

**Committee:** Security Council

**Issue:** The situation in the Middle East

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## INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is a loosely defined geographic region composed of Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The area has been and still is continuously tormented by multiple armed conflicts, wars, and generalized violence that have resulted in political instability, severe humanitarian crises, and economic recession. Within the margins of an overall upheaval, armed militias and terrorist groups like ISIS, Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda are spreading violence across borders. Currently, the ongoing proxy war between the main powers of the area, Saudi Arabia and Iran, is definitely affecting the active wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen as well as the controversial



**Figure 1:** Countries included in the geographic region known as the Middle East.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict accordingly. The situation in the Middle East is evidently a multidimensional and complex issue with various parties involved. Thus, in order to fully grasp the origins and scale of the military struggle at hand, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the way, in which all armed conflicts in the region are geopolitically interconnected and promoted. Nevertheless, the restoration of peace in the region, the realistic transition to democratic regimes alongside the revival of institutions, and the overall prosperity of the affected peoples should be the main aim of the international community.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Proxy War

“A war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these”<sup>1</sup>

### Cold War

“A state of extreme unfriendliness existing between countries, especially countries with opposing political systems, that expresses itself not through fighting but through political pressure, threats or Proxy Warfare. The expression is usually used to describe the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union after the Second World War [but can be applied to other conflicts of this nature as well.]”<sup>2</sup>

### Status quo

Status quo is a phrase to describe the current state of affairs.

### Sunni Muslims

“Members of the largest Islamic religious group, which follow the teachings only of Mohammed, not those of any of the religious leaders who came after him. [This religious group is most prominent in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, etc.]”<sup>3</sup>

### Shia Muslims

“Members of the second largest religious movement in Islam, based on the belief that Ali, a member of Mohammed's family, and the teachers who came after him were the true religious leaders. [Focal points for this sect of Islam are Iran and Iraq etc.]”<sup>4</sup>

### Coup

“Coup d'état, also called a coup, the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. The chief prerequisite for a coup is control of all or part of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “PROXY WAR: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” Cambridge Dictionary, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/proxy-war](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/proxy-war).

<sup>2</sup> Merkle, Sarah E. “4 Things Most People Get Wrong about Abstentions.” The Law of Order, 5 Feb. 2019, [www.lawoforderblog.com/2018/03/4-things-most-people-get-wrong-about-abstentions/](http://www.lawoforderblog.com/2018/03/4-things-most-people-get-wrong-about-abstentions/).

<sup>3</sup> “Sunni: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” Cambridge Dictionary, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sunni](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sunni).

<sup>4</sup> “Shia: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” Cambridge Dictionary, [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shia](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shia).

### **Zionism**

A political movement that primarily focused on the creation of an independent country for Jewish people and that now supports the existence and interests of the state of Israel.

### **Jihad**

A holy war fought by Muslims against people who are considered a threat to Islam.

### **Trench Warfare**

“Trench warfare [is] warfare in which opposing armed forces attack, counterattack, and defend from relatively permanent systems of trenches dug into the ground. Trench warfare is resorted to when the superior firepower of the defense compels the opposing forces to “dig in” so extensively as to sacrifice their mobility in order to gain protection.”<sup>6</sup>

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Saudi Arabia vs Iran**

Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two strongest countries in the region, are long-term opponents in pursuit of the absolute control of the Middle East and recognition as the legitimate Muslim state. Their feud is, basically, the key to understanding the conflicts in the Middle East seeing as this rivalry has transformed into a Cold War.

The animosity between them dates back to the 1900s when the Arab peninsula was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Upon its collapse after the end of World War I, both Saudi Arabia and Iran developed into powerful states with oil-based economies and a considerable Muslim population, Sunni Muslims in Saudi Arabia and Shia Muslims in Iran. One of the most significant events which increased tension between the countries is the Iranian revolution of 1979, in which Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters overthrew the Shah, a dictator established during the US coup of 1958, who promoted a western lifestyle contrary to Muslim ethics. Since the Islamic revolution, Iran is led by a conservative clerical elite which questioned Saudi Arabia’s role as leader of the Muslim world despite the fact that the two holiest Islam’s sites, Mecca and Medina are located in the aforementioned state. Respectively, Saudi Arabia is currently governed by a totalitarian monarchy, namely

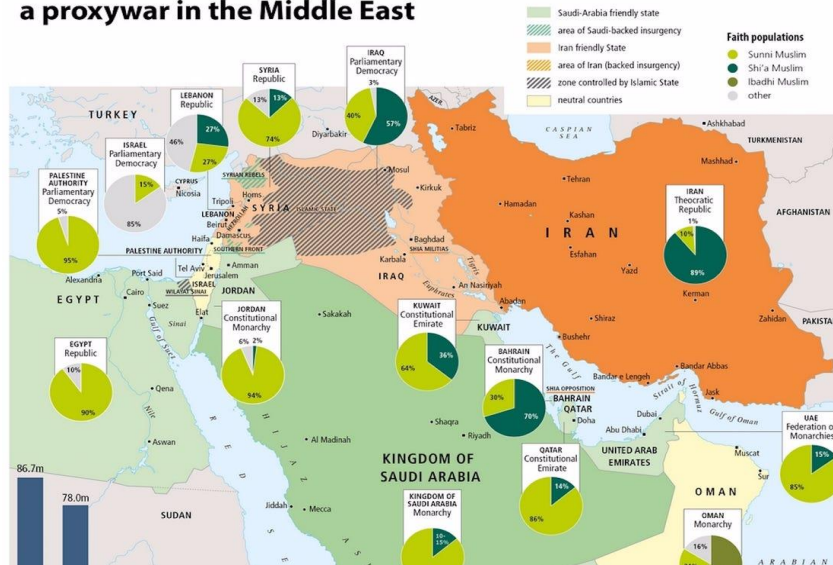
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<sup>5</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Coup D'état.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 31 Jan. 2020, [www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat](http://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat).

<sup>6</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Trench Warfare.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 26 Feb. 2020, [www.britannica.com/topic/trench-warfare](http://www.britannica.com/topic/trench-warfare).

the dynasty of Al Saud. Saudi Arabia, along with the monopoly of political power, was first established in 1932 by King Abd-al-Aziz and since then, he has been succeeded by his various sons. Saudi Arabia is now led by King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

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



**Figure 2:** Map outlining the dimensions of the Proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

As a result of the ambitions of both countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran view the region as a battlefield in an attempt to increase their influence. They are, hence, involved in every conflict in the Middle East, without ever having officially declared war on each other. Alternatively, they engage in proxy wars and fight over the control of the Middle East as such. In light of the Arab Spring in the early 2010s, a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world, in response to oppressive regimes and terrible living standards, the Saudi Arabia-Iran rivalry was further enhanced. In this sense, Saudi Arabia is portrayed as the ultimate status quo power, aiming at preserving stability in the region by suppressing any protests and attempts at overthrowing autocracy, which could inspire Saudis to act accordingly. On the other hand, Iran is the anti-status quo power, which has been trying to overturn power in its favor for decades.

**Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the world's oldest and most controversial disputes. In essence, it is a conflict between the two self-determination movements — the Jewish Zionist and the Palestinian nationalist aspirations that demand control over the same

territory. Despite the fact that both Jews and Arab Muslims date their claims to the land back a couple of thousand years seeing as said territory fosters Jerusalem, a holy site to all three major monotheistic religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism, today’s territorial dispute began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the development of an ideology known as Zionism. In particular, Jews fleeing persecution in Europe dreamt of establishing a national homeland in Palestine, an Arab- and Muslim-majority territory until that time. The Arabs in the region resisted giving up their land seeing as they considered it rightfully theirs. In a primary attempt to ease tension in the area, the United Nations adopted a Partition plan which was rather unsuccessful due to the conflicting interests of the parties. As a result, Israel and the surrounding Arab nations engaged in several wars over the territory.

Today’s de facto territorial lines largely reflect the outcomes of two of these wars, the first Arab-Israeli war, which was waged between Israelis and Palestinians in 1948 soon after the Israeli Declaration of independence and another in 1967, known as the Six-Day war between Israel and its

neighboring countries, Egypt Jordan and Syria. The latter resulted in Israel occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, two territories mainly fostering large Palestinian populations. Today, the West Bank is theoretically under the control of the Palestinian Authority in accordance with the Oslo Accords of 1993, which set



**Figure 3:** Palestinian loss of land (1947 - present)

up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves independently and establish diplomatic relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli government. However, they are still under Israeli occupation. More specifically, Israeli troops restrict Palestinian human and civil rights to a great extent. At the same time, Israeli settlers, encouraged by the Israeli government, build ever-expanding communities in the West Bank. As a result, Palestinian presence in the territory is indirectly persecuted. Gaza is controlled by Hamas, an Islamist fundamentalist organisation, and is under Israeli blockade but not troop occupation.

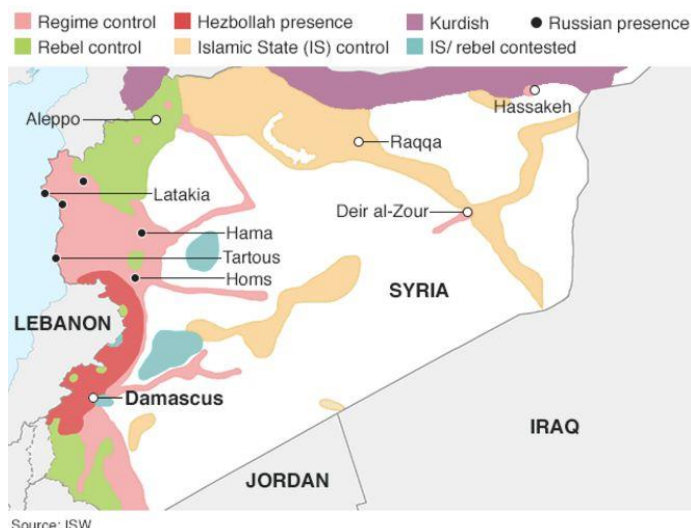
In terms of Iran’s and Saudi Arabia’s stance on the conflict, both countries do not officially recognize Israel alongside the other 18 Arab nations out of the 20 members of the

Arab League. However, since the Iranian revolution, Iranian leadership engages in a political struggle against Israel and has thus declared its aim to dissolve the Jewish state, with the counter aim of Israel to hinder the Iranian government’s attempts at acquiring nuclear weapons. Israel and Saudi Arabia are not officially related on a diplomatic level. Nevertheless, it is suspected that they have developed secret diplomatic and intelligence collaboration in pursuit of mutual goals against the regional enemy, Iran.

### Syrian civil war

The Syrian civil war began on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011 with major unrest in Damascus and Aleppo following nationwide protests demanding President Assad’s resignation. The following widespread violence soon turned into a civil war as rebel brigades were formed to battle government forces for control of Syrian territories. Nevertheless, the war has acquired sectarian overtones as the country’s Sunni majority turned against the president’s Shia sect, a development which attracted international intervention. In particular, the Syrian Arab Republic led by President Bashar al-Assad is backed by Iran, Russia and Hezbollah whereas the Sunni opposition group is backed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, Qatar, the USA, the UK and France. The rise of the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) further complicated matters.

Ever since, a UN fact-finding mission has gathered evidence that all parties of the conflict have committed war crimes – including murder, torture, sexual assault and rape.



**Figure 4:** Map highlighting Iraqi territories under control of various forces

Accusations of using civilian suffering – such as enforcing food, water and health services blockades – as a method of war have also been mentioned. In addition, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has continued to document the use of chemical weapons by Syria’s government as well as ISIS. Threatened by the prospect of US military

intervention, President Assad complied with demands for the complete removal and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

Subsequently, the aforementioned turmoil entails a major humanitarian crisis with more than 4.5 million people having fled Syria towards neighboring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey whereas about 10% of the Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe in what is known as one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. Simultaneously, about 70% of the population lacks access to adequate drinking water, one in three people are unable to meet their basic needs, more than 2 million children are cannot attend school, and four out of five people live in poverty. The parties have exacerbated the problems by refusing humanitarian agencies and organizations access to civilians in need.

### **Iraqi war**

The Iraqi war was initiated in 2003 when a United States-led coalition, primarily composed of UK forces invaded Iraq and overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein in an attempt to supposedly prevent the construction and use of weapons of mass destruction. In spite of the fact that tangible evidence of such activities was never found, the US invasion created chaos and an immense security vacuum in the region, since Shia and Sunni militias backed by Saudi Arabia and Iran, respectively, tried to seize control. What served as a buffer zone between Saudi Arabia and Iran was now dissolved.

However, prior to these events, Iraq had attempted to invade Iran backed by Saudi Arabia during the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980 in hope of gaining power and annexing some of Iran's oil reserves. Furthermore, the Gulf War from 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 1991 was yet another war led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's forceful annexation of Kuwait due to oil pricing and production disputes. Both wars led to heavy civilian casualties seeing as chemical weapons and trench warfare were actively deployed and used.

The U.S. officially declared an end to the war in Iraq on December 15, 2011, almost ten years after the conflict began. Nevertheless, three respective wars as well as the authoritarian regime that ruled the country for decades certainly left their mark creating a major humanitarian crisis and mass migration. According to UNHCR, there are currently 1.9 million internally displaced people in the country and 2 million refugees have escaped to neighboring countries, especially Syria and Jordan. Unemployment and poverty rose intensively, too. According to the United Nations Development Programme, one-third of the

population now lives in poverty, the educational system has broken down and Iraqis' basic needs in drinking water, food, sanitation and electricity are not met. Hospitals lack basic medical supplies and are understaffed. International intervention has not yet managed to



**Figure 5:** Photograph depicting a destroyed building in Syria – war casualties

effectively respond to the ever-growing humanitarian challenges. Despite the US declaring an end to the war in Iraq on December 15, 2011, nearly ten years after the fighting began, armed militias including the paramilitary force named Kata'ib Hezbollah backed by Iran continue to actively operate in the country spreading upheaval. Subsequently, the US re-intervened

at the request of the Iraqi government in 2014. On January 3, 2020, the United States conducted a fatal drone strike in order to assassinate Iranian major general Qasem Soleimani and Kata'ib Hezbollah commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Iraq protested that the airstrike violated their sovereignty. Upon the US action, the Iraqi Council of Representatives voted in favor of gradually ending the presence of all foreign troops on Iraqi land, to which U.S. President Donald Trump responded by threatening to impose sanctions against Iraq's already struggling economy.

### Yemeni civil war

The triggering event for the Yemeni civil war was definitely the failure of a supposedly promising political transition in Yemen following an Arab Spring uprising that forced its longtime authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to resign. In his place, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi assumed power in 2011. President Hadi struggled to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by ISIS, a separatist movement in the South, a lack of loyalty, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity. The Houthi movement, which comprises Yemen's Shia Muslim minority took advantage of the new president's weakness by capturing the capital Sanaa and attempting to take



**Figure 6:** Houthi Slogan – Allah is Great; Death to America; **Death to Israel;** **Victory to Islam.**



control of the entire country. Hadi fled abroad in March 2015. Alarmed by the rise of a group which was believed to be supported militarily by regional Shia power Iran, Saudi Arabia, and eight other mostly Sunni Arab states began an operation aimed at defeating the Houthis, ending Iranian influence in Yemen and restoring the overturned, yet lawful government. The US, the UK, and France sided with Saudi Arabia by providing logistical and intelligence aid.

Since then, the internationally recognized Iraqi government led by Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi struggles to provide basic services and security and the president continues to be based abroad. The arbitrary occupation of Yemeni land by various parties has further complicated matters. Yemen is currently divided into five cantons of political and military control: the Huthi-controlled territories; government-aligned areas; the pro-separatist Southern Transition Council-dominated (STC) districts; as well as territories where the Joint Resistance Forces are the main power; and others where local authorities prevail. Naturally,



**Figure 7:** Children in Yemen gather to receive Humanitarian Aid.

the multiple fronts, are each characterized by their own political and military dynamics. Finding common ground is, thus, extremely difficult. In addition, militants from al-Qaeda and the local affiliate of the rival Islamic State group have, of course, taken advantage of the chaos by seizing territory in the south and carrying out deadly attacks throughout the country. In response to rebels' ballistic attacks on Saudi

Arabian oil reserves, the Saudi-led coalition has enforced an air and sea blockade which has led to substantial increases in the prices of food and fuel resulting in the biggest humanitarian crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with about 80% of the population in need of some sort of humanitarian assistance.

Despite the United Nations effort to reestablish peace in the region by promoting a ceasefire as well as a power-sharing agreement among the parties, fighting on several front lines, missile strikes, and air raids resumed in January 2020. Currently, Saudi Arabia has announced a unilateral ceasefire due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Houthis did not comply, demanding the immediate lifting of air and sea blockades.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is, as previously mentioned, one of the two major powers in the Middle East fostering a majority of Sunni Muslims. Its pursuit of political and economic control over the Middle East as well as being acknowledged as the legitimate Muslim State has led to a Cold War with the likewise minded Republic of Iran. Saudi Arabia has, thus, currently engaged in a variety of different ongoing proxy wars with Iran, including the Israeli-Palestinian war, the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars as well as in the Iraqi war, always siding with the status quo powers so as to preserve political order as it was established before the revolutions prompted by the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia finances and arms Sunni militias in order to achieve the aforementioned goal.

### **Islamic Republic of Iran**

Similarly to Saudi Arabia, Iran, acknowledged as the leader of the Muslim world, strives for control over the Middle East. It declared its claims as such during the Iranian Revolution of 1979, long after Saudi Arabia's initial pursuits. As a result, it can be considered an anti-status quo power aiding organisations and rebels in their struggle to promote democracy and overthrow the totalitarian regimes ruling their countries. Nevertheless, this should not be perceived as an altruistic gesture seeing as it merely serves Iran's interests. Fostering a Shia Muslim majority, Iran finances and arms Shia militias in order to achieve the said goal.

### **The United States of America (USA)**

The United States first intervened in the Middle East during the Cold War and has remained actively involved, specifically since the 1970s. Over the decades, the policies and alliances of the United States in the region have shifted and evolved; however, the fundamental reason for U.S. involvement in the Middle East has remained consistent: preventing a hostile power from using the region's petroleum reserves as a weapon. To achieve that objective, the U.S. has often deployed military forces when deemed necessary. Nevertheless, it heavily relies on local allies, from Egypt to the Gulf states, offering them security assistance and weapons sales.

## **Arab League**

The Arab League is a regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East and parts of Africa, which consists of 22 Arab states. Its objective is “to strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programmes of its members and to mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties.”<sup>7</sup> Naturally, it comprises an ally of Saudi Arabia and Palestine.

## **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

The Gulf Cooperation Council is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. It was created in response to the Iranian Revolution in order to ensure the protection of their common interests based on similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures.

## **The Islamic State (IS)**

The jihadist group Islamic State (IS otherwise known as ISIS) is the most prominent terrorist group of its kind recruiting former members of Al-Qaeda. It formally declared the establishment of an ever-expanding "caliphate" in June 2014 - a state governed in accordance with Islamic law. Upon its creation, ISIS has demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and migrate to territory under its control. Today, it is believed to have been mostly deracinated by the US-led coalition. However, despite the collapse of its caliphate, jihadist ideology is still widely spread, and IS remains an experienced and dedicated force whose ultimate defeat is not assured. Moreover, upon the 2019 Turkish offensive into north-eastern Syria, members of IS held prisoners by Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have escaped and are expected to regroup.

## **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees works towards providing humanitarian aid to Palestine refugees. The Agency’s services include education,

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<sup>7</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Arab League.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Feb. 2020, [www.britannica.com/topic/Arab-League](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Arab-League).

health care, social services, camp infrastructure, and financial assistance, even in times of armed conflict. UNRWA is also active in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria.

### **International Syria Support Group (ISSG)**

The International Syria Support Group (ISSG), consisting of the Arab League, China, Egypt, the EU, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States, met in Vienna on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2015 to discuss how to accelerate an end to the Syrian conflict.

### **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, OPCW oversees the universal efforts to permanently and effectively eliminate chemical weapons. Among others, it is mandated to assist Syria in terms of the elimination of its chemical weapons programme. Until now, it has made crucial progress by initiating the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and entering the Chemical Weapons Convention into force for the Syrian Arab Republic.

### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

Present in Iraq since 1976, the UNDP is committed to supporting the Government and people of Iraq towards post-conflict reconstruction. Its "support ranges from promoting emergency livelihoods and community dialogue in districts impacted by the humanitarian crisis, to helping stabilize newly liberated areas and providing technical assistance in support of governance reforms and decentralization."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "UNDP in Iraq." UNDP, [www.iq.undp.org/](http://www.iq.undp.org/).

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
23 September 1932	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is founded after the collapse of the end of World War I and the Ottoman Empire.
1947	The United Nations adopt the Partition Plan for Palestine.
1953	The US secretly staged a coup in Iran to establish the monarch, Reza Shah.
1976	UNDP establishes its presence in Iraq.
January of 1978	The Iranian Revolution unfolds.
September 1980	Iraq invades Iran starting the Iraq-Iran War
2 <sup>nd</sup> August 1990 - 28 <sup>th</sup> February 1991	The Gulf War plays out, initiated by coalition forces from 35 nations and led by the United States in response to Iraq's actions in Kuwait.
1993	The Oslo Accords are signed between Israel, the US and Palestine.
2003	The US invades Iraq in attempt to supposedly prevent the development and use of weapons of mass destruction and create a security vacuum.
14th August 2003	The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is created.
2004	The Interim government of Iraq gains full rights as such since the UK and the US occupation forces step back.
2011	Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of Yemen hands over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.
15 <sup>th</sup> December 2011	The US declares the end of the war in Iraq.
21 <sup>st</sup> April 2012	The UN Supervision Mission in Syria is established.
2014	The US re-intervenes in Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government.
June 2014	The Islamic State formally declares the establishment of a "caliphate".
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	The International Syria Support Group meets in Vienna to discuss how to accelerate an end to the Syrian conflict.
2019	Turkish offensive into north-eastern Syria - Members of the IS held imprisoned by Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have escaped and are expected to regroup.

3 <sup>rd</sup> of January 2020	The United States conducted a fatal drone strike in order to assassinate Iranian major general Qasem Soleimani and Kata'ib Hezbollah commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.
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## UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The United Nations has always taken an active role in mediating conflict, promoting peace among its member states, condemning counter-productive actions as well as providing humanitarian aid. The situation in the Middle East is no exception to these principles. However, despite the UN's significant contributions, the Cold War implications in the region are far from being effectively tackled. In particular, the reluctance of the parties to agree on the long-term political future of the aforementioned countries cannot be simply compromised by any other kind of assistance. Therefore, joint political and humanitarian action is necessary.

### Israeli-Palestinian conflict

- General Assembly Resolution 181 adopted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1947

Adopts the partition plan for Palestine with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, 10 abstentions and one absentee. The General Assembly envisioned the partitioning of Palestine into two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem being placed under a special international regime. In other words, Jerusalem would be administered by the United Nations under the status of a corpus separatum, or a "separated body".

- General Assembly Resolution 3379 adopted on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1975

States that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination. It was passed by a vote of 72 in favor compared to 35 against, with 32 abstentions and three absentees (Rumania, Spain, and South Africa).

- Security Council Resolution 242 adopted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1967

This is one of the most crucial resolutions passed regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Issued unanimously after the 1967 war, it calls for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the recently occupied territories and a fair solution to the refugee problem. It also mentions the necessity of mutual respect for the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of every state in the area so as to ensure peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

### **Syrian civil war**

- Human Rights Council Resolution adopted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2011

Adopted with vote of 26 in favor to 9 against, with 7 abstentions, it calls for the creation of a fact-finding mission by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate all alleged human rights violations.

- Security Council Resolution 2042 adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2012

Adopted unanimously, this resolution authorized an advance team to monitor ceasefire in Syria.

- Security Council Resolution 2043 adopted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2012

Adopted unanimously, it establishes the UN Supervision Mission in Syria to achieve a sustained cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties with an effective UN supervision mechanism.

- Security Council Resolution 2254 adopted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2015

With this, unanimously passed resolution, the Council reconfirmed its endorsement of the 30 June 2012 Geneva Communiqué. The aforementioned plan would basically establish a transitional governing body with full executive powers that would include members of both the government and opposition in order to promote all-inclusive dialogue so as to reach a final and long-term political settlement. Moreover, the Council endorsed the “Vienna Statements” of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) regarding the absolute necessity of the Communiqué’s realization for peace in Syria.

- Security Council Resolution 2533 adopted on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2020

Adopted with 12 votes in favor to none against, with 3 abstentions (China, Dominican Republic, Russian Federation), it authorizes the delivery of food, medicine and other life-saving assistance through the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing. Its predecessor, Security Council Resolution 2504, authorized a six-year-long humanitarian operation. However, in his latest report to the Council on the implementation of the cross-border mechanism, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that the deliveries through Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa are not only operating at record levels but must be further enhanced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Otherwise, unprecedented hunger could ensue.

## Iraqi war

- Security Council Resolution 1483 adopted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2003

Adopted with 14 votes in favor, none against and one absentee (Syria), it recognized the US and the UK as occupying powers under international law, with legitimate authority in Iraq. The resolution further removes sanctions imposed during the Gulf War.

- Security Council Resolution 1500 adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2003

Adopted with 14 votes in favor, none against and one abstention (Syria), this resolution created the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq as a special representative of the UN Secretary General. It is extended by resolution 1557, 1919, and 1700. “The current mandate of UNAMI encompasses, at the request of the Government of Iraq, a number of key areas, including the provision of advice, support and assistance to the Government and the people of Iraq on advancing inclusive political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation; and on assistance to the electoral process; as well as facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and its neighbors; promoting accountability and the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reform; promoting gender equality; and promoting coordination and facilitating, in coordination with the Government of Iraq delivery in the humanitarian and development areas.”<sup>9</sup>

- Security Council Resolution 1546 adopted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2004

Adopted unanimously, this resolution endorsed the dissolution of the Coalition Provisional Authority in favor of the Iraqi Interim Government, established by the coalition Forces and the UN, as a step towards democracy.

## Yemeni civil war

- Security Council Resolution 2051 adopted on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2012

Adopted unanimously, this resolution reaffirmed the points included in the resolution 2014 and noted that the second phase of the political transition should focus on convening an all-inclusive national dialogue, restructuring security and armed forces,

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<sup>9</sup> “UNAMI | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/unami>.



addressing transitional justice, and holding a general election by February 2014 after undertaking constitutional and electoral reforms.

- Security Council Resolution 2201 adopted on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2015

Adopted unanimously, it strongly deplores the actions taken by Houthis including taking over governmental institutions and called all parties to refrain from using violence to achieve political gains. It specifically demanded Houthis' immediate and unconditional participation in good faith, United Nations-moderated negotiations, withdrawal from government institutions, the safe release of arbitrarily detained individuals, and abstention from any unilateral action. However, these demands were not met seeing as no party involved in the conflict wishes to engage in compromises.

- Security Council Resolution 2216 adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2015

This resolution was adopted by 14 affirmative votes to none against, with a single abstention (Russian Federation). This resolution constitutes the most important legal tool available to the international community in terms of restoring constitutional legitimacy and lawful order in Yemen. It accentuated the Security Council's support for the legitimacy of the official President of Yemen, Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, and called member states to abstain from actions that may undermine the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Yemen, as well as the legitimacy of its internationally recognized government.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Undoubtedly, international peace efforts, thus far, have neither successfully tackled the multiple ongoing military operations in the Middle East nor addressed their devastating humanitarian impact. Strengthening and reconsidering one's approach to the issue at hand is hence absolutely necessary.

To begin with, achieving and maintaining relative peace on the different fronts is of utmost importance and perhaps the first step towards resolving the situation in the Middle East. Thus, the pathway for multilateral peace talks among the parties is realistically paved in order to facilitate constructive negotiations concerning the long-term political status of the country under consideration as well as a joint approach towards eradicating terrorist groups.

In this sense, refining the existing Peacekeeping Missions mandates as well as calling for a ceasefire can prove to be useful tools.

In terms of the aforementioned endeavor, peace talks should uphold an all-inclusive and open-minded character in order for all parties of each conflict to discuss their aspirations and demands in a respectful climate. A reluctance to cooperate and compromise with the opposing side can hence not be tolerated and passively accepted, as has been the case in Syria and Yemen. Alternatively, imposing arms embargos or sanctions that would directly deter the actors responsible for the conflicts and prompt the parties to engage in



**Figure 8:** Illustration mocking the inefficiency of previous efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

negotiations can be of great use. Similarly, holding actors, organizations and governmental authorities accountable for crimes against humanity and breaches of the international law is indicative.

Furthermore, bearing in mind COVID-19 implications as well as the insufficiency of current humanitarian aid to effectively cover the affected peoples' needs, further initiatives and programmes in regard to food security, medical care, etc. are crucial to tackling the extensive humanitarian crises in the Middle East today. However, adjusting already existing missions to the new challenges is equally important. Simultaneously, primary attempts to rebuild educational and cultural institutions as well as basic state functions are significant, wherever this is possible. In this context, raising awareness among the international community in order to raise funds and support for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and UN Agencies, which are active in the Middle East, is also welcome.

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