extremism. However, it is quite a bit broader and more nuanced, with some academics defining it as the empowerment of Muslim communities. Generally considered a positive concept amongst Muslims.

- Marxism: A socioeconomic theory that looks at social conflict and power from the perspective of class struggle. It is critical of capitalism and has served as the basis for communism. The theory was developed by Karl Marx.
- Arab Spring: A wave of revolutionary protests and regime changes that took place from 2010 to 2012 in West Asia and North Africa
- Zaidism: A sect of Shia Islam, which accounts for 42% of the Muslims in Yemen and most of the Shias in Yemen.
- Ottoman Empire: A multinational empire, stemming from Turkey, that ruled over West Asia, North Africa, and Eastern Europe from the 14th century to the 20th century.
- East British India Company: A joint-stock company, from Britain, that was formed to trade with Southeast Asia and took control of large parts of Asia.
- Arab League: A multinational, regional organization consisting of Arab countries in North Africa and West Asia.

Additional links to consider

- <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Yemen-history.htm>
- <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2028740,00.html>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen>
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/arab-spring>
- <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200752>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-12482293>
- https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180120_HRP_YEMEN_Final.pdf
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-42225574>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Yemen-Uprising-of-2011-2012>
- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/key-facts-war-yemen-160607112342462.html>
- <https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/solution-yemen-not-headlines-or-humanitarian-aid-think-local-1579028611>

Thank you

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Original Background Guide Link

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54d7b4b0e4b0a551f3b29a36/t/5b8ff7d3cd8366d7c8c97c30/1536161747901/DISEC+YemenWar+Raja+-+Sabina+Raja.pdf>