

OUR JOURNEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 1	-	ABSTRACT
PAGE 2	-	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
PAGE 3	-	AUTHOUR BACKGROUND & COPYRIGHT
PAGE 5	-	PARADISE LOST
PAGE 8	-	YEMEN REFUGEES SEARCHING FOR PARADISE BUT STRUGGLING TO FIND A PLACE TO CALL HOME
PAGE 17	-	SOUTH KOREA HAS HAD A VESTED INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE 1970S.
PAGE 30	-	YEMEN IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST PROTECTION CRISES.
PAGE 43	-	3 DAYS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE
PAGE 51	-	A STORY BE-FITTING TO A K-DRAMA
PAGE 60	-	YEMEN IS UNDENIABLY THE WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS BY FAR
PAGE 66	-	REBORN
PAGE 82	-	THE LEAD UP TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE'S INFLUENCE IN YEMEN
PAGE 88	-	THE ARAB CHALLENGE TO BRITAIN'S EMPIRE
PAGE 96	-	THE UNION OF THE TWO YEMENS
PAGE 103	-	IS THE UNITED KINGDOM COMPLICIT?
PAGE 108	-	SO, IS THERE AN ANSWER?
PAGE 113	-	ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

Our Journey is a collection of stories from Yemeni refugees who fled the ongoing war in 2018. The narrative intricately intertwines three compelling stories, shedding light on the diverse experiences of Yemeni refugees on Jeju Island.

Ali AlHutaiby, a 29-year-old Yemeni refugee, adds context to the narrative by highlighting the harsh reality faced by refugees in the midst of conflict. He underscores the tragic impact on children's education, expressing dismay at the violence they endure while seeking knowledge. Ali questions the effectiveness of external aid, describing the challenging living conditions and overcrowded accommodations faced by refugees.

Mohammed, a reserved former member of the Yemeni Police force, reflects on his journey seeking refuge in South Korea amid the civil war. The exploration delves into the challenges faced by Yemeni refugees on Jeju, emphasizing the complexities of displacement and the desire for a life free from conflict.

Ahmed, a national athlete and kickboxer from Yemen, emerges as a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity. The narrative captures Ahmed's passion for sport and his journey as a humble refugee on Jeju, showcasing the inspirational power of athletic pursuits. Despite facing difficulties, Ahmed remains remarkably upbeat, embodying the strength of spirit common among those displaced by conflict.

Collectively, these narratives offer a poignant portrayal of the multifaceted experiences of Yemeni refugees on Jeju Island. The stories illuminate the resilience, passion, and struggles of individuals navigating displacement, providing a compelling call for understanding and empathy in the face of global crises.

The book also delves into the intricate historical backdrop of the Middle East, South Korea, and the involvement of the United States and the United Kingdom. It strives to unravel the complex and challenging issue of human rights through a comprehensive examination of these regions' historical contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The creation of "Our Journey" has been a collaborative effort that wouldn't have been possible without the support, dedication, and contributions of many individuals and organizations. My sincere thanks go to the brave individuals who shared their stories with unwavering openness and resilience. Your courage in recounting the challenges faced during displacement adds a crucial human dimension to the narrative, and we are grateful for your trust and willingness to be heard. A special acknowledgment to Ali AlHutaiby, whose insights and reflections on the harsh realities faced by Yemeni refugees provided invaluable context to the narrative. His commitment to shedding light on the impact of conflict on education and living conditions offers a poignant perspective. My deepest gratitude to Mohammed, a former member of the Yemeni Police force, for sharing his journey seeking refuge in South Korea. His reflections on the challenges faced by Yemeni refugees on Jeju contribute significantly to understanding the complexities of displacement. My deepest appreciation to Ahmed, a national athlete and kickboxer from Yemen, for embodying resilience in the face of adversity. His passion for sport and inspirational journey as a humble refugee on Jeju enrich the narrative, showcasing the strength of spirit common among those displaced by conflict.

To the readers and advocates who engage with the stories of Yemeni refugees, your empathy and understanding are paramount. By amplifying these narratives, you contribute to a collective call for global awareness and compassion in the face of humanitarian crises.

I also extend my thanks to all those who contributed to the development and realization of this project. Your collaboration, expertise, and encouragement have been invaluable, shaping the book into a comprehensive exploration of human rights challenges.

Gratitude to the funders and organizations that provided support, especially the UNHCR, enabling the research, documentation, and publication of "Our Journey." Your commitment to amplifying refugee voices contributes to a broader dialogue on displacement and human rights.

To my friends and family, thank you for your unwavering support and understanding throughout the journey of creating this book and film series. Your encouragement fueled my determination to bring these vital stories to a global audience.

This book is a testament to the collective effort of many, each playing a vital role in ensuring that the experiences of Yemeni refugees are heard, understood, and, above all, acknowledged.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Neil George is a highly accomplished film producer and director, recognized for his outstanding contributions to the world of documentary filmmaking. Born and raised in Exeter, England, Neil's journey in film has taken him across borders, cultures, and compelling human stories.

Having served as the producer and director of over 100 TV programs for Sky during the 2000s, Neil's passion for film and teaching led him to South Korea in 2011. Drawn by an opportunity to impart his expertise in film production at a media university near Seoul, Neil's creative journey took a transformative turn.

In Korea, Neil immersed himself in the intricacies of society and culture, sparking a profound interest in human rights filmmaking. His dedication resulted in the production of several award-winning films that delve into compelling narratives. Notable among these is 'While They Watched' (2015), a poignant exploration of the lives of North Korean defectors. Another impactful work was 'Beyond the Picture: The Story of Sohn Kee Chung,' (2015) a film that delves into the rich tapestry of Korean society.

However, it was 'After the Sewol' (2016) that became a significant milestone in Neil's career. Spending over five years on this deeply moving documentary related to the Sewol tragedy, Neil showcased his commitment to telling stories that resonate with societal challenges. He followed this with 'Crossroads,' (2018) a film that further explored the aftermath of the Sewol tragedy.

In 2018, Neil initiated a collaborative project with the UNHCR, titled "Our Journey." This series of films sheds light on the stories of Yemeni refugees seeking asylum on Jeju Island, unraveling the complexities that led them to escape their homeland. Continuing his exploration of refugee narratives, Neil produced "Writing to Reach You," (2020) a short documentary capturing the lives of four refugees striving to build new lives in South Korea.

Neil's commitment to global storytelling led to a commission by the UNHCR in 2022 to direct a documentary on Ukrainian refugees living in Poland. Titled "Dodomu," (2023) the film is currently in a festival run and is narrated by the acclaimed Jung Woo Sung.

Currently based in Dubai, Neil wears multiple hats as a dedicated film production instructor at a media university. Simultaneously, he continues his impactful film work, focusing on various human rights projects that aim to amplify marginalized voices and foster understanding across cultures. Neil's journey stands as a testament to the transformative power of film in shaping narratives and fostering empathy on a global scale.

PARADISE LOST

When we stand back and take a look around the world of today, it is easily noticeable that many countries have an expansive history of supporting migrants and refugees, and in many cases, they go on to enrich society, whether we go back 5, 10 or more than 100 years. The people, fleeing violence and persecution are often escaping wars they had no choice in and are now hoping to try and go to 'safe havens', where they can try and live in places that stand as beacons of hope and freedom to the world. There are of course some who deny these facts and there are others who embrace them, but one thing for sure is that we are all members of one species no matter our skin color or background, the human race.

What we have been witnessing for some time is a growing negative narrative towards immigrants and refugees, in particular, Muslims and people from the Middle East, coming into 'our' countries in search of hope and perhaps a faint chance at finding something we all want to call paradise. But I assure you the paradise they are searching for is not what we would consider one.

Paradise can often be associated with a place of exceptional happiness and delight, and I am sure every day each one of us at some point during the day scrolls through their Instagram feed searching for the perfect vacation spot, and our own piece of paradise, where we can escape from all our troubles and the realities that surround us. When we are sitting there in search of this place and our perfect happiness, I am sure we won't generally be drawn towards South Korea and the small island of Jeju to its south. But for 549 people, it is currently being considered somewhat of a paradise in comparison to what they left behind.



Neil and M discussing the refugee issue on Jeju. Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018

The Yemeni refugee issue on the island has not had that much positive media attention in the last few months, and very rarely have we heard the stories of the refugees, who are currently awaiting an answer about their status from the Korean government. Since their arrival, between April and May 2018, it seems every time the issue gets some air space, it is very negative, or we just see the Korean people protesting for their expulsion. After spending some time talking with them when I visited Jeju recently it became apparent that coming to Korea was the only option they had, and I am without doubt they never thought they would be living here in 2018. If it wasn't for direct flights and visa-free access, which was suddenly then canceled in June after the influx of 550, I believe they would be home with their families, if it wasn't for one somewhat small problem.

Of course, 549 may not sound like a big number in comparison to the amount of **Syrian and other** middle eastern refugees that travel through Turkey into Europe each year, with **198 thousand** applicants registered in 2017, with Germany accounting for 31% of all first-time applicants in the EU-28. It was followed by Italy (127 thousand, or 20%), France (91 thousand, or 14%), Greece (57 thousand, or 9%), the United Kingdom (33 thousand, or 5%) and Spain (30 thousand, or 5%).

So, when just 550 Yemen refugees starting entering Jeju, apparently it was enough for South Koreans to take notice. In fact, it was enough for a Blue House (governmental) petition, that has now been signed by more than 700,000 people asking the Moon administration to expel them from the island. This, in my opinion, truly shows a poor mentality and a complete lack of awareness towards an issue, I am sure many Korean, if not foreigners as well, fail to understand, or perhaps don't want to understand.

What we have witnessed over the last few weeks and months, is hundreds of Koreans taking to the streets of Seoul protesting, calling them "fake refugees" and accusing the Yemenis of being economic migrants. **Online forums for mothers** on Jeju that usually discuss pram reviews or the best preschool have turned overwhelmingly political in recent months.



South Koreans protesting against the refugees. Taken from News article by the South China Morning Post - <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2155163/influx-refugees-yemen-divides-south-korean-resort>

And after visiting Jeju with a fellow director, in August, we spent some time talking with many of the locals, who don't really seem to be too bothered by the refugees being there.

Sitting in a small coffee shop in Jeju city we start discussing the refugee issue with a local resident who has lived on the island his entire life. He tells us, *"Before talking to other people about the situation I felt a little negative towards them but now I have come to understand their situation a little more and I don't really see any problem with them being here. Korean people tend to have this fear about things they don't understand and are often unwilling, or open-minded to change the fear into understanding. I think another big problem is the media and the somewhat negative information they show about the refugees. How can people understand another's situation without discussion. I hope we can resolve this situation in the best way for everybody who is involved, especially people living in Jeju and the Yemen refugees"*.

YEMEN REFUGEES SEARCHING FOR PARADISE BUT STRUGGLING TO FIND A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Since arriving here the refugees have taken various art classes, cultural classes and language programs to try to integrate themselves, and some of the local residents working with them have grown very fond of them.

"...whenever I meet you I feel so happy. You are the person who makes people enjoy the moments with you. Thank you for coming here and being my friend", writes a young girl who attended an art workshop with several of the Yemenis when they first arrived. This image itself paints a completely different story to what we are seeing in the mainstream and local media.

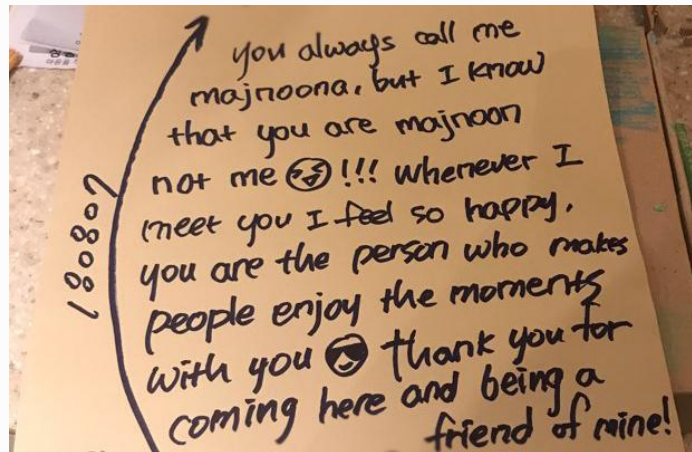
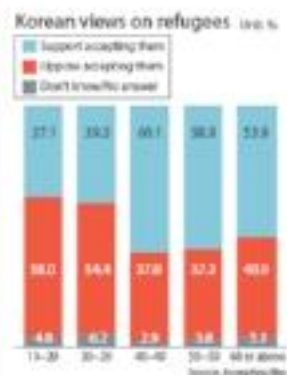


Photo supplied by 'M', a Yemeni refugee currently residing on Jeju island.

I wonder why we are not really seeing the stories of the refugees within the media and why the media is portraying them in such a negative light when they do. And when we look through the newspapers and online content about the issue we can see that others have not been so welcoming, "I am absolutely against having refugees," one woman said.



Some also mentioned religion as a reason, *"I really hate the thought of people with the religion of Islam living on Jeju in a large number",* and others point to the refugee crisis in Europe, and hope to avoid a similar fate for South Korea, *"I used to live in Europe... and accepting the Muslim population is literally a crazy idea,"* wrote another.

The most outspoken critics of the Yemenis have come from conservative Christian groups. A recent poll showed 49% of South Koreans were opposed to accepting the refugees, while 39% were in favour of accepting them. The more surprising poll showed that over 54% of 19-40 year old also opposed them being here.

South Korea has approved just 3 Syrian refugees since 2015.



Ahmad Barro, left, Ahmad al-Othman and Ahmad Khalifa last month in Yangju, South Korea. The men, all from Syria, expressed frustration as they talked about family members left in Aleppo. Credit - Jean Chung for The New York Times

One underlying point that does sit well for the Korean government and the anti-refugee protesters is the previous track record of refugee intake, which could give the Moon administration a very easy-out.

Since 2015, some 848 Syrian refugees have applied for refugee status here, with just 3, less than 1%, of them eventually be approved, the rest given humanitarian visas. And according to further statistics from the Ministry of Justice, 40,470 people have applied for refugee status since 1994 and Korea has accepted just 839 or 4.1%. In comparison to other countries approval ratios who are significantly higher, Germany 31.7%, Mexico 55.7%, Canada 51.8 and even the average OECD stands at 24.8%, six times higher than that of South Korea.

"The point of the policy is to ensure that these Syrians will return home once the civil war is over, so not to make their life here too comfortable," said Kim Sung-in, secretary general of Nancen, a refugee advocacy group in Seoul. *"It essentially leaves them to fend for themselves."* Twenty-eight Syrians who claimed asylum thereafter the Paris terrorist attacks in November languished in crowded, windowless rooms at the airport for up to eight months. They were allowed to enter South Korea in July to apply for refugee status, but only after human rights lawyers intervened and publicized their plight.

"They told us to go elsewhere," said Ahmad, 23, one of the 28, who asked to be identified by his given name only. "But we had nowhere else to go, so we just waited and waited."

To Korean immigration officials, fleeing war is not sufficient grounds for asylum, said Chae Hyun-young, a legal officer at the United Nations' refugee office in Seoul. Applicants must also be at risk of persecution. "And they focus on whether the applicant has suffered persecution in the past, rather than whether they would suffer in the future if returned home," Ms. Chae said.



Korean War SC Coll Box 1, RG6s-KWP.27 1st LT William Millward of Baltimore, Md, Civil Assistant Officer, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, distributes candy to Korean children at a refugee collecting point in Western Korea.

Now, considering that South Korea was once considered a refugee country it is quite remarkable they have this mentality towards others, and even though they are signed onto the UNHCR resettlement program. It is quite obvious to see from their own statistics for refugee intake is incredibly low. So, there is no doubt that we must question the relationships between the more powerful middle eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the Korean government going forward, and in particular towards the interests that lie in other countries, such as Yemen and Syria, who have reserves of untapped resources such as oil and gold as well as the strategic location. Not to mention any potential nuclear deals, technology patents or clean energy opportunities in the future. So we need to tread lightly when looking at what people might consider just to be a refugee issue, and we can clearly see that these countries have a lot vested in Yemen already as well as other counties in the surrounding areas.

Human rights filmmakers attempt to re-shape the narrative

Coming back to today and why I actually became interested in the Yemen refugee issue in Jeju. Being based near Seoul and with only access to mainstream media and the Korean news for information about the issue, it doesn't paint the whole picture. So, after living in Korea now since 2011 and working as a professor at a media university as well as a documentary director on films related to human rights issues, including a North Korean film about refugees, 'While they Watched' (2015), the Sewol ferry tragedy, 'After the Sewol' (2016) and 'Crossroads' (2017), another director came to discuss the idea of going to Jeju in order to plan a film about the Yemen refugee issue. So, we packed our equipment and headed to Gimpo airport in the South of Seoul.



Taken from Sewol film, After the Sewol, 2017. Photograph by Neil P George © 2016

After arriving in Jeju we spent several days driving around the island filming and location scouting, and then we made contact with the owner of **Global Inner Peace**, a non-profit and civil society organization that has been working with the refugees since they arrived. We arranged to go to their office to discuss the issue and organize a meeting with some refugees so we can listen to their stories.

As I walked into the room there was an air of silence. Men Sat around tables listening intently to the teacher stood in front of them. This is what a classroom should look like, keen students who are interested in learning something new and paying attention to their teacher. What you might not expect to see are ten men, of Arabic descent, trying to speak Korean.

Since the Yemen refugees arrived on Jeju in April and May 2018, they have clearly found it difficult to integrate into the society, but they are certainly trying their best and as I stand to observe their class it's hard to believe that just 12 hours earlier another **Saudi-led airstrike bombs** down on a school bus killing at least 29 children. **Muwlef**, the Red Crescent Director said, *"I am really shocked because there is no military base or troops in that area. Why would they carry out such an action?"*



Photo by Peter Salisbury/Vice News

The United States is, of course, helping the coalition, being the only party in the conflict to use warplanes, with refueling, intelligence and billions in weapons sales. And just last week, Yemeni rebel health officials accused the coalition of launching airstrikes in the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, killing at least 28 people and wounding scores.

Hodeida has been under siege since June, despite U.N. peace efforts. The coalition is seeking to push the Houthis out of the strategic city, whose port is an essential gateway for supplies that fuel the rebels' ability to dominate the capital, Sanaa, and the north. Hodeida is also a key entry point for food, medicine and other aid for more than 22 million Yemenis — three-quarters of the population — in need of assistance in what the United Nations describes as the world's most severe humanitarian crisis.

And when I woke up on the 10th August to the news of the Saudi-led bomb strike on Yemen I didn't know what to think. I was going to meet people from a country already torn apart by war and now we are watching videos of their children being massacred.

The children were on a field trip when their bus was struck at a market, the first stop of the day; **50 were killed and 77 injured**, according to the ministry. Most of the children were inside the bus when the airstrike hit, according to a local medic, Yahya al-Hadi. The International Committee for the Red Cross said a hospital it supports in Saada had received 29 bodies of "mainly children" younger than 15, and 40 injured, including 30 children.

Ayman Gharaibeh, the UNHCR representative to Yemen recently said, "*The world cannot afford to let Yemen slip into the abyss*", and I think he is absolutely right.

Saudi-led airstrike kills 29 children in Yemen - BBC News



A Yemeni child is transported to a hospital after being wounded in a reported airstrike on the Iran-backed Houthi rebels' stronghold province of Sa'ada on August 9, 2018.
Stringer/AFP/Getty Images

It is heartbreaking to see my home being destroyed and my people being killed.

After talking with the owner of Global Inner Peace, we then sat down to talk with 3 of the refugees, 2 of which were comfortable to talk about the stories, the third just wanted to listen.

"When I heard the news about the airstrike (on the 9th August) it was too painful to watch any videos. I am not a strong person and it is heartbreaking to see my home being destroyed and my people being killed. I want them to stop the killing! M tells me.



Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018

"Our children are going to school, like they do in any other country, in order to learn and play, and they get killed in this way. If this is the way they (Saudi Arabia) are wanting to help us, we don't want any help" says Ali AlHutaiby, a 29-year-old refugee who used to be a student from Sana'a, the capital city of Yemen.

The pain from their eyes paints a picture in itself. Coming here without much choice to go anywhere else and now being treated almost like cattle, herded together, given schedules and in some cases curfews to live by each day. Around 50 of them are crammed into accommodation at the immigration office, sharing just 1 bathroom and others sharing small rooms between 5 people in local motels.

The conflict is also taking a toll on children's access to education where we have seen a total of 20 incidents of attacks on schools were reported and verified. Schools have been hit during both ground operations and aerial attacks, and many are currently unfit for use due to damage, the presence of IDPs or occupation by armed groups. Some 2 million children are out of school, depriving them of an education and exposing them to child recruitment into armed groups and armed forces, or child marriage. Children who have experienced stressful situations are likely to show changes in social relations, behavior, physical reactions, and emotional response manifesting as sleeping problems, nightmares, withdrawal, problems concentrating and guilt. So, when we hear about attacks happening on school buses it makes it even more upsetting and distressed. These men fled for good reasons and now have to be judged by people who are not understanding the situation they escaped from.

They have of course received help from some communities here, mostly religious based or NGO's, who are assisting them with food, accommodation, and schooling but all the really want is the fend for themselves and live a normal life.

"I just want to live a normal life, whatever that means, and I want to help people when I am in a position to do it. Given the choice I would go home tomorrow, of course, I want to see my family and friends but I can't. If I go back I truly believe I will die". M tells us over coffee.



Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018

WHEN I CAME TO JEJU, THIS WAS A PLACE I DREAMED TO CALL 'PARADISE'.

The war, since 2015, has torn the entire country of Yemen apart, with millions abandoning their homes searching for sanctuary elsewhere but due to the lack of money, it is extremely difficult for most to escape.

Coming back to the realities of Jeju, when talking with 'M', he wanted to remain anonymous, and is now awaiting the decision of his refugee status in Jeju tells me, *"Back in Yemen I come from a successful family but it means nothing during the war. My families house was destroyed, my entire family is scattered all over the place and now I am on Jeju island, 8000 km from my home. When I came to Jeju, this was a place I dreamed to call 'paradise' some 30 years ago as a child. I give thanks to God for bringing me to this place I try to call paradise and I hope to be able to live in a safe place, not a war zone. I believe that all humans need help within their lifetimes at some point and I want to be the one helping, but at this moment I am the one asking for some help and understanding".*

As we talk about their daily lives in Jeju it becomes clear that all he is thinking about is wanting to help those back in his home country but knowing if he were to return he would surely be caught in a war, enlisted into the armed forces and risk being potentially killed. He continues, *"I want people to understand this was my (and our) only choice to leave. If we return (to Yemen) I am sure we would be killed or at least fighting in this terrible war. I wish that people could walk in my shoes to understand what I have been through and I hope that if I can share my story, people will start to understand just a little and realize that they don't need to be afraid of us. I would like people to feel comfortable with us and just allow us to live like human beings".* M is a Yemeni refugee who wanted to remain anonymous for fear that his family and friends could suffer if he is seen on the news or social media speaking out against what is happening back in his home country.

SOUTH KOREA HAS HAD A VESTED INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE 1970S.



*People boarding a ship near Masan, South Korea, in 1950.
PHOTO: JIM PRINGLE/ASSOCIATED PRESS*

Refugees are not new in South Korea, in fact, Korea itself was a refugee country during and after the Korean War, that ended in an armistice in 1953, with some estimates of the numbers of people displaced ranging widely, with anywhere from 1 million to more than 5 million forced to flee. So one could presume that a country that has been through a war, technically still not resolved, would have a better understanding of the issues surrounding refugees and show some form of empathy towards other countries going through a similar plight.

And of course, South Korea is also not new to the issues within the middle east, having been involved there for some time selling arms and supplying troops, particularly to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In fact, South Korean arms exports, amounted to \$253 million in 2006 and reached \$2.5 billion ten years later, and according to the SIPRI Top 100 arms and military weapons producing companies, including the Korea Aerospace industries, Hanhwa Corp. and LIG Nex1, South Korea has increased their arms sales by 20.6 percent to \$8.4 billion, putting them alongside 'other established producers' such as Israel and Japan.

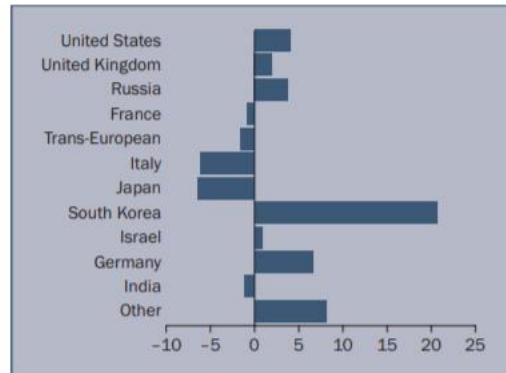


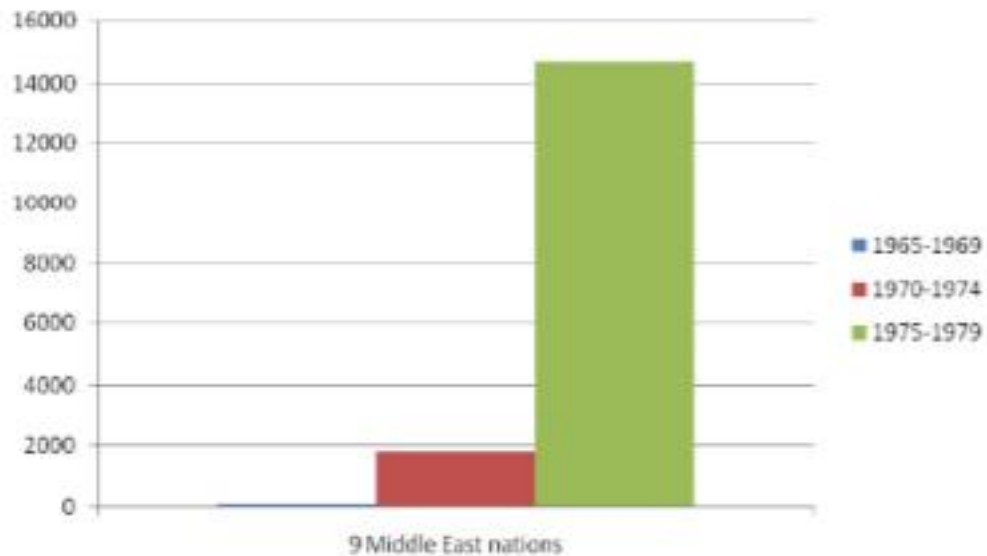
Figure 2. Percentage change in arms sales of companies in the SIPRI Top 100, by country, 2015-16
Notes: The change refers to the companies in the Top 100 for 2016. The figures are based on arms sales in constant (2016) US\$. The category 'Other' consists of countries whose companies' arms sales comprise less than 1% of the total: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Norway, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

The relationship between these countries can be traced back to the 1970s under Park Chung Hee, the dictator who ruled Korea between 1963-1979.

In the early 1970s, the face of the Middle East changed when the oil boom brought a rapid increase in revenues to oil-producing nations. This led these countries, mainly in the Middle East, to launch ambitious programs of public spending on infrastructure to foreign companies. The 1970s oil boom opened opportunities for South Korean companies to expand to the Middle East and compete with other international companies. Seoul began to regard this region as an attractive market for its industries, mainly the construction companies. The main goals of the government and the *chaebol* were to increase the competitiveness of South Korea's economy and South Korean *chaebol* and to overcome the conception that South Korean companies were incapable of competing in international projects.

Moving forward to the modern relationship between UAE and Korea, we only need to go back to 2009 under the Lee Myoung Park administration when they made an agreement to send troops to the UAE, becoming known as the 'Akh unit', in Arabic meaning 'brothers'. These soldiers were sent to train the UAE forces and continued throughout Lee Myoung Park and the Park Guen Hye administrations.

Figure 1: South Korea's Trade with the Middle East, 1965–79, in millions of dollars



Source: Korean Statistical Information Service.

It was also reported in a Wiki-leaks document that, South Korea has more than 716 troops in 13 countries, including a peacekeeping mission on the Lebanese-Israeli border and naval counter-piracy operations in Somalia. Seoul also plans to expand its deployment in Afghanistan, sending 350 troops to Parwan province north of the Afghan capital Kabul to protect reconstruction efforts by South Korean engineers and workers.

In the future, Korea plans to expand its standing army of peacekeepers to 3,000 and to increase humanitarian and disaster-relief missions throughout the world.



Ex-President Lee Myong Bak

This relationship will be a great benefit to the UAE, as it will be able to gain extensive experience with special forces, due to the ongoing conflict with North Korea. Abu Dhabi is struggling with security threats in its near abroad, including the desire to root out terrorism and maintain a stable business environment for foreign investors, as well as deeper problems arising from increasing unpredictability over Iran's role in the region and the potential for conflict to emerge in reaction to it. South Korea can offer high-tech goods and services that Abu Dhabi needs to develop and diversify its energy sector and the overall economy.



Rep. Kim Jong-dae of the Justice Party

The 139-strong unit, composed of the Navy's UDT/SEAL and other special operation forces, would carry out the duty of helping train the Middle Eastern country's special forces and protect South Korean residents there in case of an emergency, the ministry said in a statement. Allegations were raised in 2018 by an **opposition lawmaker**, Rep. Kim Jong-dae of the Justice Party, that South Korea has actually signed at least six secret military deals with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under the governments of conservative Presidents Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye. Rep. Kim Jong-dae of the Justice Party claimed the Lee government signed five of the deals on military cooperation, while the Park administration signed at least one. These types of deals are not new between countries but it was alleged that these deals played a significant role in **South Korea also winning bids** for an \$18.6 billion deal to build nuclear power plants in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

It is also worth noting that the ROK-UAE nuclear deal had been criticized in South Korea for being commercially weak. The bid was reported to be about 20 percent beneath the industry average bidding price range. Other unsuccessful bidders from France, Japan, and the United States may now feel a bit better about losing out to KEPCO, knowing that there was more behind the deal than a mere cost discount.



Park Jie-won, floor leader of the Democratic Party (DP)

And when we trace this back to 2011, Park Jie-won, floor leader of the Democratic Party (DP), had already lashed out at President Lee Myung-bak for his alleged opaque dealings over Korea winning an \$18.6 billion deal to build nuclear power plants in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and although in response, Knowledge Economy Minister Choi Joong-Kyung refuted the claim, saying, the government made no backdoor deals with the UAE and did not include the proposal to lend the construction cost in the final contract.

However, as we now know it was confirmed by the Former Defense Minister Kim Tae-young, in 2018, that the two countries had, in fact, signed a secret military pact mandating South Korea dispatch its troops to the UAE in the event of a contingency. *"It was basically about having South Korean troops come to the UAE when it was in military trouble,"* Kim said in an interview with local daily JoongAng Ilbo. *"During peacetime, it was about helping with UAE's military training and weapons management."*



Former Defense Minister Kim Tae-young

So, in having these secret pacts between South Korea and middle eastern countries we could easily be led to question how much influence they might have in regards to any other issues, perhaps issues surrounding refugees..?

From all the available information it is clear that South Korea has a large amount invested in the countries of Saudi Arabia and UAE, and they, in turn, are also looking for opportunities to try to influence the somewhat less developed areas, specifically within Yemen, in order to gain more influence and power, mostly due to its highly strategic position as well as having resources of oil, gold, and other valuable minerals. Taking all of this into account we have not even considering the USA's role within the Saudi-led coalition.

The US classified the middle east as the most strategically important area of the world at the end of the 2nd world and little has changed since then. They have a lot to gain in strategic positioning, weapons sales, oil exploration and of course a main transportation hub throughout the world. But as the power of SA and UAE grow there seems to be a power struggle not just within the immediate countries but also from the US, and while they still remain the **primary security guarantor** in the Middle East, many of its partners have become far more capable and far more assertive: They decide on their interests, how to best achieve them, and the types of relationships they wish to pursue with other actors.

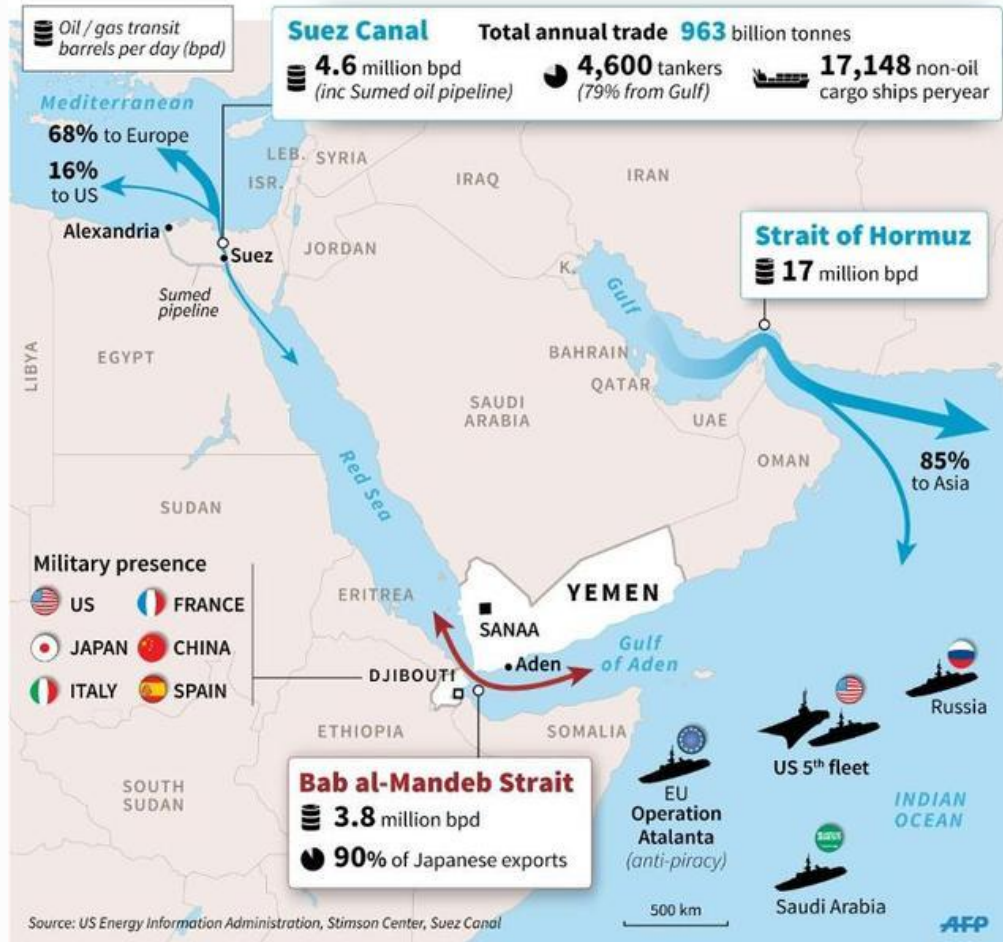
"The US is certainly in a bind in Yemen," said Katherine Zimmerman, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. "It doesn't make sense that the United States has identified al-Qaeda as a threat, but that we have common interests inside of Yemen and that, in some places, it looks like we're looking the other way."

"The Obama administration had reservations about the Yemen war from the beginning, but supported the fight largely to show support for Saudi Arabia at a time when the relationship was strained by the Iran nuclear deal," Blecher explained. Which as we all know President Trump has now pulled out of.

WHO HAS THE MOST TO GAIN OUT OF THIS RELATIONSHIP?

Returning to the UAE and its interests, it is clear that they have a lot to gain from the agreements with South Korea, already having 5 MOU's, as well as various other agreements, exports and import opportunities as well. Aside to the **trade relationship between the two countries** which is also booming, according to figures from the South Korean embassy. In the first half of 2017, South Korea's exports to the UAE were valued at \$2.95 billion (Dh10.8 billion), a 4 per cent increase on the same period in 2016, while the UAE's H1 exports to South Korea grew 47 per cent to \$4.29 billion in 2016. And in November 2017, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) made an unexpected and its largest ever investment in the South Korean stock market, and much attention has been given to what is behind it. The Middle East nation might have suddenly become attracted to domestic stocks as they purchased a net 967 billion won (US\$906.28 million) worth of South Korean stocks last November.

Yemen's strategic importance



Yemen's strategic importance ©L. Saubadu / K. Tian / C. Mutto, cam/gil/jj (AFP/File)

The nation's holdings of listed South Korean shares, which stood at 2.86 trillion won (US\$2.68 billion) at the end of 2008 when the Lee Myung-bak administration came to office, continued to increase to 5.446 trillion won (US\$5.103 billion) at the end of 2009, 6.836 trillion won (US\$6.406 billion) at the end of 2010, 6.837 trillion won (US\$6.408 billion) at the end of 2011 and 8.24 trillion won (US\$7.722 billion) at the end of 2012, Lee's last year in office.

The amount of the UAE's South Korean shareholdings came to 8.242 trillion won (US\$7.724 billion) at the end of 2013 during the first year of the Park Geun-hye presidency, up a mere 2 billion won (US\$1.874 million) in a year. The figure slightly rose to 8.962 trillion won (US\$8.399 billion) at the end of 2014 but kept decreasing since then to 8.254 billion trillion won (US\$7.736 billion) at the end of 2015 and 6.931 trillion won (US\$6.496 billion) at the end of 2016. It gradually rebounded from last year, returned to the 8 trillion won (US\$7.5 billion) level at the end of May when there was a presidential election and showed an increase since then.

The UAE's stock investment was mostly concentrated on oil-related companies in the past, but the investment made in November concentrated on about 100 major companies including Samsung Electronics Co., SK Hynix, and Hyundai Motor Co. Some analysts speculate that some senior South Korean officials' previous visits to the UAE may well have led to Abu Dhabi's increased investment in Korean stocks.

This proves the countries have significant levels of interest within each other's economies as well as looking to push for new deals between the two countries in the future. So, having social issues, such as the Yemeni refugee issue could easily create some tensions within the relationship, something I am sure is not wanted from either side.

And when Moon went to visit the UAE in early 2018, he took the opportunity to emphasize the strength of bilateral relations, downplaying recent reports about a possible discord, *"The Akh unit is the pride of Korea's armed forces, and the symbol of cooperation between Korea and the UAE,"* adding that the unit was instrumental in the two countries forming a relationship of special strategic partners. Perhaps he was unaware of the exact dealings that had taken place during the previous administrations under Lee Myoung Park and Park Guen Hye, who coincidentally are both now residing in jail for bribery, embezzlement, tax evasion, and corruption.



Moon Jae In, South Korean President.

The opposition parties also criticized the Moon administration over a senior presidential aide's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), *"There is also a rumor that the UAE even mentioned the severance of diplomatic relations, and Im (Im Jong-seok, Blue House chief of staff) was sent as a special envoy to resolve the issue,"* LKP floor leader Kim Sung-tae said during a committee meeting. *"The Moon government has caused a diplomatic stir, being immersed in political retaliation against its conservative predecessors."*



Khaldoon Khalifa al-Mubarak of Abu Dhabi, left, chief of Abu Dhabi's Organization & Administration Department, meets with Presidential Chief of Staff Im Jong-seok (Yonhap)

Im on Sunday (December 10th 2017) met with Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces. He also met with the Akh Unit in the UAE, touring the facilities, receiving a briefing by the soldiers. And when Moon visited the UAE to show a strengthening of ties, this could well be seen as playing straight into the hands of the coalition formed to battle the Shiite rebels in Yemen, and could cause even more destruction within the already war-torn country, and in turn help the Saudi government to improve their stronghold over the already weakened Yemeni government.

However, a former South Korean defense minister has downplayed the chance of entering a conflict alongside the UAE and classified it as a "low risk." But the Shiite rebels in Yemen, who the UAE is battling as part of a Saudi-led coalition, say they have already tried to target the under-construction Barakah nuclear power plant with a cruise missile, which is coincidentally being built by the Korean Electrical Power Corporation (KEPCO).



The Barakah nuclear power plant

"The Barakah nuclear power plant is not simply a mega construction project worth \$18.6 billion," Moon wrote. "The fact that the UAE put confidence in Korea, which had no experience in constructing overseas nuclear power plants, and signed a contract with us to build one in Barakah was possible only because there was deep trust between our two countries."

This project will have immense implications on South Korean trade with other Middle Eastern nations that perceive Seoul as a potential contractor for building these nuclear power plants in other regional states and in regions outside the Middle East. It is no coincidence that South Korea should be building better military and economic relations with the UAE as the mission clearly complements the economic relationship. South Korea also has a vested interest in the oil coming out of the middle east, but i will talk about this later in the article.

So, if we bear all of this in mind, we simply must question how much influence will the UAE and Saudi governments have towards the Yemeni refugee issue and what effect would this have on the relationship between Korea and middle eastern countries going forward if they do? Would the Moon administration potentially risk all of these potential deals in the future for 549 Yemeni refugees?

THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF YEMEN WILL PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE.

Economically, Yemen is important to the global flow of oil, however, in the resource-rich Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is only a minor player in the global oil business mostly due to a lack of investment and continuing attacks on its infrastructure, which has led to Yemen's oil production decreasing since 2001. (It just about produces 131,000 barrels of crude oil per day and its oil reserves are barely bigger than those of the United Kingdom.) Yet a major escalation of its conflict would have severe repercussions across global oil markets for geo-strategic reasons. Yemen is located adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important energy choke-point, and to the Bab-el-Mandab Strait, which controls access to the Suez Canal.

The strategic positioning of the small island of Socotra as well as the harbor ports of Aden and Mulkalla will surely play a significant role in the growth and development of the country as well as the security of Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the other middle eastern countries in the future, thus impacting even further on their broken economy. Moreover, the strategic location along the Bab el Mandeb, the strait that links the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and is one of the world's most active shipping lanes, which should be considered highly strategic and an invaluable position to SA. The port harbors of both Aden and Al Mukalla having both been bombed significantly since 2015, the first incident reported on May 11, 2015, when a U.S drone strike killed four AQAP militants traveling in a car around the Mukalla, including the commander Mamoun Abdulhamid Hatem. *"The UAE plays a parallel role on the Yemeni island of Socotra to maintain security and stability, support development projects, and help the people of the island,"* the ministry said. It added that its military presence *"comes within the efforts of the Arab Coalition to support the legitimacy at this critical stage in the history of Yemen."*



Now, most of Yemen's GDP comes from its limited oil production, which accounts for about 85 percent of export earnings and 75 percent of government revenue. Therefore, confirming that these port harbors play a vital element in the economy of Yemen, due to being the most natural and logical place for shipping across the world. The Port of Aden, in 2018, actually witnessed a steady growth during the first half of this year compared to the same period last year, and the handling rate is now the largest during the past ten years. From January to June 2018 it reached 333 vessels, an increase of 6% over the same period last year and the shipped cargo reaching 570,266 tons, an increase of 115% weighing 1,062,097 tons, an increase of up to 194% from last year. But where is this much-needed money going, into the hands of the already rich SA coalition or is it finding its way into the Yemen economy?



Photo was taken from article published on The Atlantic

These numbers, of course, tell a story in themselves, and even though there is a civil war raging, the strait of Bab el Mandeb and the port city of Aden are still playing an ever-increasing role bringing goods around the world, including taking oil to countries such as Japan, South Korea, India and China, some of the largest economies in the world. At the same time, there is a vast fear growing in relation to the security of the shipping vessels in the area and the growing ties between Yemen's Houthi Shi'ites and Iran poses another threat to both Saudi Arabia and the United States. It potentially could allow Iran to outflank the Gulf, and deploy air and naval forces to Yemen. This threat still seems limited, but it is important to note that Yemen's territory and islands play a critical role in the security of another global choke point at the southeastern end of the Red Sea called the Bab el Mandab or "gate of tears."

Another thing to consider is that Yemen may well be a small country, but it does have a population of 26.1 million and one of the highest population growth rates in the world. Nearly 63% of its population is 24 years of age or younger and it is deeply divided between Sunnis (65%) and Shiites, like the Houthis, (35%). So, when South Korea saw the influx of Yemen refugees seeking asylum in 2018 it should not have been a surprise that they saw many young males entering.

Yemen is one of the world's largest protection crises.

For over two and a half years, airstrikes, armed clashes and attacks on civilian infrastructure have pushed Yemen into a downward spiral, resulting in the world's largest food security crisis, and enabling the spread of cholera at an unprecedented scale. Half of the Yemeni population live in areas directly affected by conflict, many of whom are suffering from the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and other apparent violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The crisis in Yemen is one of the world's largest protection crises and has forcibly displaced three million people from their homes.

This conflict has been raging now since 2015 and according to the **Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights**, Yemen is one of the world's largest protection crises, in which civilians face serious risks to their safety, well-being and basic rights. As of 15 October 2017, health facilities reported 8,757 conflict-related deaths and over 50,610 injuries, and over three million people have been forced to flee from their homes. Millions of people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance to ensure their basic survival. An estimated 17.8 million are food insecure, 16 million lack access to safe water and sanitation, and 16.4 million lack access to adequate healthcare. Needs across the country have grown more acute since June 2017, with 11.3 million in acute need of humanitarian assistance in order to survive – this is an increase of 15 percent in five months.

I am always a firm believer that people should know their history in order to learn from it and not make the same mistakes again. And after researching about Yemen it became clear that a lot of people don't actually realize the war didn't really start in 2015. It can be traced back to 1990 when the two states unified, which in turn caused even more tensions and if we go back even further than that we can see why.

The Yemen Arab Republic

In 1962 - Imam Ahmad died and was succeeded by his son but the army officers seized power, setting up the Yemen Arab Republic, which in turn sparked a civil war between royalists supported by Saudi Arabia and republicans backed by Egypt. In 1967 South Yemen was formed with the formation of the People's Republic of Yemen, comprising Aden and former Protectorate of South Arabia, which led to thousands fleeing to the north following a crackdown on dissidents and the armed groups formed a bid in order to overthrow the government. 1978 we see Ali Abdallah Saleh become the President of North Yemen and fighting continued with a renewed effort to try to unite the two states and then in 1986 thousands die in the south due to the political rivalry and at that point. President Ali Nasser Muhammad fled the country, later to be sentenced to death for treason. This then led to a new government being formed.



President Ali Abdullah Saleh, In office
22 May 1990 – 27 February 2012. Killed on 4 December 2017.

May 1990, the two Yemenis united as the Republic of Yemen with Mr. Saleh as President, but tensions between the states endured. A coalition government was formed in April 1993 made up of ruling parties of former north and south and then in August, the Vice-President Ali Salim al-Baid withdraws to Aden, alleging that the south is being marginalized and southerners are being attacked by northerners. Saleh declares a state of emergency in May 1994 and dismisses Al-Baid and other southern government members following a political deadlock and sporadic fighting. Al-Baid declares independence of the Democratic Republic of Yemen and Northern forces capture Aden, whilst the southern leaders flee abroad and are sentenced to death in absentia.



USS Cole was bombed in an attack against the United States Navy guided-missile destroyer USS *Cole* on 12 October 2000.

The US naval vessel USS Cole is damaged in an al-Qaeda suicide attack in Aden in 2000, killing 17 US personnel and sparking more violence leading up to February 2002 when Yemen expels more than 100 foreign Islamic clerics in a crackdown on al-Qaeda. In October Al-Qaeda attacks and badly damages oil supertanker MV Limburg in Gulf of Aden, killing one and injuring 12 crew members and costing Yemen dear in lost port revenues. We then see the Houthi insurgency in 2004, when hundreds are killed as troops battle the Shia insurgency led by Hussein al-Houthi in the north. After several months of clashes, President Saleh says the leader of the rebellion in the north has agreed to renounce the campaign in return for a pardon. In March 2006 more than 600 followers of the slain Shia cleric Hussein al-Houthi who was captured following a rebellion he led in 2004 are released under an amnesty and Saleh wins another election term.

September 2008 sees an attack on the US embassy in the Yemeni capital Sanaa which kills 18 people, including six assailants and in October the President announces the arrest of suspected Islamist militants allegedly linked to Israeli intelligence and the fighting continues until February 2010 when they finally signed a ceasefire with the Houthi northern rebels, but this breaks down in December.

After months of mounting protests, President Saleh is injured in a rocket attack and flown to Saudi Arabia, returning home in September, eventually handing over power to Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is inaugurated as President after uncontested elections.

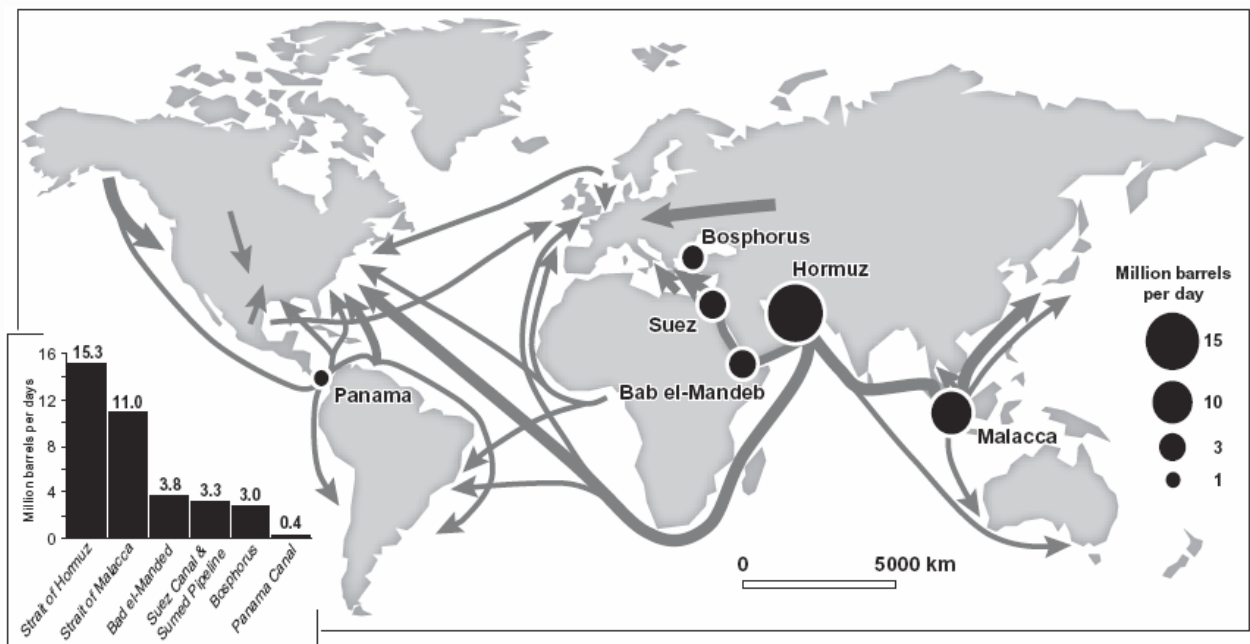
Jumping forward to 2014 when the Houthi rebels take control of most of the capital Sanaa and then go onto reject the draft constitution proposed by the government in 2015. This led up to the two suicide bombings that targeted Shia mosques in Sana'a in which 137 people are killed. To view the full breakdown of the Yemen modern history [here](#).



Houthi Shiite Yemeni raise their weapons during clashes near the presidential palace in Sanaa, Yemen, Monday, Jan. 19, 2015. (AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)

So, when people talk about the Yemen war we must realise that it is not something that just started in 2015, this goes back a lot longer and it also has many similarities to what we saw happen with the Korean war, and what Korea has been through since the 1950s, not just with North Korea but even within the country itself. We could easily discuss the development of Korea post-war, and how Syngman Rhee took control of an unstable democracy, only to be overthrown by Park Chung Hee. The country, during 1960's and 70s under the dictatorship of Park, was developed 'at all costs', effectively forcing the people to work 7 days a week, earning barely enough to feed their families. All of that economic development came at a cost and it ultimately led up to the 5.18 Gwangju uprising in 1980 and then the eventual 6.10 democracy movement in 1987, where Korea finally became a democracy. But the Korean people still continued to fight throughout the 1990's and 2000s to build the economy and become a more democratic state but in doing, so they left the safety culture at the back, which resulted in various man-made disasters, such as the Sampoong, Seung-su bridge collapse, Seohae ferry disaster and even more recently the Sewol ferry tragedy in 2014. Obviously, I don't intend to talk about Korean history but when you explore the situation in Yemen, the comparables between Yemen and Korea are easy to see, both the society, the history with dictatorships and the way they are trying to be controlled by outside influence, such as the USA, Saudi Arabia, UAE and you don't need to look that hard to see these similarities.

They even continue in terms of the geographic location, South Korea being the Asian Pacific hub between China, Russia, Japan and the rest of the world and when we look at Yemen's positioning we can explore this in a broader strategic context, and the crisis in Yemen can be seen as only a part of the U.S.-Saudi strategic equation.



The Broader Strategic Importance of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

U.S.- Saudi partnership and cooperation are critical in building some form of deterrence and strategic stability to contain Iran in the Gulf. Any nuclear agreement will not affect the need for close cooperation between the United States, Saudi Arabia and other key members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in dealing with the broader and active threat Iran poses in terms of conventional forces, asymmetric warfare, missiles, and strategic influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip.

From a strategic viewpoint, the flow of oil and gas tanker traffic out of the Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz remains the world's most important energy choke point. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) also reported in November 2014 that an average of 167 million barrels worth of oil a day passed through the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil chokepoint because of its daily oil flow of 17 million barrels per day in 2013. Flows through the Strait of Hormuz in 2013 were about 30% of all seaborne-traded oil. EIA estimates that more than 85% of the crude oil that moved through this choke point went to Asian markets, based on data from Lloyd's List Intelligence tanker tracking service.⁶ Japan, India, South Korea, and China are the largest destinations for oil moving through the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar exported about 3.7 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) per year of liquefied natural gas (LNG) through the Strait of Hormuz in 2013, according to BP's Statistical Review of World Energy 2014.⁷

This volume accounts for more than 30% of global LNG trade. Kuwait imports LNG volumes that travel northward through the Strait of Hormuz.

There is no question that Yemen is confronting a humanitarian crisis that has been exacerbated by the entry of the Saudi-led coalition into the war.

We met them for the second time and went to a coffee shop on the north coast of Jeju, not that far away from the immigration centre where around 50 others are staying and we talked about their lives back in Yemen and what they have been doing since arriving here in May. After coming from Malaysia, where they were constantly trying to find work for around 3 years, what the Korean people don't seem understand is they just simply didn't have anywhere else to go, and so when they hear about the Yemen refugees in Jeju in the media they don't appear to have any interest in trying to understand the issue that brought them here in the first place.

Ali tells us he spent 6 days in the airport waiting to be interviewed for refugee status before being allowed to enter the island. We discussed the recent news and the related media and M tells us, *"People shouldn't believe the media from the middle east. They just tell misinformation and propaganda about Yemen and the issues we have. We are actually a very peaceful people and the media is only concentrating on Syria. Why don't they talk more about Yemen and what we have gone through!"*



Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018

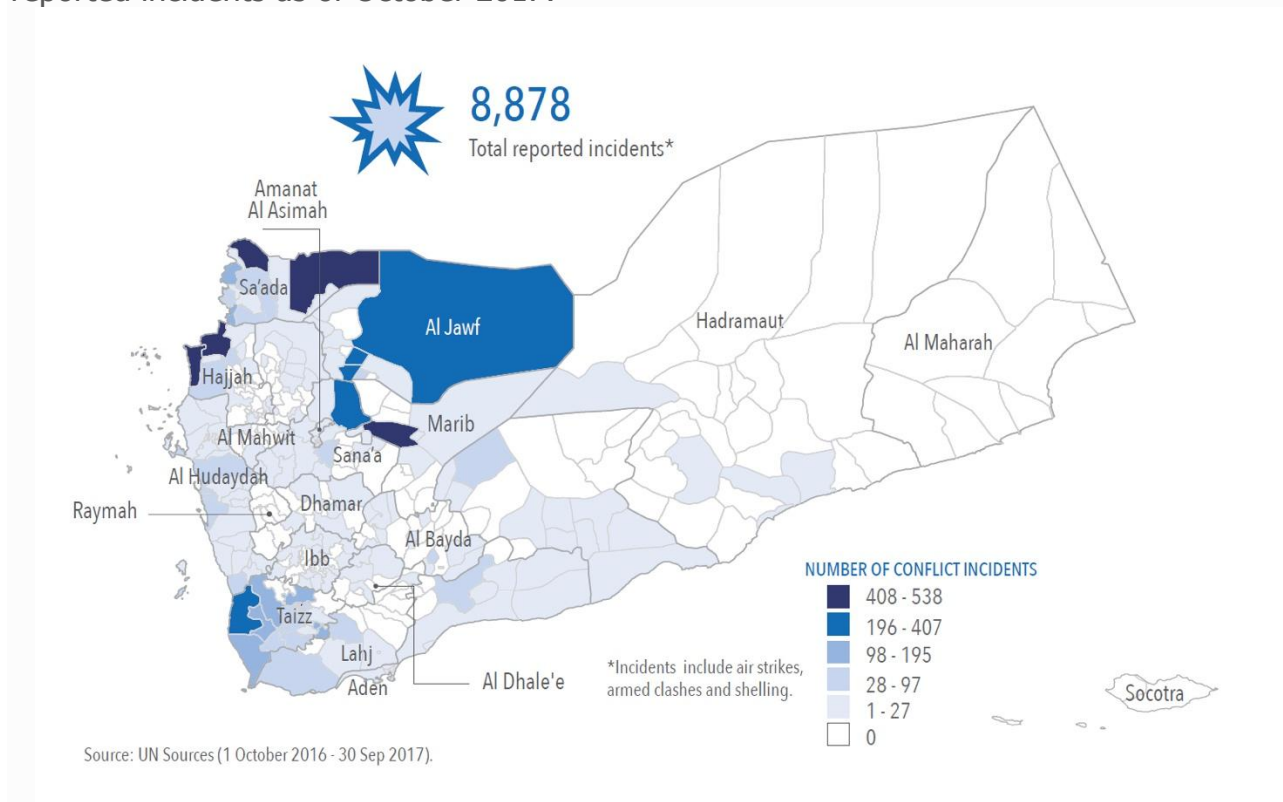
According to **Afrah Nasser**, an independent Yemeni journalist who is based in Sweden, "When western news outlets cover Yemen it's often 'parachute journalism.' This is mainly because it's been hard to access Yemen and if you want to get in you have to get permission from the Saudis and the Houthis. For foreign journalists, it's become hell to enter or leave the country and a trip that used to take a few hours might now take days or even weeks."

With the constant news feeds giving focus on other Middle Eastern countries and the difficulty in accessing the country, it also brings attention to who is controlling this limited information coming out of Yemen, and it also highlights the important issue we are dealing with today of 'fake news', and who do we actually trust for our news. This has become an important question since President Trump came into power, with his constant berating of the 'mainstream' media that he doesn't like. But this is a whole different conversation altogether.

Coming back to the refugees, it is clear they are angry and upset about what is happening in Yemen but also they are powerless to do anything whilst residing in Jeju and you can sense the frustration about what is happening around their own situation.

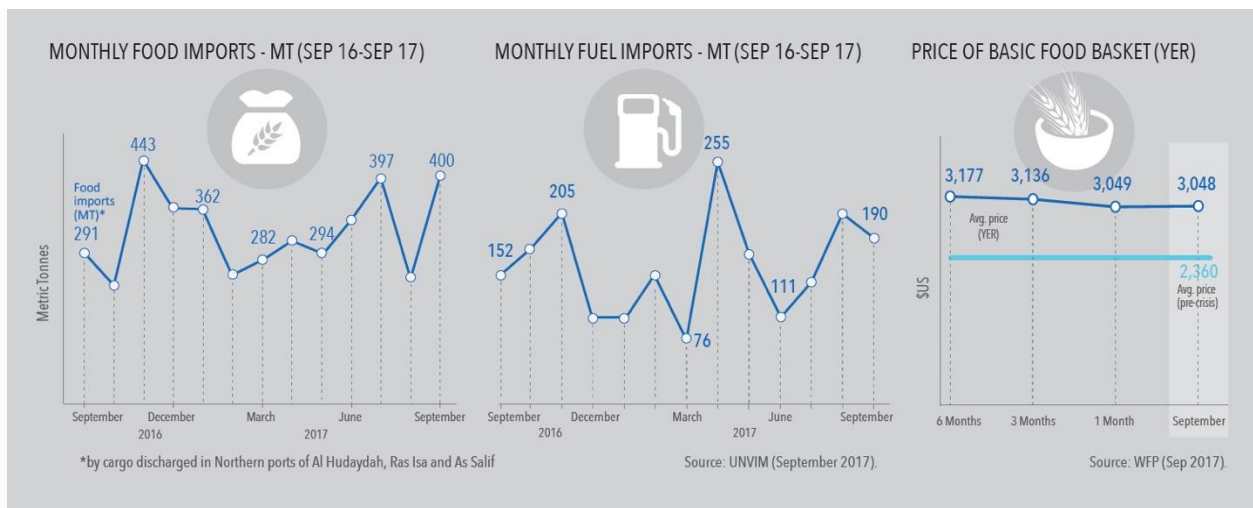
They told us that they try to have contact with their relatives and friends every couple of weeks back in Yemen but due to the power issues and lack of cellular services it is becoming harder each week, and they echoed the UN report that said the situation is getting worse in Yemen. And after reading through the UN report published back in 2017 I can see exactly where they are coming from.

It is clear from the report that all parties to the conflict display a disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law and impede the principled and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance and this can be seen with the 8,878 total reported incidents as of October 2017.



They are in a severe economic decline and in fact, there hasn't even been electric there since 2011. On top of all of this the recent closures of Yemen's ports (sea, land, and airports) on 6 November 2017 by the Saudi-led Coalition, threatens Yemenis' lifelines and remains partially effective in Hudaydah, Salif and Sana'a. Within 24 hours of this, the prices for food, fuel, and water had soared, putting them out of reach of vulnerable populations, which highlights the volatility of the situation in Yemen.

The UN report goes on to say that this is the world's largest man-made food security crisis. Yemen is now the world's largest man-made food security crisis. However, this crisis is not driven by a lack of food in the country but rather, Yemen's food crisis is driven by factors constraining the supply, distribution and people's diminishing purchasing power. Ongoing conflict and economic decline have steadily eroded people's coping mechanisms, leaving large parts of the population at the risk of famine.



As we continue to talk with M and Ali they both nod their heads in agreement about it but all they seem to be thinking about at this moment are their own struggles.

It is almost unimaginable what is happening back in Yemen with over 22.1 million people in need of assistance and we are now sitting discussing the issues with men who are also trying to find their way in Jeju. On top of that, there are a lot of people in Korea who appear to want them to leave, and it would also appear that a vast majority of them don't have any idea about the situation itself.



The photo was taken from the Yemen Press.

The costs of this terrible war rise higher and higher... We have to wake up to the reality of what is happening in Yemen.

The refugees in Jeju just want their voices to be heard and want people to understand why they came here. A plight not so dissimilar to that of the Sewol ferry victims families, who I spent 3 years filming with, and who fought for that entire time for their voices to be heard, and all within their own country. Perhaps that in itself shows the mentality of this incredibly insular society and in particular the attitude of the previous administrations. So, one does wonder how these Yemeni strangers will continue to be received in the future.



Yemeni children raise protest signs and chant slogans during a demonstration in the capital Sanaa on August 12, 2018, against an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition which hit a bus killing dozens of children. (AFP Photo)

However, I am a firm believer that once the Korean people gain a much better understanding of the situation they will be more accepting and allow them to try and create a normal life for themselves, which in turn will help them to earn some money that they can then send back to their families in Yemen. This money can be used to support the and booster the local economy in some small part, hopefully bringing back some normality to their lives in general. The Yemen war, known as the forgotten war, has been raging for a long time and well before 2015 and if people can see that, understand the issues and try to help the refugees, perhaps we can start to bring back some decency to the world that seems to have lost all reason these days.

The golden rule by which we should live.

A golden rule in life that I very much practice is the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated. It is the maxim of many religions and societies but what we seem to be witnessing from a vast majority of people in South Korea is almost the complete opposite. I myself would urge each and every Korean to take a good hard look in the mirror. Look at your grandparents and your own country's history. See how the rest of the world treated them when they were caught up in the Korean War. Now, try and put yourselves in the shoes of these young Yemeni men and women who had no choice but to flee their own war-torn country in search of a place they could try to call paradise, perhaps not what we all think of one but to them it is a paradise that they hope to be able to call a second home one day.

When I came to Jeju to talk with the refugees I did not consider how deep this issue is rooted. This issue is not just about the Yemen refugees, it goes a lot deeper than that, but at the heart of it is; Can we allow ourselves to turn a blind eye to these growing human rights issues that are taking place all over the world and sometimes right next door?



Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018

We can only understand these issues when we open our eyes, our ears, and our minds, and what I witnessed after the Sewol ferry tragedy and the empowerment of the South Korean people is now being heavily diminished by their attitude towards the Yemen refugees. I hope these people can wake up and realise that we are all human beings at the end of the day and try thinking about a very simple ideology known as the golden rule. It says, *"Before one performs an action which might harm another person, try to imagine yourself in their position, and consider whether you would want to be the recipient of that action. If you would not want to be in such a position, the other person probably would not either, and so you should not do it"*.

This is the basic and fundamental human trait of empathy, the ability to vicariously experience how another is feeling, that makes this possible, and it is the principle of empathy by which we should live our lives. In writing this piece I wanted to try and shed some more light into the Yemen refugee issue in Jeju and ultimately I hope people can start to understand and then feel some empathy for what their country has been through and what they now experiencing. I will leave you with the words of M, a young male Yemeni striving to make a way for himself here and for people to listen to his story.

"I believe that all humans need help at some point within their lifetime, and I truly want to be the one helping, but at this moment I am the one asking people to help and understand me".



Photograph by Hankyul Kim © 2018



Photo taken by Hankyul Kim, © 2018

THE 3 DAYS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

BACK IN HIS HOME COUNTRY HE WAS A NATIONAL ATHLETE

When I first met Ahmed we were just sitting on the floor having a chat, listening to the Yemeni stories of why and how they came to Jeju, and generally just getting to know each other. We had been filming all day with another refugee but naturally were interested in learning more about each of their stories. He was a very lean looking young man and had a smile on his face, and as soon as we mentioned the idea of making a film about him, he got all excited about it and invited us to watch him train without hesitation. Unfortunately, we had to leave Jeju and head back to Seoul the next day, but we kept in contact with him and as soon as we returned to Jeju we made a plan to film with him.

When we met him again, a few weeks later, standing in front of us he had this aura of confidence about him and he was clearly a fit young man with a deep passion for sport.

Back in his home country, he was a national athlete, competing in kickboxing and in July 2013, he was proud to enter the stadium carrying the flag of Yemen at the Incheon Asian Games. Five years later, due to the intensified civil war, he now finds himself staying on Jeju as a humble refugee, with very little choice, no place to call home but still a deep desire to fight and an inspirational passion for sport. Even under these somewhat difficult circumstances, he is an amazingly upbeat and cheerful young man and now stays in a motel not far from Jeju City Hall, paid for by his coach, and where he spends most of his time training or looking for work. We were fortunate enough that he shared his story with us and now we would like to share it with you.



Photo taken at the Incheon Asian games, © Ahmed Askar 2013

When the civil war broke out, the Yemen Athletic Department banned Ahmed from competing and training and ordered him to join the government forces. It may sound like a patriotic thing to do but at the same time can you imagine being forced to fight in a war you don't believe in?

I believe that in order to truly understand this, one must have faced a similar action, or been called upon to serve their country, without choice, which I am sure many of you reading this have not been through. Therefore, because of this unique position, I feel it is necessary for us to understand more about the nature of the Yemen civil war.

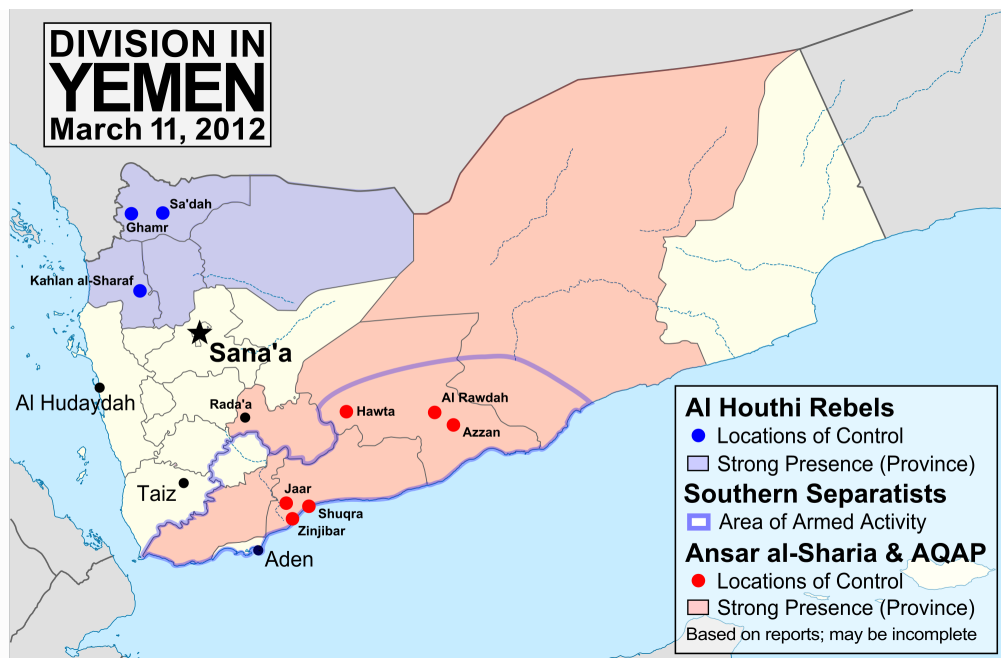
The civil war currently underway in Yemen is not a matter of protecting the country, and it is a fact that the country is divided into the north and south and so joining to one side makes you choose to aim guns at your brothers, perhaps even people you grew up with. Being caught up in this war was not a choice for many and as usual, the ones suffering are young children, the women and those who do not believe in the war.

Of course, if we take as an example, North Korea and South Korea, there is a fundamental difference from Yemen because the Korean war was a choice between democracy and communism, the sides were drawn on a political ideology. Of course, there was more to it than that, but the simple point is the war happened as an extension of the US/Soviet influences. But when it comes to Yemen it is very hard to say that the current government or the rebels are representatives of the people, in fact, what we see is just various groups of factions that constituted the pre-civilized government. This is not some political issue fighting for democracy, this is mostly related to control of power, oil, and resources, and most importantly access between East and West.

THE ENDLESS AIRSTRIKES CAUSING COUNTLESS DEATH

Both groups, the 'Houthi rebels' and the government could be considered good and bad. And as usual, the ones who get hurt the most are the civilians caught up in the middle. The endless airstrikes on buses, churches, military camps, hospitals are now a daily expectation for life in Yemen. And even as recently as November 2018, these street battles have raged in residential areas of Yemen's main port city of Hodeidah, forcing medical staff to flee the largest hospital, as Houthi insurgents tried to repel forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition. This is the daily life of the people of Yemen and although there are some similarities with the Korean War there are many many differences.

Now, after Yemen was divided into North and South it underwent ideological and religious conflicts, mostly stemming out of the Arab springs movement, originated in Tunisia (2010-2012). The country quickly became divided and lines are drawn, so, it literally gave people no choice in picking a side to support, it became more of, either you are with us or against us. And so we saw each armed service, including the police, told to join or you would become an enemy or thrown in prison. This also happened with civilian men, where they were effectively 'hunted' down and given the same ultimatum. The only escape was bribery or imprisonment in some military building, however being imprisoned was an eventual death penalty as these buildings were likely pinpointed for airstrikes from the Saudi led coalition.



When thinking about all of the stories we heard, these two groups who lead the war seem to just think that they are fighting only for their political interests and it could well be said from that point of view that both are as bad as each other. This idea was common to all the refugees I met, and I think the story of Ahmed is certainly not the first, nor will it be the last.

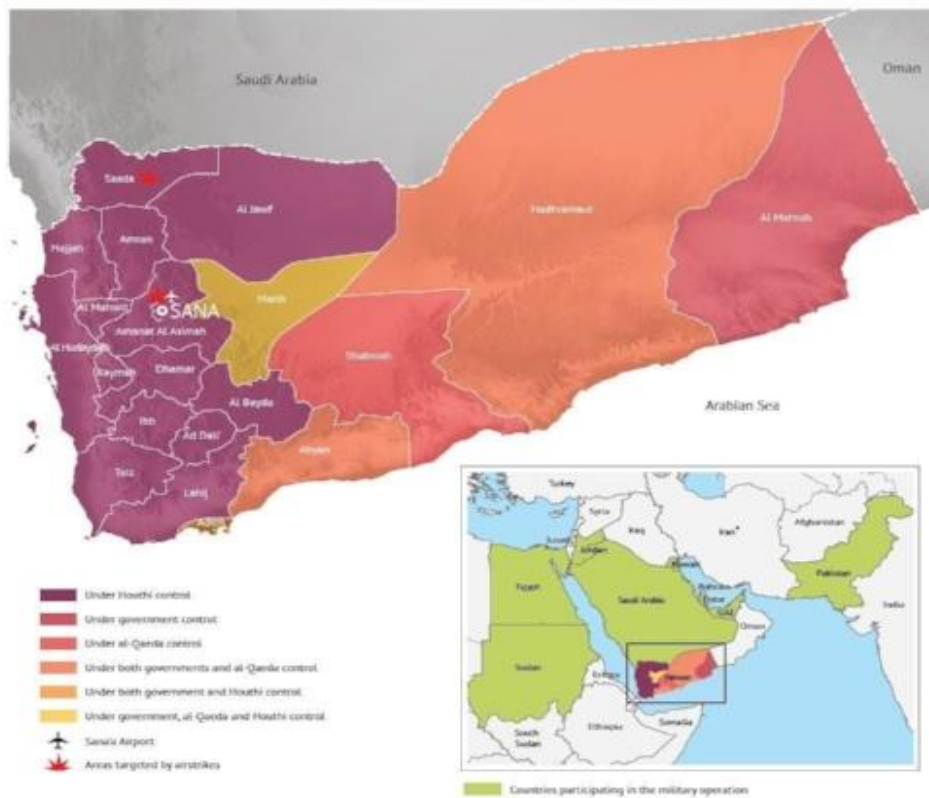
Of course, on the flip side of this in Korea, I have seen many people who oppose refugees ask why they flee without fighting for their country. They question whether these refugees are 'fake', but it seems to me that they have no interest in looking at Yemen's history nor listening to the refugee's stories. They decided with prejudice towards Muslims and so, the answer becomes quite simple as to why they chose not to defend their country. There is no form of state or group that should be protected by faith and they all have a belief and don't want to be forced to defend an ideology.

It may be a romantic idea to picture as the crowd revolts, guns held high, cheering for the revolution but in reality it is never that simple and it is not up to the rebels to rebel against the army of Saudi Arabia and the coalition of other Middle Eastern countries and other western countries. The Saudi and Iranian involvement made things a lot worse, with the situation in Yemen being difficult to say the least, let alone the fact that Yemen has been one of the world's poorest country for decades. It is also true that the society is suffering greatly for many reasons, mostly stemming from the civil war, which has been raging on now since 2015, if not before that and we can actually trace these problems back even further to the division in the 1990s, where it appears they have never really improved, more so they have escalated even further after the assassination of the ex-President Saleh.

Stetiana Prokhorova, Designer: Evgeniy Rymdin, Supervisor: Mikhail Sitnikov, Art Director: Anton Stepanov
Source: <http://www.stetiana.com.ua>

Military Operation in Yemen

Saudi Arabia and a number of Persian Gulf states launched a military operation in Yemen, having declared the intention to defend the country's legitimate government from the Houthi militants



* The Houthis chief ally in their fight against Yemen's President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, but at the moment they don't intend to ask it for help.

HE WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON AFTER THREE EXCRUCIATING DAYS



Hajjah is the capital city of Hajjah Governorate in north-western Yemen. It is located 127 kilometres northwest of Sana'a

Coming back to Ahmed's story, his refusal to join the government forces were simple, he didn't want to fight in a war he didn't believe in, and from this information we now have we can see why. He just hoped to continue his training and become a professional athlete. However, the government stepped on his desires, his dreams became lost and he ended up being imprisoned in the infamous prison in his home city of Hajjah. This is a prison where the worst of the worst get sent to, and so it's not an ideal place for anyone to be sent to, let alone a young athlete. Inside he was trapped with 50 men in a small room and without a toilet and barely anything to eat. After several days passed he couldn't bear it anymore and he made the decision that he had to try and escape somehow.

His family and his colleagues sought ways to bribe officials within the prison, he attempted to bribe bureaucrats who he knew when he was a national sportsman, all in the hope of being released. And eventually, he was released from prison after three excruciating days. As soon as he came out, he headed to Sanaa, a three-hour drive away and there he bought a plane ticket and started the long journey to the south, which takes over 27 hours by bus. It took him more than 50 hours to see the back of Yemen and a similar journey that many others have also taken.

On the bus in Sana'a he had many fears and on his journey to Aden, he had to go through both the government army and insurgent-controlled areas. The biggest fear was that his passport, which had been issued in the port city of Hameido, Namyen. He knew the Government troops were unlikely to admit this passport and he also worried about his birthplace when passing through the rebel-controlled area, where he was Yemeni but on his passport, his birthplace was listed as Saudi Arabia. All of these things did not matter until after the civil war broke out, but during these times this was the difference between life and death and they were the obstacles that could prevent him from escaping.

He moved on from Sana'a via Damar, where he stopped briefly, and then onto Taiz, passing both checkpoints of the government and rebels dozens of times. It was a terrible road, but eventually, he was able to reach Aden, without too much trouble, just a few bribes along the way. (It was a simple journey but during those 27-hours he said he was extremely anxious, which I am sure most of us can understand.)

He then moved on once more and traveled to Khartoum, Sudan, another 3 hours away using Yemen's low-cost airline. After, waiting 12 hours at the airport in Khartoum, he set out on a flight to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. At that time, the crew of Saudi Airlines yelled at all the passengers from Yemen, subjected them to searches and treated them almost like prisoners.



Journey taken by Ahmed.

ALL YEMEN PASSENGERS GET UP FROM YOUR SEATS

As he boarded the plane just like any other time he was surprised by the hostility towards many of the Yemeni passengers. They were stopped one by one and all the Yemeni passengers were subject to a search on the plane. No other passengers appeared to have done this to them, just the Yemeni's and the plane wasn't allowed to embark until the searches were completed. I am sure that not one person reading this has ever been subjected to a search on the actual plane. After the plane took off he flew another five hours and arrived at Jeddah, where he was eventually able to fly to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. However, when arriving in Malaysia, after his 53-hour journey, all in order to avoid forced conscription, he did not see a welcoming party of any sort.

While it may seem strange to us, who can travel around the world without a visa, Yemen is required to obtain a visa when visiting almost every country. In fact, with the ease of travel around the world it is very rare that we need to obtain a visa entering various countries, but it seems that many of today's generations do not know about restrictions. Ahmed first wanted to go to Thailand, because of Muay Thai. He thought there would be some opportunities there for someone with his fighting talents. But it was almost impossible for him to get a visa, and there were only a few foreign embassies in Yemen. Due to the civil war, they have either been destroyed or abandoned. Despite trying to obtain a visa through the nearest Thai embassy in Jordan, the situation within the country made it almost impossible and so once again his options became smaller and smaller.

Ahmed's option was to choose Malaysia, as Yemeni people are able to stay for up to three months on a tourist visa, as long as they can prove some financial capability. So, just 7 days since his imprisonment, he finally set foot in the land of Malaysia, and finally breathe a little better than before.

Of course, the Malaysian immigration office was aware of the Yemen situation and that of the Yemeni people, many of whom fled to enter Malaysia after the civil war started and ended up stuck without a place to go. In any case, what choice did he have?

So, he headed to the gate and would allow his fate to be decided. The officer then guided him to a separate interview room, as he expected, and asked for a detailed explanation of the reasons why he was entering and for his identity. Among the documents prepared for the escape, Ahmed was fortunate to have an invitation to a college graduation from a friend who is studying in Malaysia. If it had not been for the invitation, he would have most certainly been fated to be denied entry. After sometime he was allowed entry and the weight on his shoulders lifted just a bit.

He stayed in Kuala Lumpur for just two months with the help of his friend, but every day he feared he would be kicked out. In this situation, there appears to be very little hope for the future and desperate hope calls for desperate actions. By this point, there were literally no countries allowing Yemeni refugees entrance.

A STORY BE-FITTING TO A K-DRAMA

Whilst living back in Yemen, Ahmed had seen some Korean dramas on TV, but not once did he think he would be heading to Jeju in search of a new place to rest his head. Perhaps the only country in Asia with civil law and a past not dissimilar to the present in Yemen, a country that has suffered tragedy, and been divided into North and South, this place could be the answer.



Ahmed and some of his fellow kick-boxers on Jeju.

"I knew about Korea because Korean dramas are also popular in Yemen. Although I only knew a little I watched more when I was in Malaysia and when I visited in 2013, this place gave me a sense of warmth and joy, and I was always greeted by nice people, willing to help me and a welcoming crowd. But now that I am back on my own, Korea's refugee recognition rate has once again made me anxious".

The anxiety seems to be well placed, as we saw when the Yemeni people started arriving on Jeju, the reaction was somewhat unnecessary, but as Korea is going through a protesting trend these days, it was easy to see it happening. All Ahmed could think at this time was that he will be expelled from Malaysia and so he had no more options left.

"I had no choice but to leave for Jeju, it was my last resort".

"In Malaysia, I brought a flight ticket through the internet and I boarded a flight heading to Jeju. As expected, I saw many Yemeni people on the airplane". It reminded him of his memories when first arriving in Malaysia and made him feel once again tense and wonder about what will happen in the coming hours.

"At Jeju International Airport, I encountered more Yemeni people in the line waiting for entrance to the island. However, I thought there will be a record of me visiting Korea in 2013, and so I just waited". All he knew was that Korea was the only country in Asia allowing refugees, although he was unaware of the whole situation that was unraveling on the mainland.

As his turn approached and he stood before the judging panel. The immigration staff looked at the passport with suspicion and when he was asked if he had ever visited Korea before, he, of course, replied, "Yes." However, there was no visit stamp in the passport because it was in his old passport, and so he mentioned that he had participated in the Incheon Asian Games as a national representative at the time.

He showed a photo of his old passport and the visa to the officer and that was that, he was finally allowed entrance and the weight on his shoulders once again began to lift, and life felt a little more relaxed. "I thought the time would never end, it felt like everything slowed down around me" he recalled. "My worries then disappeared and time returned to normal when the officer stamped my passport, looked up at me and said",

"WELCOME TO KOREA"

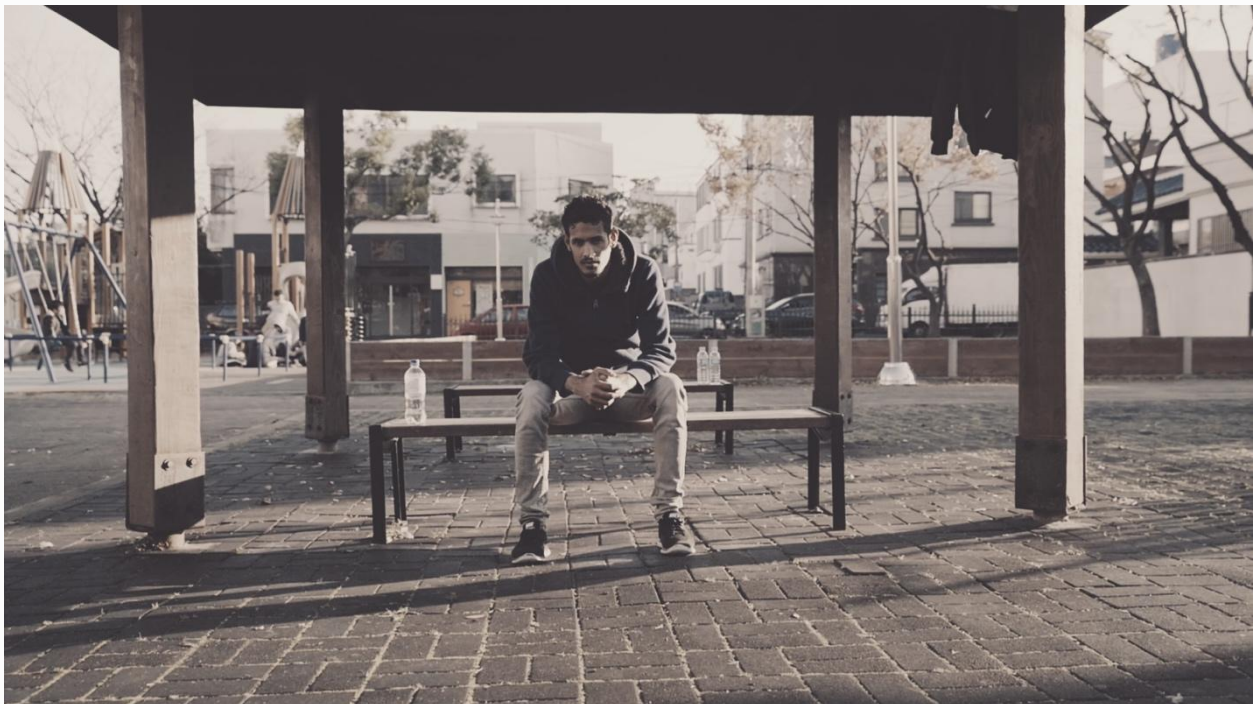
HE IS MY SAVIOUR!

"After arriving in Jeju I had to try and find my place and it was very tough, to begin with. I didn't realise there were so many other Yemeni here but as I walked around I started to meet more and more. And after visiting the immigration office, I saw so many, it was quite surprising. I ended up sharing an apartment with several others for about 1 month and found it quite hard to get work. I didn't speak the language, I found the food a little difficult to eat all the time, but was thankful there was some help. The biggest problem was there were so many others in the same situation as me. We were all looking for work so we could eat and live but there wasn't much available".

As we heard in the news on several occasions the only jobs available were working on the fishing boats or restaurants. There was some money raised in donations but not enough to really spread between the entire collective. So, they had to find ways of making money in order to really live. This is quite a simple idea to grasp. These people want to fend for themselves, which means trying to earn some money in order to eat. They didn't come here to buy property or land, they came in order to escape a war.

"I tried working on a fishing boat, but I am from the North of Yemen, a mountain city, I am not a fisherman and although I really appreciated the work, I realised it was just something I couldn't do. I came to Korea with the hope of living my dream, being a professional athlete and every day, it felt like my dreams were drifting away from me".

"After losing my place to live, I had no money, and I just wanted somewhere to rest my head. But it seemed that I wasn't allowed.. I never thought I would be in this type of situation in my life but I wanted to try and see some positive points. I found myself walking the streets with my bag, and nowhere to go. So, trying to see the positive side of life I knew that many parks in Korea have exercise machines, so I went and slept in a park not far from the hotel I could no longer afford. I was desperate but I never gave up hope for my future. I continued my training in the park. I was homeless once again and I am sure many people in this situation would have just given up but I am a fighter and so when I am at the bottom, the only way is up. I knew things would be hard but if I stayed positive and continued training, pushing myself the only way is up".



Ahmed on the bench where he slept for 3 days. Photo taken by Neil P George, © 2018

After 3 more days he was fortunate to find a restaurant job and made some small money to help. "I worked in the kitchen of a restaurant with some other refugees and the owner allowed us to stay in a room whilst we were working there. He was kind and offered food and drink, mostly rice, some fish and side dishes. So, I think he was a little offended when we passed on eating some of the food, except one of the refugees who ate. I guess he really wanted to keep the job and so he just did everything he could to keep it. As time passed the owner of the restaurant became more frustrated with us and so eventually he asked us to leave, except the one who was eating the food he supplied. We had nowhere to go, so we stayed in the room secretly until the owner came in two days later and found us. At that point, several days later, everyone was asked to leave, so we had to move from the apartment".

Once again he was back to where he had been just 1 month ago, so again he didn't know what to do. He had very little money, nowhere to live and found himself just walking around the streets. It was then he decided to call the kickboxing President that he had met in 2013 and ask him for some help. The message was sent and now it was just a waiting game to see when he replies.

"Finally, I got a message telling me to go to a gym not far from City Hall. So, I started walking with all of my luggage in search of my next step in life. I had already met the coach before as he had come to visit me when I stayed in the house, but I was once again at the bottom, so I just felt that I had nothing to lose. I met him at the gym to see if he can help me. As soon as I walked into the gym my coach told me to spar with one of the other younger coaches. He wanted to check my fitness, condition and my skills and it was so hard. But from that moment I could feel my life change. I felt I had found my Korean 'father'". The coach from that day started to pay for his room and helps him train almost every day.

"Everyday I want to hug him and thank him for everything he has done for me. He is my saviour".

After listening to Ahmed and many other Yemen refugee stories, it made me a lot more interested in finding out more about the war in Yemen as well as exploring how the relationship between Korea and Yemen has developed over the years. As I researched many things became very clear to me about the situation and I came to understand in more detail why it was an obvious choice that the refugees decided to leave in search of a safer place.



Ahmed and his coach in Jeju. Photo taken by Neil P George, © 2018

YEMEN IS A COUNTRY SITTING ON SUBSTANTIAL OIL AND GAS RESERVES, WHICH SAUDI ARABIA AND ITS ALLIES WANT TO CONTROL

I will start with Korea and the fact that it has had a long relationship with countries in the Middle East, even Yemen, and most importantly these relationships are particularly related to oil, gas, construction or arms deals.

In 2005, Korea Gas Corporation (known as Kogas) was the world's largest LNG importer. Kogas operates three LNG terminals and a nationwide pipeline network in Korea and has agreements to import 2 Mtpa of LNG from Yemen LNG for 20 years. As a partner in Oman LNG and Ras Laffan LNG, Kogas has proved its capability and reliability in the upstream business and is actively expanding its business in overseas LNG projects using its accumulated expertise in the global LNG industry to pursue its goal of becoming a world-class integrated energy company.

And in 2014, Yemen LNG, a joint venture of international energy firms and the Yemeni government, was in the process of renegotiating these contracts. South Korea's Korean Gas Corporation (KOGAS), a 6% shareholder in Yemen LNG, recently agreed to purchase gas for a price closer to market value. But efforts to convince Total, the French multinational that is the largest shareholder in Yemen LNG, to do the same have proven fruitless. Defenders of the agreement say that the rates paid by Total and others were the only way to guarantee funds to build a new gas plant in southern Yemen, which at \$4 billion was the largest foreign investment in the country's history. Such investors are hard to replace. Many foreign firms are wary of investing in Yemen since its oil and gas are located in some of the most volatile provinces. Attacks on infrastructure are common. The Yemen LNG shareholders are the Yemeni government, represented by Yemen Gas Company (23.10%), Total (42.90%), Hunt Oil Company (18%) and South Korea's SK Corporation (10%) and Hyundai Corporation (6%). Under the agreements with Kogas, the utility will acquire a 6% interest in Yemen LNG in the near future.



Signing ceremony with Kogas in 2005

I am sure that most Korean citizens are not aware of where the LNG comes from that fuels their taxis and buses, so now you know. Also, SK Innovation Co., Ltd. participated in Yemen LNG as the leader of a Korean consortium comprising SK Innovation Co., Ltd., Samwhan Corporation and Korea National Oil Corporation. The Korean consortium also has 24.5% of the exploration and production interests in the Marib fields in Yemen, which came on stream in 1987.

This only goes to show that Yemen has valuable resources that other middle eastern countries would probably like a share of. In fact "63% of Yemen's crude production is being stolen by Saudi Arabia in cooperation with Mansour Hadi, the fugitive Yemeni president, and his mercenaries," Mohammad Abdolrahman Sharafeddin told FNA on Tuesday.

Yemen LNG Shareholders

Yemen LNG Company comprises the following seven shareholders

 39.62% TOTAL Yemen LNG Company, Ltd.	 16.73% Yemen Gas Company (YGC)	 6.00 Korea Gas Corp. (KOGAS)
 17.22% Yemen Hunt LNG Company, LLC	 9.55% SK Corporation	 5.88% HYUNDAI Corporation
 5.00 % General Authority for Social Security and Pensions		

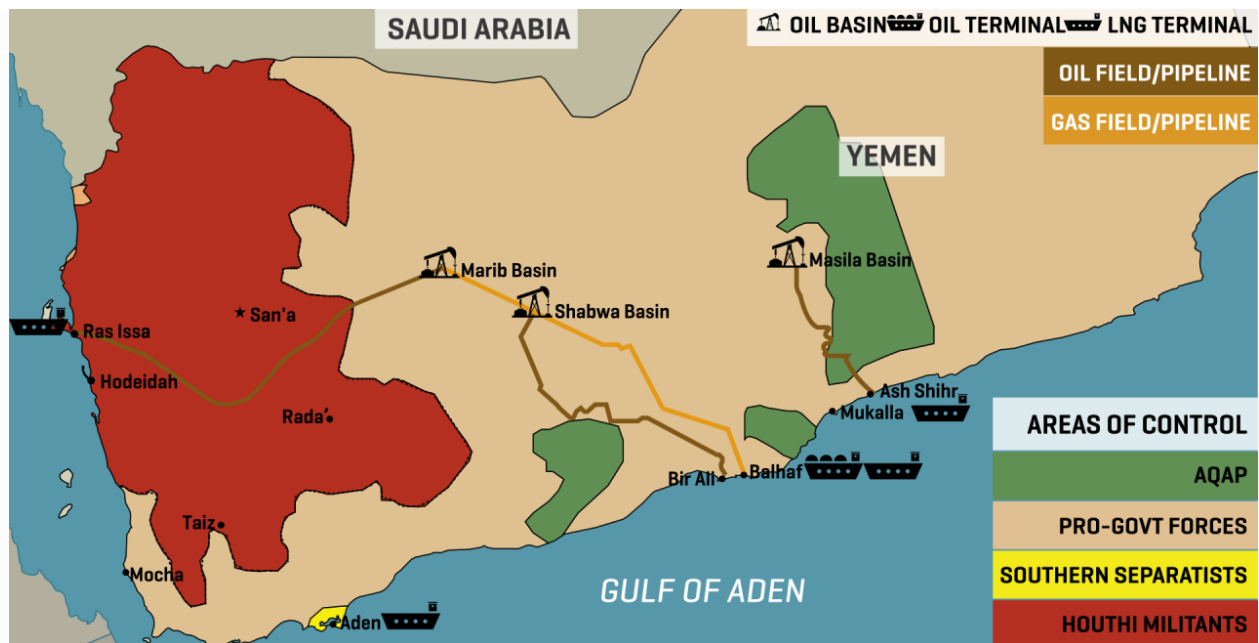


Photo from Yemen LNG Project. The Technical Training Story

<https://docplayer.net/13485309-Yemen-lng-project-the-technical-training-story.html>

"Saudi Arabia has set up an oil base in collaboration with the French Total company in the Southern parts of Kharkhir region near the Saudi border province of Najran and is exploiting oil from the wells in the region," he added. How the plot thickens! And in fact, the provinces of Marib, Jawf, Shabwa, and Hadramout owns oil and gas wealth, of which scientific research and international companies are estimated to explore beyond the Gulf oil. And in the last three decades, there has been a Saudi, American and Western agreement to block Yemen from benefiting oil stocks so that it cannot develop the economy and its society.

"Saudi Arabia has signed a secret agreement with the US to prevent Yemen from utilizing its oil reserves over the past 30 years," Yemeni Economist Hassan Ali al-Sanaeri told FNA on Sunday. In relevant remarks in early April (2013), a political analyst and researcher said, the US-backed Saudi Arabian war against Yemen is neither about the longstanding sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shiites nor about the much-discussed military campaign aimed against al-Qaeda in the region.



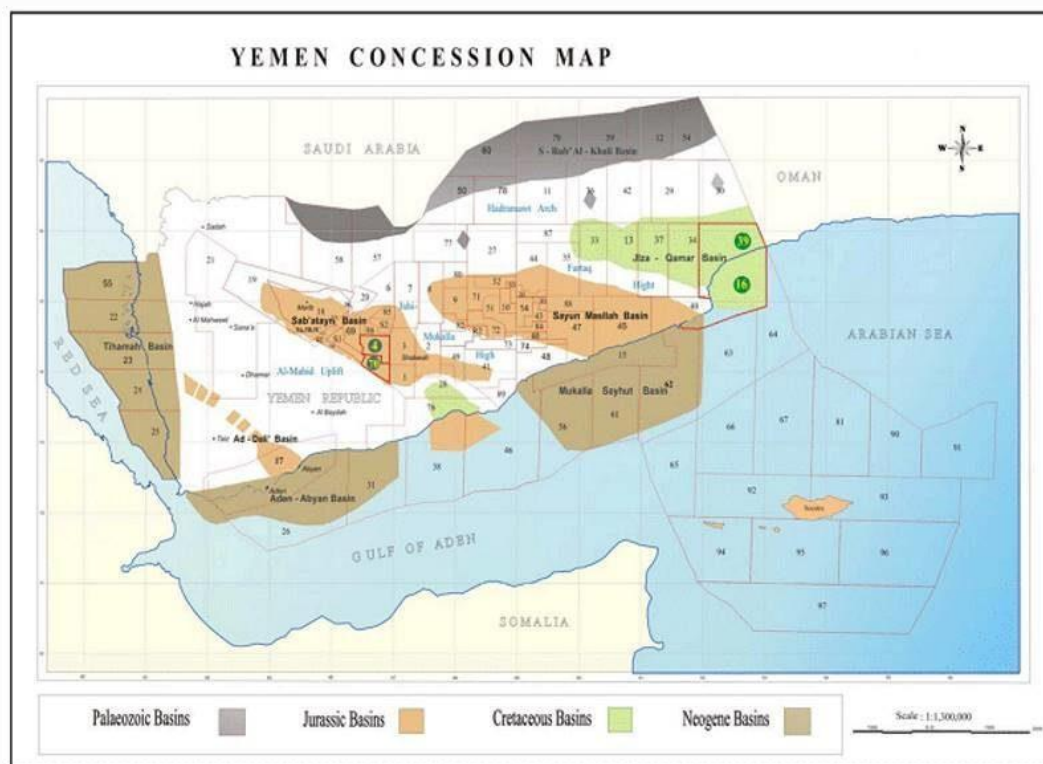
"While Western media outlets usually refer to Yemen as a small energy producer, the truth of the matter is the country is sitting on substantial oil and gas reserves, which Saudi Arabia and its allies want to control," the Russian news agency Sputnik quoted US political analyst Phil Butler as saying.

"Given the nature of the country's (Saudi Arabia's) oil reserves, and almost unlimited production for decades, it's possible the Saudis could simply be running out of gas," the American analyst stressed. So, if there was any doubt about why the Saudi's are backing the Yemeni government here is some proof they are really in it for the money! And the US has been well aware of Yemen's resources for some time. The Obama administration has long been aware of Yemen's substantial gas capacity. He quotes Ambassador Stephen A. Seche's 2008 secret cable, published by Wikileaks, which reads "that the governorates of Shabwah, Ma'rib, and al-Jawf have high potential for significant gas deposits."

As for oil, according to the detailed 2002 United States Geological Survey (USGS), Yemen possesses vast offshore oil reservoirs in addition to its 3 billion barrels of proved oil reserves, the analyst underscores. That is why neither the Obama administration nor European governments are rushing to help the Yemenis being bombed and shelled by Riyadh: all of them have their own vested interests in the Middle East. Further information about the largest source of oil in the world is in Yemen, the area that extends some of its sections to Saudi Arabia at a depth of 1800 meters, in a border area called Al-Jawf, only that vast reservoir is under the land of Yemen, and regarded the first in the world, in terms of inventory, where if Saudi Arabia has 34% of global oil reserves, from the discovery of oil in Yemen makes Yemen to owns 34% of the extra global stocks.

Yemen, as we know, contains proven crude oil reserves of more than 4 billion barrels (640,000,000 m3), although these reserves are not expected to last more than 9 years, and output from the country's older fields is falling, a concern since oil provides around 90% of the country's exports. Most of Yemen's GDP comes from its limited oil production, which accounts for about 85 percent of export earnings and 75 percent of government revenue. Therefore, confirming that these port harbors play a vital element in the economy of Yemen, due to being the most natural and logical place for shipping across the world. The Port of Aden, in 2018, actually witnessed a steady growth during the first half of this year compared to the same period last year, and the handling rate is now the largest during the past ten years. From January to June 2018 it reached 333 vessels, an increase of 6% over the same period last year and the shipped cargo reaching 570,266 tons, an increase of 115% weighing 1,062,097 tons, an increase of up to 194% from last year. But where is this much-needed money going, into the hands of the already rich SA coalition or is it finding its way into the Yemen economy?

This only goes to prove that not only do Saudi, USA and other countries have a major interest in Yemen, we can also conclude South Korea also has a significant financial vested interest in the country as well.



YEMEN IS UNDENIABLY THE WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS BY FAR

The war rages on, and from an outside perspective it appears to be a 'civil war', there is no doubt about that, but when we start to dig a little bit deeper we can see there is a lot more to it than that and it is surrounded by money, oil, natural resources, shipping zones and of course power. And who are the ones suffering from this, the civilian men, women and children. The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that Yemen is on the brink of a full-blown famine, with 18 million of its 29 million population food insecure, 8.4 million severely so.

"Yemen is a disaster and I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel right now," WFP's Executive Director David Beasley told reporters at a closed briefing during the UN General Assembly in New York City on Thursday.

"Yemen is undeniably the world's worst humanitarian crisis by far," said Beasley.



Men sort food donations for delivery in Aslam, Yemen, on September 23. Hammadi Issa/AP

UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock issued a dire warning to the Security Council on Friday, ahead of the world body's General Assembly, saying, "We are losing the fight against famine" in Yemen.

"We may now be approaching a tipping point, beyond which it will be impossible to prevent massive loss of life as a result of widespread famine across the country," he said. "We are already seeing pockets of famine-like conditions, including cases where people are eating leaves."

Across Yemen, around 2.9 million women and children are acutely malnourished; another 400,000 children are fighting for their lives, in the same condition as Zaifa was. This year, the UN and humanitarian groups provided assistance to more than 8 million of the most vulnerable Yemenis who don't know when their next meal will come. That is a dramatic expansion from 2017, when food was reaching 3 million people a month in the country of nearly 29 million.

And as I previously mentioned in my Paradise Lost article, a UN report stated that this is the world's largest man-made food security crisis. The crisis is not driven by a lack of food in the country but rather, Yemen's food crisis is driven by factors constraining the supply, distribution and people's diminishing purchasing power. Ongoing conflict and economic decline have steadily eroded people's coping mechanisms, leaving large parts of the population at the risk of famine. All of which is due to the intervention of the Saudi government in blocking the necessary importing of goods into Aden and other ports.

Late last year, the Kota Nazar, a Singaporean ship with 636 containers of steel, paper, medicine and other goods, set sail to Hodeida, the largest cargo port in war-torn Yemen. It never got there. Like dozens of other ships carrying food and supplies to Yemen over the past 30 months, the Kota Nazar was stopped by a Saudi Arabian warship blocking Yemen's ports on the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies have been stationing naval forces in and around Yemeni waters since 2015. Western governments approved the show of military force as a way to stop arms reaching Houthi fighters trying to overthrow Yemen's internationally recognized government.

The result of all of this is the continuing impact on the Yemen civilians, especially the children.



A malnourished 4-year girl is weighed while she receives treatment at a malnutrition department in a hospital in Sanaa, Yemen, on Sept. 2, 2018. Millions of people in the war-torn Yemen are unable to secure one meal a day. (Xinhua/Mohammed Mohammed)

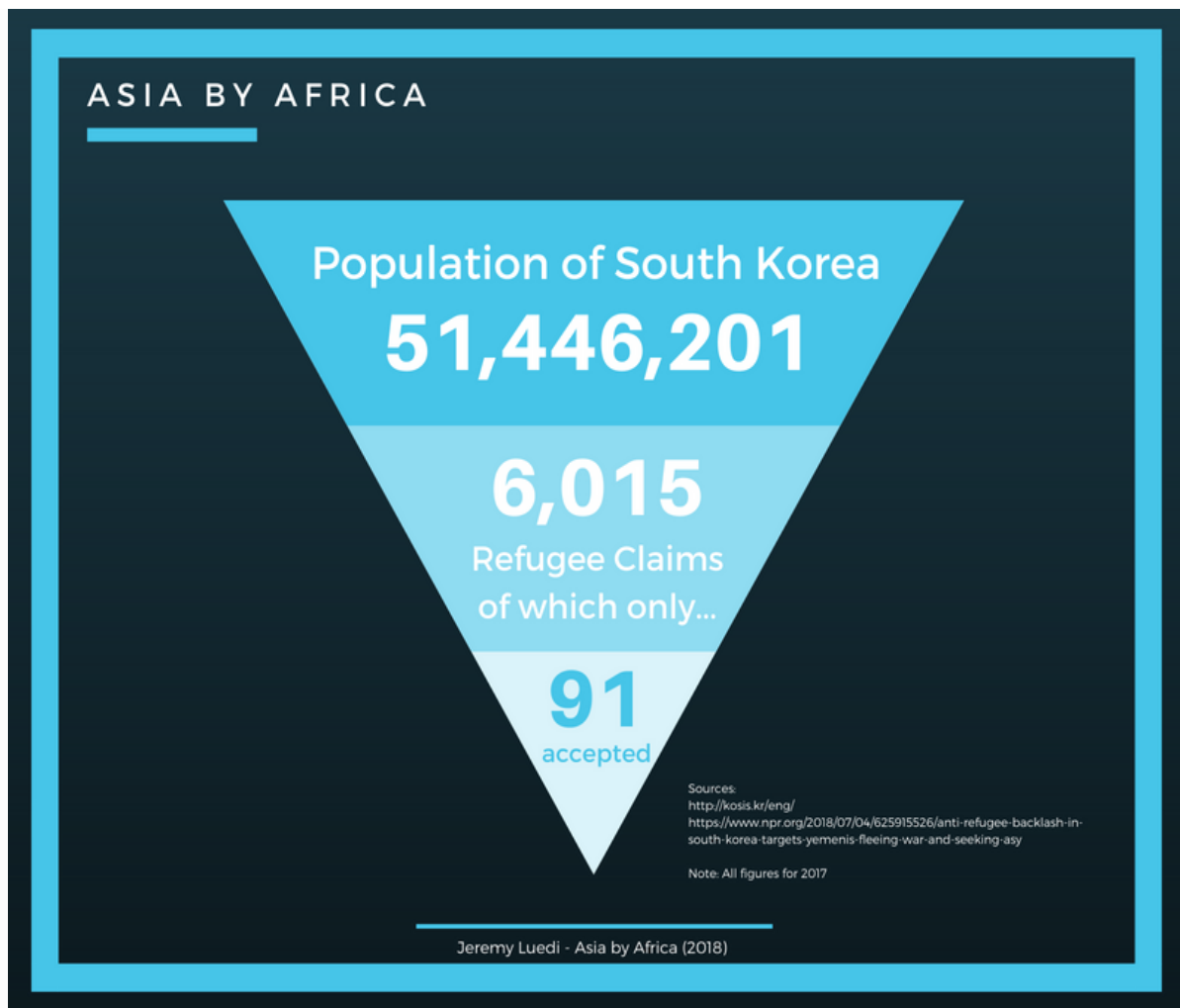
As I previously wrote, Since 2015, some 848 Syrian refugees have applied for refugee status here, with just 3, less than 1%, of them eventually being approved, the rest given humanitarian visas. And according to further statistics from the Ministry of Justice, 40,470 people have applied for refugee status since 1994 and Korea has accepted just 839 or 4.1%. In comparison to other countries' approval ratios which are significantly higher, Germany 31.7%, Mexico 55.7%, Canada 51.8 and even the average OECD stands at 24.8%, six times higher than that of South Korea. What the South Korean government and immigration have done is bracket these Yemeni refugees and have decided to give them humanitarian visas. They may have listened to their stories during the interviews they did but did the really listen. It seems that after talking with several of the refugees they fit into a category of 'refugee', deemed by the refugee charter but it would appear that Korea's bureaucratic state is standing in the way of approving them.



Ahmad Barro, left, Ahmad al-Othman and Ahmad Khalifa last month in Yangju, South Korea. The men, all from Syria, expressed frustration as they talked about family members left in Aleppo.
Credit - Jean Chung for The New York Times

To Korean immigration officials, fleeing war is not sufficient grounds for asylum, said Chae Hyun-young, a legal officer at the United Nations' refugee office in Seoul. Applicants must also be at risk of persecution. "And they focus on whether the applicant has suffered persecution in the past, rather than whether they would suffer in the future if returned home," Ms. Chae said.

They have denied refugee status on a lack of evidence. But if you look closely and open your minds to their situation it becomes quite clear why they don't have additional 'paperwork' or evidence to show what their status is like back in their home country.



When was the last time you left home and carried all your documentation with you? When was the last time you were stopped at a rebel-controlled checkpoint and casually asked the guards for some paperwork?

It blows my mind to think that anyone in their right mind would ever consider doing this, but the immigration service is asking for more documentation or evidence to prove these people are in danger if they were to return home. I suggest watching the news, read some articles or perhaps actually listen to their stories. If they spent just a short time looking and researching into Yemen and the current war it is going through, maybe they would be more open to the discussion.

But, from what I see they are creating points so they can deny refugee status on any ground possible. You only have to look at the statistics to see South Korea has very little interest in supporting refugees and until the people's mindset is changed this will, unfortunately, continue to happen.

If more people are aware of stories, such as Ahmed's I truly believe it will open up their minds to a deeper and more rational conversation about their status in Korea. In the meantime I will continue to write and produce films that highlight what they have been through, currently going through and their aspirations for the future.

Ahmed's future is uncertain but his passion is unquestionable. He has recently moved to the mainland in search of work as a kickboxing trainer and I will continue to talk and work with him in the future and as his life progresses. I will endeavour to write an updated piece in a few months and also, the short film about him titled, Passion, which is being produced in association with the UNHCR will hopefully be released mid to late December.

This information was published under the consent of Ahmed Askar.



Mohammed and his two daughters (faces were blurred at the request of Mohammed).

RE-BORN

THE JOURNEY TO FIND MY FREEDOM

The first time I met Mohammed he was a quiet, slim man who patiently listened, examined and looked to understand each situation as they greeted him. He was a quiet man and he didn't speak to us for a couple of hours, he seemed to just want to listen and get a better understanding of who we are and what we wanted before he was comfortable to open up about his story. We met with him several times over the course of two or three months before asking him to tell us about his story. Mohammed wanted a simple life and like many in his family he joined the Police force at a young age and served his city and country like anyone else would. He was married in 2007 and his first daughter was born just one year later. When he was living back in Yemen his family had a history of working in the police force and military organisations and after talking with him for several hours we soon discovered his father worked for the Yemen immigration service, which felt somewhat ironic given his present situation and if you understand or know anything about Yemen you will know that they accept various refugees from many different countries that surround them, especially coming from Africa, such as Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia etc. So, the fact that he was now asking for the same help his father once gave out, it felt embarrassing to listen to his story and hearing the way he and many of the other Yemeni refugees have been treated since arriving on Jeju. As we talked with him it became clear that all he wanted was to go back home to see his family, especially his wife and two children, and being on Jeju was his last resort to stay safe after leaving Yemen due to the raging civil war in 2018.

AFTER JUST 10 DAYS MY BROTHER HAD CHANGED



Mohammed's uncle lost his leg in an Al Qaeda car bomb attack in 2014

As I mentioned above Mohammed's father worked in the Police as a District Director or Superintendent, at the immigration office but unfortunately he passed away in 2004. Mohammed himself worked in the Police force, and was a Senior Police officer, serving in Sana'a and mostly involved with training recruits. Four of his uncles were also serving in the military or police forces. His first uncle was a Deputy Inspector General also in the police force, his second uncle was a Brigadier General in the air force, who had disappeared in early 2018 and not been seen since. Nobody knew where he is or why he disappeared, but they suspect a kidnapping of some sort. His third uncle is serving in the Air Force as a Captain, for over 25 years, in a very similar position to Mohammed, mostly working with training recruits. However, after the Houthi took control of Sana'a they effectively took control of the Police and other military institutions in the city and gave all serving members two choices, serve with us or be imprisoned. Another uncle, who also served in the police force, lost his leg in a car bomb attack in 2014 and Mohammed himself has received various death threats from Al Qaeda, only because he was a Police officer. So, for him and his family, and after the war broke out again in 2015 it was an incredibly dangerous place to be living.

In 2014 several of his police colleagues and friends were forced to join the Houthi rebels because they had no choice and were killed in the line of duty quite soon after. At this moment he didn't know what to do, as he was offered very little choice by the Houthi rebels, join us and train our recruits or be imprisoned and potentially killed. His brothers had talked many times about wanting to try and escape the country but it wasn't until April 2017 that they tried. However, when they attempted to escape they were caught and imprisoned in a small jail by the Houthi rebels. They were captured at a very famous checkpoint, known to many Yemeni, as "*the point of no return*". If you were caught at this checkpoint it would be almost impossible to escape the country and you were likely to be put in prison. After one of his brothers was caught here, he was imprisoned with another 15 men in a tiny room with no space to move and no food. Fortunately, it turned out that his brother was quite an influential person within the city and whilst being imprisoned he was coerced by the Houthis, mostly in order to bring in more troops to fight for their cause. Mohammed recalled the time he was finally released from the prison and he noted his brother had clearly changed, "*His mind was not the same as I knew. After just 10 days my brother had changed. Maybe from the torture, maybe lack of food and water, I don't know, but he was not the same person we knew. He had lost his mind and was going crazy. There was no way to control him and my family were incredibly worried about the whole situation. Nobody knew what to do*".

Since meeting and talking with quite a few of the refugees on Jeju we have now heard many similar stories like this, and that if they refused to fight for the Houthis, they would be imprisoned in a military installation or building and just left there to die. The Houthis knew that eventually the Saudi-led coalition would bomb the building and therefore end up killing them, and so they would not be blamed for these deaths. We heard this same story from all of the Yemeni refugees we talked too.



Mohammed joined the Police force in 1997

This was the last time his brothers attempted to escape but for Mohammed, his situation was getting worse and he felt that he had to try because he feared for his life and that of his family. If he were to stay, the future would have been extremely dangerous for him and nobody knew what the outcome could have been. He could only refuse serving the Houthi rebels for so long before they would eventually just arrest him and put him in prison and one thing to remember about his position, he didn't want to fight for the Houthis and the government did not exist in Sana'a, so they considered he was a traitor to the rebels and therefore as good as serving the '*enemy*' in their eyes. This put him in an incredibly dangerous position.

At that moment all he knew was, six of his cousins had already been forced to join the Houthis and had been killed in the war. He had a wife, two small children and had never left Yemen before. He wanted to do his duty as a police officer and serve his country, not fight in a war he didn't believe in. The rebels had their own agendas, as did the standing government and Saudi coalition, so, his family decided enough was enough, and they wanted someone to survive. So, they came together and made the decision that he must leave Yemen as soon as possible.

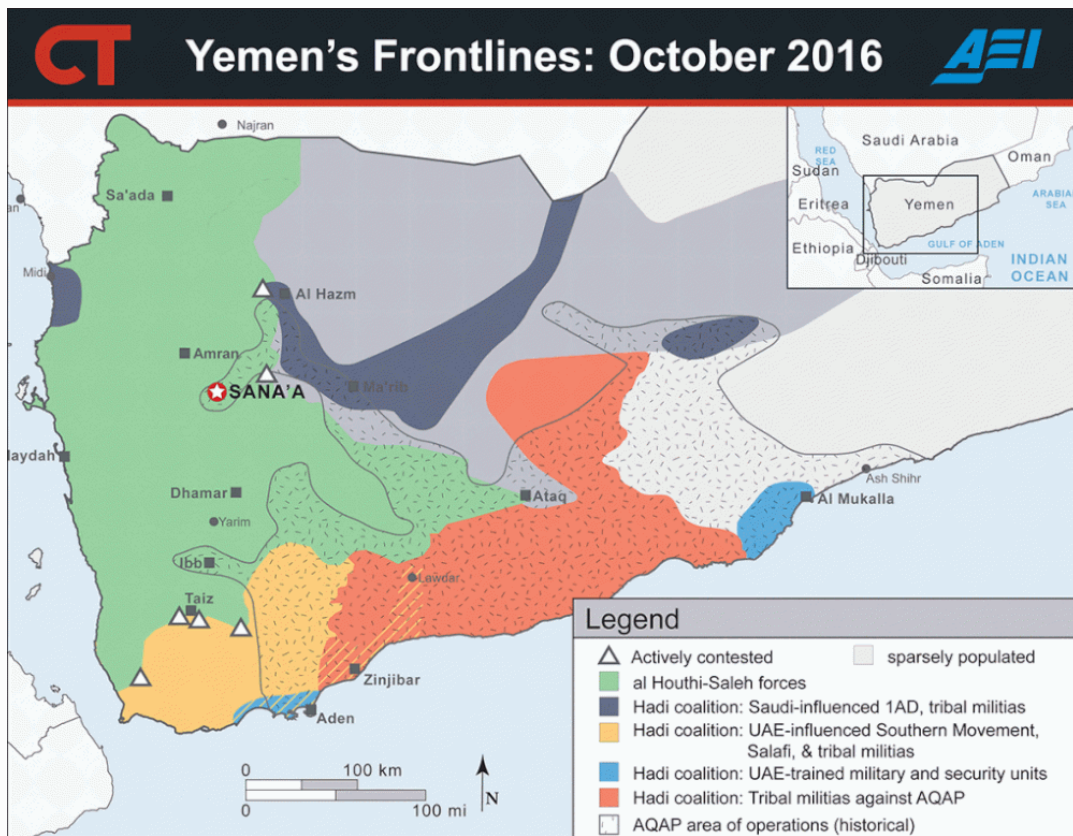
IF CAPTURED THEY WOULD BE IMPRISONED

The night before he left, his family and friends came together to say their goodbyes and to pray for his safe journey, hoping that he can survive and help them in the future. The only way for him to leave without being captured was if he was accompanied by women, because there is a tradition in Yemen that if you travel with women in a car, the military are not allowed to search your car. But, in a time a war this was sometimes overlooked by the rebels and even sometimes the government troops. In any case, Mohammed had no choice and so he set out on his epic journey with his mother, brother and sister-in-law to try to escape the country.

In January 2018 it was time to leave. He said his goodbyes to his wife and children and he set off, other family members in tow and on a journey he would never forget, and a journey that could easily be turned into a Hollywood film any day of the week. Please note that this is not an extensively detailed account of his escape.

He left Sana'a and headed south to Dhamar before moving onto Al Bayda, a 10 hour drive away and each checkpoint he came too was a new battle with unknown outcomes. Now, one thing we need to remember here is he was a Police Officer and at each checkpoint there were documents with the names of each army, police officer or any other military officer in case they decided to flee. If captured they would be imprisoned or potentially killed, so the journey that started at Sana'a and ended in Muscat in Oman was fraught with danger at every turn. Not only did he have to pass through Houthi checkpoints, he also had to pass government controlled ones as well and if it wasn't for the presence of his mother and sister-in-law he would have arrested immediately.

A few days before he left his family devised a way to go and a story to tell at each checkpoint. He was heading to Seiyun to attend a friends wedding. At Al Bayda, a Houthi controlled checkpoint he was stopped and asked for papers and many questions about where they were going and why. He told me, *"We came up with the idea of attending a friends wedding, we called to our friends so they knew what to do if anyone called them and we went. We had to plan ahead of time to make sure if we were stopped and questioned we had the information ready and it was believable"*. At Al Bayda they called back to Sana'a to ask if anyone knew them and to check their identities. Luckily he had some new documents and the people called said they were not on any of the lists or known as a threat working for any of the military organisations. This checkpoint was the *"point of no return"*.



The rebels then called to Seiyun to check the wedding story as well, where some friends had the plan fully under control. If they were caught here they were done for and a prison cell awaited but luckily they checked out and were allowed to move on. The first main checkpoint was over, but there were to be many more. By the end of the journey Mohammed believed they had to pass through around 100 different checkpoints. *"Some we had prepared for, others we did not know existed, so we did anything in order to pass through them without any problems. We would often wait until night because it was easier, and sometimes we would even crash into the lights set up next to the checkpoint to cause a distraction and make it harder for them to see any faces or do anything"*.

After spending around 6 hours at the main checkpoint they headed north to Marib and then headed West directly into Seiyun. This part of the journey took over 13 hours and one might wonder why they didn't just head to Marib from Sana'a, well the simple answer is the roads were highly controlled by both Houthi and government forces, so they set out the best route to try and avoid as many checkpoints as possible. After arriving in Seiyun they rested for 1 day, his mother was tired from the traveling and by this point they had already been on the move for 2 days without stopping, except at the checkpoints.

They rested and then left Seiyun headed to the Al Mahra region, specifically towards the South East of Yemen and the city of Al Ghayda. This would be a 19 hour drive passing through endless checkpoints, either bribing some of the guards or passing through at night in order to avoid being detained for longer. Eventually they arrived in Al Ghayda and could take some rest. He now would have to wait for 1 week to apply for a visa in order to enter Oman.

After a week passed by he was eventually granted a visa to enter Oman and he headed across the country to the city of Muscat on the far East coast. At the same time his brother and sister-in-law would head back to Sana'a and Mohammed would carry on with his mother. After driving for another 16 hours across Oman he finally arrived in Muscat where he would stay for a further 2 days before getting onto a flight heading to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

The entire journey from leaving Sana'a to arriving in Oman was around 2 weeks, and another day before he finally landed in Kuala Lumpur to what he hoped would be a more peaceful and safer place, at least safer than Yemen.

Obviously, within this story I only cover some of the basic details about Mohammad's escape and I believe that each day on his journey to escape the war in Yemen, he encountered so many obstacles before reaching the border at Oman. I encourage you all to use your imagination in thinking about his journey to freedom, which took over 2 weeks. Each hour and minute he went through whilst driving through a country being torn apart by war, being stopped endlessly at checkpoints, knowing each one could be his last before being arrested and then potentially killed. And then try to imagine the feelings he would have in leaving his family behind, his wife and 2 young daughters, having to watch his brother and sister-in-law depart from Al Ghayda, heading back on the return journey to Sana'a and his mother heading to the UAE in search of one of his other brothers.

His entire family had been split up because of the civil war that has been raging on since 2015, and his only hope of freedom lies in a country he has no idea about, but it was the only choice he had. Try to put yourselves in his shoes as he steps onto the plane to leave a country he has been trying to defend as a policeman but has ended up being a place where he became an effective prisoner with only 3 choices, join the rebels, move out of Sana'a and join the government forces or flee. Two of these choices would most certainly have led to fighting his brothers and more than likely being killed in action and the other made he feel like he was abandoning his family. What would you do given these choices?



Mohammed's escape route

I FELT RE-BORN WHEN I CAME OUT OF THE AIRPORT

Mohammed spent less than 1 month in Malaysia before deciding to move on and whilst staying in Malaysia he met quite a few other Yemen refugees. Some of which had tried to come to Korea before but had been rejected, so he had no plan to actually try and come here, he had a plan to move to Australia. But, he had been told that this was a very dangerous trip, having to go via boat and it would take around 1 month. So, he decided it wasn't worth the risk to try, as he had heard many had tried and a lot died on this trip. He wasn't comfortable in Malaysia and couldn't find much work to support him, in fact he even spent several days living on the streets but it was too dangerous for him to fall asleep on the streets, for fear of being arrested, mugged or potentially killed as well, so he had to stay awake as much as he could. He drank tea for 3 days in order to stay awake and then finally found a few days work just to make enough money so he could move on once again. He decided that had to leave because there was nothing for him there and so he bought a ticket to Jeju and once again his journey continued.



Mohammed arrived at Jeju International airport on May 5th 2018

Unlike some refugees coming to Korea, he had no problem entering the country at all and was let in without any issue. He was actually quite surprised that he was let in without any questions but at the same time quite relieved, *"I felt re-born when I came out of the airport. I got into a taxi and went to a hotel. I had enough money to stay there for just 20 days"*.

After 20 days his money ran out and so he left the comfort of the motel where he stayed and went in search for another place to live. At this point he didn't have any money, so as he just walked around with his bag looking for anywhere to stay. Eventually he happened to find a small garden that seemed to be unused and so he climbed over a small wall and hid. He stayed here for the next 15 days.

"Serving as a policeman I had pride, honour and distinction, but now, I find myself having to sleep in a garden, in a country where people were protesting my existence, without understanding at all. I didn't know anyone, and I didn't want to bother people. I am a proud man and I don't like to ask for help but at this point I felt my life could not get any worse", he says.

He now found himself waking up in a garden, not far from the first motel he first stayed at. Now homeless, with little hope of work, and all he can do is try to survive until he can look to earn some small money or find someone to help him. *"After 15 days I could not stand it anymore. I had no jacket to stay warm at night, nowhere to sleep except the hard ground, I had not slept and I had no money. I really felt like I had hit rock bottom. Each night I would try to sleep but would be woken by nightmares of being back in Yemen and on the journey to escape. It was torturing me to not know what was happening with my family, were they safe, were they even alive. Had they been punished for my escape...I had so many thoughts running through my mind every night and when I tried to sleep they would enter my nightmares".*

After leaving Yemen he told me he would try to find out some news each day about what was happening back in Yemen. Were his friends or family members in any danger? And each time he saw the news it was usually about airstrikes, Al Qaeda or rebel attacks and more of his countrymen being killed, especially civilians and children.

Since 2015 the war in Yemen has killed thousands of people within the country and left millions on the brink of famine. Back in 2016, around the time Mohammed's brother was thinking to try and escape a suicide bomber killed at least 40 Yemeni soldiers in Aden, one in a string of deadly bomb attacks against recruits in the war-torn country's second city. "The number of those killed has exceeded 40, with some 50 others wounded," Abdel Nasser al-Wali, head of the Aden health department, told AFP, adding that the death toll is likely to mount due to "critical cases". Medics had initially given a toll of 30 dead. ^[1] This was just one of the many headlines coming from the war in Yemen and Mohammed did not want to be apart of the dead count.

In 2018, at the same time Mohammed was trying to escape, at least 14 people were killed and 40 wounded when car suicide bombers and gunmen tried to storm the headquarters of a Yemeni counter-terrorism unit in Aden. ^[2]



Image via [The Shia Post](#)

Nine soldiers, five militants killed in attack on elite Yemeni forces. Suspected al Qaeda militants attacked a military checkpoint in southeastern Yemen, killing at least nine soldiers from a local force backed by a member of the Saudi-led coalition fighting in the country, an official said. [3]

Al Qaeda ambush kills 12 Yemeni soldiers and leaves them decapitated. The attack began on Wednesday with two Al Qaeda militants on a motorcycle gunning down soldiers posted in Al Aqeeq intersection. The soldiers chased down the bikers only to find themselves caught in a crossfire down the road. *"Unexpectedly the soldiers found themselves in an ambush by dozens of Al Qaeda militants, who began firing on them until the soldiers ran out of ammunition. So many of them were killed,"* a soldier posted in Hadramawt told *The National*. Soldiers arrived after the battle to find *"corpses with their heads cut off"* in a scene they described as a slaughter. [4] These were just a few of the headlines in 2018, so you can imagine how many other people were being killed at this time and before. Mohammed being a Police Officer with a young family did not want to end up like any of his cousins, he wanted to support his family and his country but it was almost impossible.

THE NIGHTMARES OF WAR!

Back on Jeju and after all of his experiences, he eventually found some work on a fishing boat for 13 days, but was let go by the owner for no particular reason. He even begged to stay on and said he can improve. That was how dire the situation was, *"It was at this time I visited the center that was helping other refugees. I couldn't stand to sleep in the garden again. Luckily they found a place where I stayed for 2 days and eventually I was introduced to more of the Yemeni refugees. I thought things would get better at that point"*.



Members of International Movement for Justice and Peace (IMJP) hold placards demanding peace in Yemen during a demonstration in Islamabad March 30, 2015. (Reuters/Faisal Mahmood) © Reuters

One popular misconception by many in Korea was that these refugees all knew each other and it was quite surprising each time we talked to them to discover most of them had never met before Jeju and even on Jeju many of them didn't know each other. They had at this point split up into smaller groups in order to try and survive as best they could. Not all of them could find jobs, so they supported each other as best they could, with upto 10 of them sharing one room and then anyone earning money contributing to the bigger pot, to make sure they could all survive.

Each night as he looked up at the sky he wondered about his family. He brought some photos of his family and constantly wondered what they were doing. *"I often wonder if one day I will stop receiving messages from them. If that day comes I don't know what I will do".*

His nightmares of the war would continue, as he knew many who had been killed due to being forced to join the Houthi rebels. All he wanted was the chance to fend for himself and earn some small money for living and eating. It seems like a simple request but even this seemed very difficult, especially when so many people were protesting their existence.

"What can I do to convince people we are just like them? Maybe nothing...When I arrived and heard about the protests it seemed they had already built up some prejudice against us, with no information and no attempt to understand. I feel incredibly bad about the whole situation, but like the others who fled here I had no choice. My life was in danger if I stayed. I wanted to protect and be there for my family by staying alive".

After talking to his family back in Yemen, they told him the houthi rebels had found out that he had escaped the country, and they now considered him to be a spy for the UAE. So, if he returns to Yemen he would more than likely be killed. At this point things had not gotten better, in fact they were getting worse.

468 YEMENIS DENIED REFUGEE STATUS



Yemeni refugees wait for a meeting with immigration officials at a refugee center on Jeju, South Korea. AFP

Currently, the Jeju Immigration and Foreigners Office granted 23 statuses of humanitarian status among the 481 Yemeni applicants who applied for refugees in the first round of judging in September. On October 17th, 339 people were granted humanitarian status during the second round of judging. Thirty-four people were untidy, and 85 people were judged. The 85 people whose judgments are suspended are only waiting for the final results of the third round of judging. The Jeju Immigration Service is scheduled to complete the final screening within this year. So as of today and as a result of the screening, 2 were recognized as refugees, 56 were rejected, and 412 people were granted humanitarian visas. The two people who were recognized for refugee status were reporters. Yemen has reportedly been criticized for its alleged rivalry with the government and they have been threatened with kidnappings and threats of murder. So according to the Refugee Convention, which Korea joined in 1991. As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of *race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.* [5]

When we heard about Mohammed and his job back in Yemen, we felt that he would qualify for refugee status. In fact it is quite obvious from listening to his story that if he were to return he would most certainly be thrown in prison if not killed. So, considering he is a former Policeman and was rejected it came as quite a surprise to me, as I am sure it might come as a surprise to you. It actually made me question whether the screening process was effective at all, and it feels as though the Korean government just decided to allow the Yemeni 'refugees' to hold a humanitarian visa from the beginning. If journalists who have spoken out against the rebels and the regime in Yemen are in threat of persecution, then a former Police officer, who has had death threats from Al Qaeda as well as threats from the Houthi, surely should be at the top of the list for refugee status.

He was actually denied because the government felt that because his brother and mother were staying in the UAE, so, according to immigration officers, this is considered as a '*safe place*'. Even though and as we know, in order to enter the UAE he would need a visa in the first place, which as it stands is not possible for Yemeni people to get. This seems to show a misunderstanding coming from the government and somewhat of a lack of knowledge in regards to what is actually happening in and around Yemen. Or perhaps they are just unwilling to open the door to refugees, which looking at Korea's history with refugee acceptance seems to make a lot more sense.



Mohammed with some other Yemen refugees - often they shared a room with up to 10 other people due to lack of money and support.

As I have previously stated, Since 2015, some 848 Syrian refugees have applied for refugee status here, with just 3, less than 1%, of them eventually be approved, the rest given humanitarian visas. And according to further statistics from the Ministry of Justice, 40,470 people have applied for refugee status since 1994 and Korea has accepted just 839 or 4.1%. This doesn't take into account people from other countries, such as Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Egypt, Senegal and so on. Historically, we can see Korea has a low percentage intake of refugees from these countries and although they grant humanitarian visas, these are somewhat limiting and also only last for 1 year, with the right to extend depending on individual circumstances. So, it would seem that the Korean government has made a decision to accept only 2 of the 450+ Yemeni cases as 'refugees' somewhat disappointing and it seems it has been done more to appease public discourse about the situation, rather than try to fully understand the entire situation.

As it stands the two successful applicants were journalists who were subject to political persecution in Yemen, the Ministry of Justice said, *"Both journalists received death threats for criticizing the Houthi insurgency,"* the Jeju branch of the ministry's immigration office said in a press statement. The announcement came after months of heated controversy over the Yemeni refugees after their arrival incited protests fueled by Islamophobia and worries about *"fake refugees"* taking jobs and using up resources. Unlike refugee status, the one-year humanitarian visas limit job options and block access to health care, education and welfare benefits. About 2,000 asylum seekers are staying in Korea through the permits, according to refugee rights group NANCEN. As the situation in their home countries remains the same, if not worse, many end up living here without basic public benefits or working options for more than 20 years, renewing their one-year visas each year. *"We frequently get reports of accepted refugees becoming homeless,"* said Koh Eun-ji, a NANCEN activist. *"There is no reliable settlement process provided by the government that helps them learn the Korean language, Korean culture, or how to navigate life here."*

[6]



Yemen's warring parties agreed to a ceasefire in Hodeidah at end of peace talks in Sweden [Reuters]

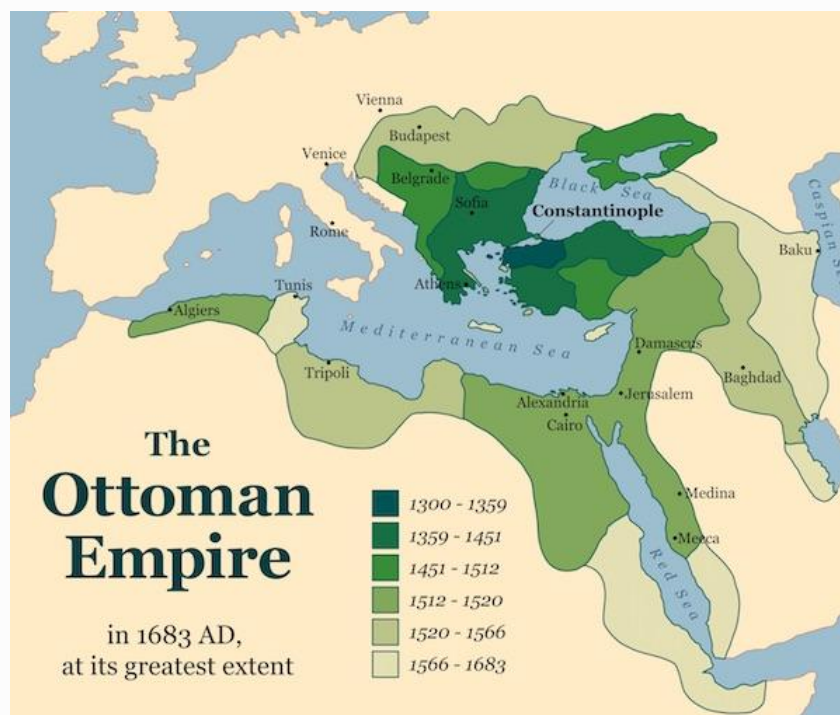
Today the war in Yemen continues and even since the so called ceasefire in Hodeidah bombs are still dropping on Sana'a^[7] Fighting also broke out on the outskirts of Yemen's port city of Hodeidah on Friday, residents said, a day after a ceasefire agreement was reached by the warring parties at U.N.-sponsored peace talks. Despite the ceasefire, one resident told Reuters he could hear the sound of missiles and automatic gunfire in the direction of the eastern 7th July suburb. Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said coalition warplanes had launched two strikes on Ras Isa city north of Hodeidah. The coalition did not immediately confirm the report. The warring sides agreed after a week of consultations in Sweden to cease fighting in Hodeidah and withdraw their troops as part of confidence-building measures to pave the way for a wider truce and political negotiations. It was the first significant breakthrough for U.N.-led peace efforts to end the nearly four-year-old war that has killed tens of thousands of people and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. ^[8]

Mohammed, like many of his fellow Yemeni brothers and sisters is still living on Jeju and fortunately has now found work on a fish farm, so his future is looking much brighter, but he is still awaiting the outcome of the appeal of his refugee status. This feels like the beginning of his story and we will be returning to Jeju early next year to catch up with him on his life and his family. We can only hope that the MOJ and the immigration service open their eyes a little more to what has been happening in Yemen and why these men, women and children have chosen sanctuary in this country.

THE LEAD-UP TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE'S INFLUENCE IN YEMEN



Earlier, I focused mostly on South Korea and its relationship with the Middle East. As I am British, I felt that it was also necessary to explore the history between my own country and Yemen and after researching this history between the British Empire and what is now known as Yemen, it came as no surprise to discover that we had a significant foothold within the Middle East post World War I. As I am a man who likes to keep to his word, and I have on numerous occasions stated, *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"*, it would be somewhat ironic if I were to ignore my own country's history and dealings when it came to a topic that I was working on. Therefore, it came time to once again open my mind and start to look at what influence the British Empire had within South West Arabia, and particularly Yemen post WWI and WWII. The rest of this article explores the relationship between The British Empire and Yemen post WWI.



Historical map of the Ottoman Empire.

In the 19th Century the Egyptian army, under Muhammad Ali captured the northern half of Yemen at the behest of the Ottoman Empire while the British Empire captured the southern port of Aden. Over the following decades the British and Ottoman Empire expanded control and influence over the surrounding tribal areas. To avoid territorial conflict, they signed a treaty officially dividing South Arabia into North and South Yemen. The great majority of North Yemen was of the Zaydi religious sect, increasing the power and influence of the Yemeni Zaydi Imam. Rule over South Yemen, dominated by the Shafi'i branch of Sunni Islam, and was consolidated by the British in the 20th Century in the form of the East and West Aden Protectorate which eventually became the Federation of South Arabia. [9]

In the early years of the twentieth century Arab nationalism was the province of a small elite who dreamed of a greater Arab role. Towards the end of World War I, the British were in control of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia (Iraq), and British, French and Greek forces stood ready to march across the Bulgarian border and occupy Ottoman Thrace and Constantinople. And in November 1919, there seemed to be little the interim Ottoman government could do to stop the Allies. The remnants of the two Ottoman armies, destroyed by the final British offensive in Palestine and Syria were slowly reassembling under Mustafa Kemal's command in Cilicia, north of Aleppo. In Mesopotamia the battered but still intact Ottoman Sixth Army regrouped north of Mosul and awaited orders. Far away to the south in Arabia, General Fakhri Pasha and his besieged garrison at Medina continued to hold out, having grimly defied Arab attacks for more than two years. Fakhri would not finally surrender until February 1919.



Photo taken from <https://cmvtcivils.wordpress.com/2015/09/05/why-league-of-nations-on-failed-while-un-fairly-succeeded/>

At the end of World War I, Wilson finally got his much fought for League of Nations, in which a majority of Asian and Middle Eastern countries were ignored. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and German empires were dismantled and were re-distributed between the Allies without much thought of any consequences in the future. [11]

Throughout 1919–24 these regions struggled to recover from the devastation of the First World War and the destabilising effects of the loss of four large historic empires: the German Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The United States gained dominance in world finance. [12] Democracy and prosperity largely went together in the 1920s but following the Great Depression in 1929, it led to a distrust in the effectiveness of democracy and its collapse in most of Europe, including the Baltic and Balkan countries, Poland, Spain, and Portugal. After this period powerful expansionary dictatorships emerged in Italy, Japan, and Germany. [13]



Philippe Rekacewicz / Le Monde Diplomatique

During World War II, the Middle East played a vital part in British strategic calculations. As prime minister from May 1940, Churchill placed a high priority on bolstering British power in the region. At a critical phase in the war, he insisted on dispatching large numbers of tanks and men to reinforce British forces confronting the Italians, and later the Germans, on the border between Egypt and Libya. During the war, large reserves of oil in the Arabian Peninsula had come on-stream and because of the closure of the Mediterranean to British commercial shipping, they used Middle East oil during the war, mainly coming from the area east of the Suez, an area I will touch on later. After the war, the balance changed and over the next three decades, Britain became steadily more dependent on oil imports from the Middle East, especially Kuwait. [16]

COLONY OF ADEN AND THE ADEN PROTECTORATES



Edmaps.com - https://www.edmaps.com/html/yemen_crisis_in_five_maps.html

"(Gamal Abdel) Nasser envisioned a Yemeni state that would be controlled from Cairo and would mirror the United Arab Republic in many aspects from its constitution to the format of its postal stamps. The founding Yemeni republicans were emulators of Nasserism, supporters of Arab nationalist unity, and consciously invited Egyptian intervention to secure the republic", Asher Orkarby. [17]

Jumping forward to the 1950s, Egypt, was now under the reign of Nasser and was to play a significant role in the development of this era. As the British Chiefs of Staff noted just prior to the outbreak of the Suez crisis: *"The need to deploy forces in the Colony of Aden and the Aden Protectorates will continue for as long as we can foresee"*.^[18] The geographical position of southwest Arabia, particularly Yemen and Aden, had a continued role in the convenient solution for transport of goods throughout the East and West and the British base in Aden became a significant asset for this reason. Damascus, Beirut and Baghdad were the cities in which the anti-western brand of Arab nationalism was first generated, and it was its adoption by the new military leadership in Cairo which gave it great political significance; Aden by contrast appeared as a provincial backwater.^[19]

The supreme crisis of British power in the Middle East came later that year, appropriately at the focal point of Britain's interests in the region and the reason d'être of its presence there—the Suez Canal. In spite of its gradually diminishing economic position relative to other powers, Britain remained the world's foremost shipping nation, and the British merchant fleet was by far the largest user of the canal. ^[20]



Gamal Abdel Nasser - IBL/REX/Shutterstock.com

ARAB NATIONALISM AND BRITISH IMPERIALISM

"Foreign intervention in post-WWII civil wars can be divided into three main categories: military, economic, and diplomatic", Asher Orkaby [21]

Britain was on retreat from Africa and East Asia regions in the early 1950's and so the coastline of Yemen, in particular Aden, positioned as one of the most significant trade routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean became invaluable. Aden would prove to be a place to bring together the imperial governments of Southern and Eastern Asia, in turn connecting them to the Western world and at this time was becoming a hustling and bustling city, bringing in vast amounts of goods being distributed around the world. It was becoming the center port for all deliveries between East and West and therefore became of great interest to many. During the course of 1955, 5,239 vessels called at the harbour of Aden, making it the second busiest port in the world after New York.

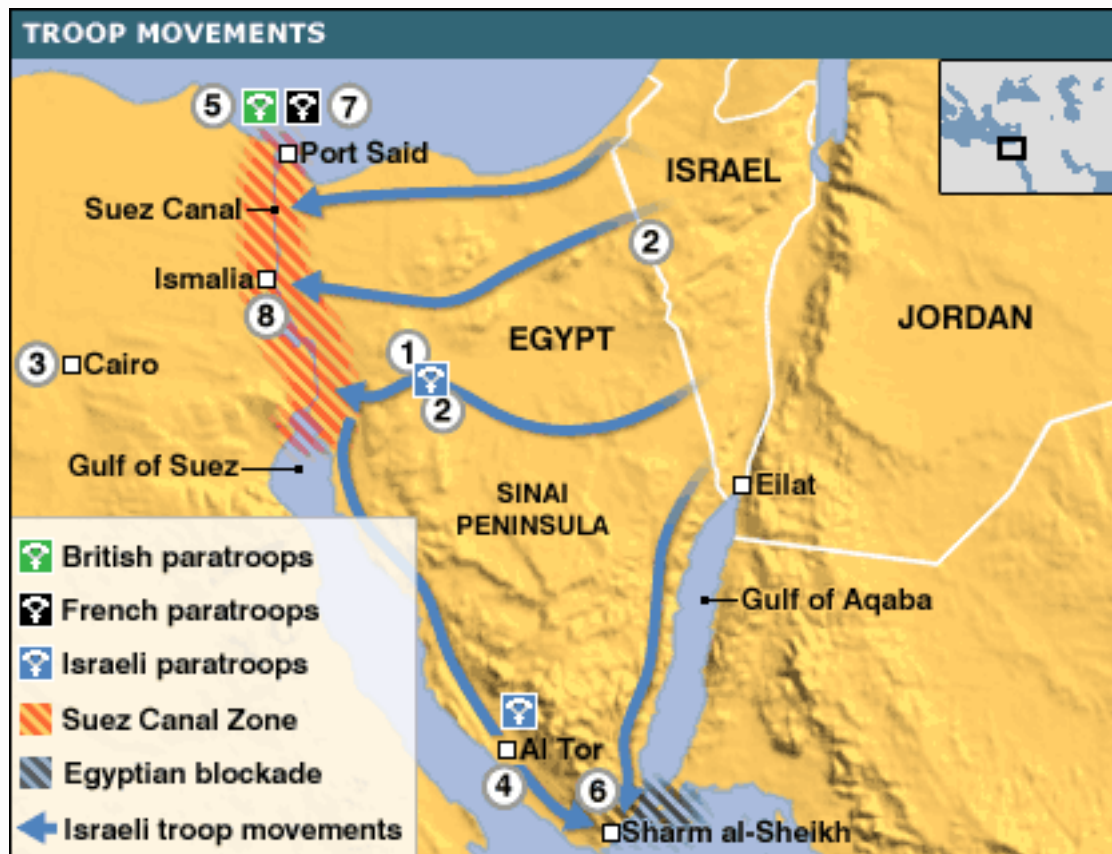
Aden had retained its historic role as an entrepôt for East—West trade and was visited by all the major shipping lines operating in the western half of the Indian Ocean. Between 1955 and 1959 the British pursued an ambitious programme in southwest Arabia designed to consolidate their long-term influence in the region. In February 1955 a defence pact between Turkey and Iraq was signed and the reactions of the British and Egyptian governments to this event provided a definitive demonstration of the irreconcilability of British imperialism and Arab nationalism.[22]

During 1956, Nasser laid successful claim to the leadership of the Arab world and for the next decade he became a cynosure guiding politicians and people from Algeria to Yemen in their struggle to recreate a dignified role for the Arabs following the perceived humiliations of European rule and the establishment of a Zionist state in Palestine. The Anglo-Egyptian conflict of the 1950s and 1960s was predicated not on a clash of interests but on an incompatibility between two different visions of Middle East order and formed the backdrop to events in southwest Arabia. To Nasser the attempt to bind Iraq and Jordan to a coalition of non-Arab western oriented powers was a threat to Egypt's regional ambitions. In his view the interests of Egypt were linked inextricably to those of the wider Arab world. Nasser responded to the actions of Turkey and Iraq by drawing closer to Syria and negotiating an arms deal with the Soviet Union. His argument that the Baghdad Pact was a cover for western imperialism was forcefully presented by radio Cairo and in the Arab press.[24]

By the 1960's Aden had become a major trade route and employed over 11,000 locals, as well as attracting a large number of immigrants for opportunities of work.

THE ARAB CHALLENGE TO BRITAIN'S EMPIRE

The British and American attitudes towards Nasser differed but they still undertook joint operations to undermine his position, under the codename Omega. The primary aim of the Omega operations was to discredit Nasser as an Arab leader by weakening his domestic position and building up his rivals abroad. [25] The motivation behind Eisenhower's opposition to the British invasion of Egypt is the subject of some debate but it reflected at least in part the greater priority which the United States gave to the Cold War confrontation in comparison with the increasing British obsession with the threat from Arab nationalism. [26] However, once the Eisenhower administration understood the extent of Nasser's hostility to British plans, they attempted to dissuade the British from encouraging new Arab members to join the Baghdad Pact. Anglo-American differences on the matter of how to deal with Arab nationalism diverged further after Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal. The motivation behind Eisenhower's opposition to the British invasion of Egypt is the subject of some debate but it reflected at least in part the greater priority which the United States gave to the Cold War confrontation, in comparison with the increasing British obsession with the threat from Arab nationalism.[27]



1. 29 October: Israeli paratroops dropped east of town of Suez
2. 30 October: More paratroops dropped to the east of Mitla Pass. Troops begin crossing the border at Qussaima.
3. 31 October: British bombs dropped on Cairo and Cairo international airport
4. 2 November: Israeli paratroops land near Al Tor, west of Sinai
5. 5 November: British paratroops land west of Port Said. French paratroops land south of Port Said
6. 5 November: Israelis capture Sharm al-Sheikh to lift blockade of Gulf of Aqaba.
7. 6 November: Anglo-French invasion force bombardment and landings
8. 7 November: Anglo-French forces claim to have occupied most of the Suez Canal zone as far as Ismailia, when UN orders a halt to fighting
- 21 November: First UN troops land at Port Said
- 23 November: British and French forces begin withdrawal from Egypt
- 22 December: Withdrawal completed at midnight

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5195068.stm

By this time Britain was planning war with Egypt to regain control of the Suez canal and on October 29, 1956, Israeli armed forces pushed into Egypt toward the Suez Canal after Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-70) nationalized the canal in July of that same year, initiating the Suez Crisis. Around this time Aden was singled out as a vital asset in the defence of British Middle East interests. In addition the Defence White Paper produced just a few months after the end of the Suez crisis affirmed that Aden should be retained as a key element of Britain's new defence policy. It stated: "*Britain must at all times be ready to defend Aden Colony and Protectorates and the territories on the Persian Gulf for whose defence she is responsible. For this task land, air and sea forces have to be maintained in that area*". [28] During the 1960s, Soviet and American policy in Yemen was based on realpolitik strategic calculations, rather than ideologically-based decisions. The Soviet construction of the western Yemeni port of Hodeidah (Al Hudaydah), was part of a broader Soviet effort to secure international shipping, particularly along the Red Sea and the entryway to the Suez Canal.

SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN'S "COLD WAR"



I think it is important for us to be aware of Saudi Arabia and Iran's "Cold War" that was taking place during this time as well. US grand strategy envisioned a closer relationship with the Saudi oil monarchy north of the Yemen border, thereby placing a premium on Arabian political stability and the containment of regional conflicts. The converging foreign policies of the US and USSR was manifested by mutual support and recognition of the YAR. Furthermore, by 1965, both powers tolerated and even encouraged Nasser's continued occupation of Yemen in an effort to divert and maintain their individual strategic interests in Yemen, and subsequently divert Egyptian attention away from Israel. After 1967 and through the 1980s, however, South Arabia became a partial exception to ideology-less Cold War interactions in the Middle East with the founding of the first and only communist Arab state in South Yemen. [29] Taking off both the "Cold War lens" and the "Arab Cold War lens" reveals multiple interactions, conflicts, and themes that would have otherwise been obscured by the dominant paradigm. This narrative of the international Yemen civil war focuses on traditional overarching themes of US-USSR and Egypt-Saudi Arabia competition, while reinterpreting their applicability to the Yemen case and adding layers of narrative and analysis beyond the central conflicts. [30]

Although the British clung on in Aden until 1967, the attempt to prolong British imperialism had unintended consequences, most notably the radicalisation of politics in Aden and the Protectorates. After 1967 the new leaders of the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY) rejected Cairo's brand of Arab nationalism; the extension of British rule for a sufficient length of time to witness the decline of Nasser's influence provided some consolation for policy-makers in Whitehall. [32] The British continued to push for alternatives to Nasserism post 1967, so they could keep a foothold within the Middle East but it came at risk, and eventually eighteen months after the British withdrawal the National Liberation Front (NLF) initiated the so-called 'corrective movement', in which the pragmatic Qahtan was replaced by a clique of Marxist ideologues including Muhammad 'Ali Haytham and 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il.[33]

In 1970 this group declared the creation of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). North of the border the conclusion of the Yemen Civil War led to the abolition of the Imamate and in 1970 the inauguration of an era of authoritarian politics and liberal economics came into the Yemeni Arab Republic (YAR). In order to understand this in more detail we should look at the underlying issue that is the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two of the biggest players when it comes to Middle East politics.

YEMEN'S WAR IS FAR MORE COMPLEX THAN JUST A SAUDI-IRANIAN CONFLICT

Yemen was ruled for a millennium by Zaydi Shia imams until 1962, and the Houthis were founded as a Zaydi Shia revivalist movement. However, the Houthis have not called for restoring the imamate in Yemen, and religious grievances have not been a major factor in the war. Rather, the Houthis' demands have been primarily economic and political in nature. In 1839 the British set up a protective area around the southern port of Aden. North Yemen became a republic in 1962, but it was not until 1967 that the British Empire withdrew from what became South Yemen. The British Empire had control for a substantial part of the 20th Century in Yemen and assisted in the way it would develop moving forward into the 21st.



Protesters burned photos of the Shah. | Source

The Iranian revolution of 1979 and the advent of the Islamic Republic — with its fiercely anti-American slant — were perceived as a double threat to the conservative Sunni monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula, allied with the United States. Saudi Arabia was a key financial backer of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during his 1980-1988 war with Iran. With Iraq weakened following the 1991 Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and Iran became *"the two main regional powers,"* said Clement Therme, a researcher at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Up until the late 1970s, relations between Iran and its Gulf neighbors were relatively cordial, if not warm. There were several long-running border disputes, and the Arabs criticized Iran for recognizing the state of Israel, but their common alliance with the United States kept disagreements in check. Iran and Saudi Arabia were the "twin pillars" of American policy in the region, as guarantors of Western oil supplies and bulwarks against the Leftist ideologies which prevailed at the time. [34]

Since 1979, the Saudi narrative has focused on a specific understanding of Iranian ambitions in the region. The Saudi perspective is that they are engaged in a defense of the status quo against a revolutionary, militaristic and expansionist Shi'a theocracy. In this context, Saudi Arabia is content to maintain the current regional order, whereas Iran is in its 'Trotskyist' stage, seeking to export revolution. Iranian ambitions do, however, precede the 1979 Islamic Revolution, as Henry Kissinger had discussed with Shah Reza Pahlavi (documented in Andrew Scott Cooper's book *The Oil Kings*) the possibility of the then-key American ally and pre-eminent regional military power taking over Saudi and Kuwaiti oil fields.

The Iranian regime is animated both by this historical memory and a deep enmity towards Saudi Wahhabism. Saudi elites consider Iran an existential threat, as its imperial ambitions involve overturning the ruling order in the Gulf. In the Iranian narrative, their country is considered an ancient regional power, historically dominant and impelled to remain so. Governments post-1979 have simply been operators – rather than shapers – of Iran's foreign policy in this regard. Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution played a big role in creating the hostile environment we see today. Iran engages in power politics like any other state, the difference being that the state in Iran (since 1979) is uninterested in being a member of the international community. Though it desires economic interaction and integration into international trade flows, it draws a distinction between such conduct and political dealings; a reflection of the ruling political Islamist ideology. Neither is it interested in sharing intelligence or capabilities on matters of national security with other countries in the region.

Yemen on the other hand has a history of shifting alliances amid interference from outside actors. Relations between South Yemen (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen or PDRY) and Iran changed entirely after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, as they had been on very poor terms with the Shah, later becoming cordial with the Islamic Republic. North Yemen (the Yemen Arab Republic or YAR) had very bad relations with Iran as Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh was firmly on the side of Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War. Then-Iranian President Khatami met Saleh – by this point, President of a unified Yemen – in 2003, and managed to reach an accord, which later deteriorated after the beginning of the Houthi insurgency in 2004. Saleh then invested heavily in portraying Iran as behind the Houthi movement, a narrative that convinced neither the US nor Saudi Arabia at the time. [35] The conflict in Yemen has never been fought along a clear-cut sectarian axis. Saudi Arabia has supported a variety of groups there, including the Zaidi/Shi'a Imamate of North Yemen in the 1962–70 civil war, and subsequently both tribal groups and the state in order to keep Yemen neither too weak nor too strong to pose a threat. Saudi Arabia even implied it would recognise South Yemen's secession, but relented in exchange for permanent recognition of Saudi ownership of disputed borderland territories after 2000. The most recent Saudi adventure in Yemen, launched by newly-appointed Defence Minister Prince Muhammad bin Salman in 2015, was justified as a mission to restore Yemen's legitimate government.



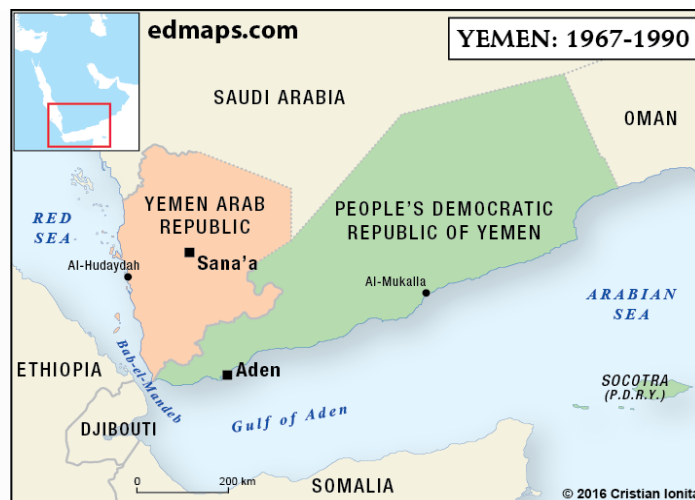
Edmaps.com - https://www.edmaps.com/html/yemen_crisis_in_five_maps.html

It functioned, however, as a mechanism to strengthen his internal position, bin Salman thinking the Houthis would not last longer than a few weeks against the well equipped Saudi military. Three years later this has clearly not worked out as planned, with the highly-advanced state having completely failed to defeat a poorly-equipped insurgency. A UN Panel of Experts declared they had no definitive proof that Iran had been providing the Houthis with material support. The Houthis have in any case proven that they are no-one's proxy, having often opposed Iranian diktats, for example moving into Aden against Iranian advice. The Saudi/UAE blockade, instead of preventing military aid from reaching the insurgency, has created a humanitarian crisis. Saudi policy seems unlikely to change as the new Crown Prince brooks no dissent, whereas some debate is permitted in Iran, which may yet affect policy. [36]

After considering the history, it can be argued that the British Empire and US should hold more responsibility for actions in trying to force imperialism into an area clearly not setup for it. And in doing so potentially stunting the growth of the country in its own right. The US had a significant part to play in this and have since continued to push for the larger key players, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in order to take more control of the Middle East, particularly surrounding Yemen, and mostly due to its geographical placement being key to connect East and West. When we move forward into 2015, and the latest civil war, we saw the US and UK continued support of the Saudi-led coalition in attacking Yemen. Saudi Arabia formed a coalition of Arab states to defeat the Houthis in Yemen and this coalition includes Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan and Senegal effectively fighting against the Houthis, backed by Iran. Several of these countries have sent troops to fight on the ground in Yemen, while others have only carried out air attacks. [37]

Jumping forward briefly to today, and according to statistics produced by YouGov recently, more than half of British people are unaware of the so-called "forgotten war" currently happening in Yemen, even though the Government's support for a military coalition has been accused of killing thousands of civilians. [38] And I am sure that a large percentage were unaware of the British Empire's colonisation and history with Yemen, and the subsequent battles that were undertaken in order to try and control this area. So, when we consider the current civil war raging on in Yemen, we, the British Empire, should also be held accountable and when we consider everything from a historical context it could be easily argued that we caused the lead up to this mess in the first place. Maybe not by direct action but historically, the British influence within the Middle East caused almost an evil circle of events that transpired and pushed Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries into the situations they are currently in.

As it stands the US and UK are only backing the biggest players within this region, namely Saudi Arabia and anyone who has opposed these forced colonizations of the past, such as Iran and the Yemen Houthis rebels, are constantly being pushed aside, and it becomes clear to see why we are now at this point in history. They are only backing them due to the resources, location, power and money they hold and that has been seen with other military based invasions, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. These may have been retaliation to the so-called 'terror' attacks by Al Qaeda, ISIS etc., but clearly they were pursued for bigger and more important factors, which always came down to location and resources, such as oil.



Edmaps.com - https://www.edmaps.com/html/yemen_crisis_in_five_maps.html

THE UNION OF THE TWO YEMENS

Moving back to the late 1990s, the union of the two Yemens reflected both the regional and global victory of capitalism over communism: the free marketeers in the north effectively annexed the socialist government of the south. Southern resentment flared up in 1994 and caused a brief civil war whose conclusion reconfirmed the northern victory. This brought us up to the modern era, where a coalition government was formed in April 1993 made up of ruling parties of former north and south and then in August the Vice-President Ali Salim al-Baid withdrew to Aden, alleging that the south is being marginalized and southerners are being attacked by northerners. Saleh declared a state of emergency in May 1994 and dismissed Al-Baid and other southern government members following a political deadlock and sporadic fighting. Al-Baid declared independence of Democratic Republic of Yemen and Northern forces captured Aden, whilst the southern leaders fled abroad and were sentenced to death in absentia.

Since the end of these conflicts, the government of the united Yemen struggled to introduce social and economic reforms against a background of rising tensions between the nationalist inheritors of the revolution, socialists and Islamic groups. In the aftermath of the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, in which 3 of them were Yemeni participants, (Saudi Arabia being the predominant country of origin of the other 16 terrorists), the country began appearing in British and American news bulletins as a breeding ground for Islamic terrorists. [39]

There were a number of other attacks that led up to 9.11 during the 1990s and early 2000s, including the US naval vessel USS Cole which was damaged in an al-Qaeda suicide attack in Aden in 2000, killing 17 US personnel and sparking more violence leading up to February 2002 when Yemen expels more than 100 foreign Islamic clerics in a crackdown on al-Qaeda. In October Al-Qaeda attacks and badly damages oil supertanker MV Limburg in Gulf of Aden, killing one and injuring 12 crew members and costing Yemen dear in lost port revenues. We then see the Houthi insurgency in 2004, when hundreds are killed as troops battle the Shia insurgency led by Hussein al-Houthi in the north.



<http://csglobe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/US-fears-Russian-publication-of-satellite-photos-of-the-9.jpg>

After 9.11 the US took great steps in attempting to combat terrorism throughout the Middle East, some successful and others drastic failures. But, throughout the period they held a strong foothold within this area and in particular Saudi Arabia and UAE. The Houthis and the Yemeni government have battled on and off since 2004, but much of the fighting was confined to the Houthis' stronghold, northern Yemen's impoverished Saada province, however, in September 2014, the Houthis took control of Yemen's capital, Sana'a, and proceeded to push southwards towards the country's second-biggest city, Aden. In response to the Houthis' advances, this coalition of Arab states launched a military campaign in 2015 to defeat the Houthis and restore Yemen's government.

At the end of the day it all comes down to how we act and as we are all well aware, in war, the biggest casualties are always the civilians, especially the children, and so it is vitally important that we as the general public are more aware of our own country's input into these problems, because most of them have stemmed out of our attempts at colonisation and want of power, stemming out of the 2 World Wars.



THE OIL AND GAS FACTOR

According to American political analyst and researcher Phil Butler, the US-backed Saudi Arabian war against Yemen is neither about the longstanding sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shiites, nor about the much-discussed military campaign aimed against al-Qaeda in the region. While Western media outlets usually refer to Yemen as a "small" energy producer, the truth of the matter is the country is sitting on substantial oil and gas reserves, and has been since the late 1980's, which Saudi Arabia and its allies want to control. In addition, Yemen lies at the Bab el-Mandab, a key checkpoint for maritime transit of oil, with 3.4 million barrels of oil passing through it each day. In one of his previous analytical reports for New Eastern Outlook back in 2016, Phil Butler called attention to the fact that Saudi Arabia's oil wealth is doomed to falter, *"Given the nature of the country's [Saudi Arabia's] oil reserves, and almost unlimited production for decades, it's possible the Saudis could simply be running out of gas," the American analyst stressed.* To stay on top, Riyadh has to maintain control over oil reserves beyond its borders, particularly in Yemen. The Western establishment is assisting Saudi Arabia, and with "reason": in November 2005 the Republic of Yemen expropriated its oil basins — the Marib Al-Jawf Block — from Hunt Oil Company and ExxonMobil affiliates. [44]

Saudi Arabia has also started to implement precautions against Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz and stop the Gulf oil exports by building an alternative oil pipeline from its borders passing through the Yemeni district of Al-Mahrah to the Arabian Sea.

As I noted in my previous article, Butler also pointed to the fact that the Obama administration had long been aware of Yemen's substantial gas capacity. He quotes Ambassador Stephen A. Seche's 2008 secret cable, published by Wikileaks, which reads *"that the governorates of Shabwa, Marib and al-Jawf have high potential for significant gas deposits."* As for oil, according to the detailed 2002 United States Geological Survey (USGS), Yemen possesses vast offshore oil reservoirs in addition to its 3 billion barrels of proved oil reserves, the analyst underscores. That is why neither the Obama administration, nor European governments are rushing to help the Yemenis being bombed and shelled by Riyadh: all of them have their own vested interests in the Middle East.

As well as this, in a CIA report on Yemen's oil resources, in 1988, it was made clear the amount of oil and gas resources that were available and who the main interested countries were in developing this resource. *"Fifty years of episodic oil exploration in South Yemen has only recently met with success...according to Press reports, a consortium of Kuwaiti, French and US firms were awarded a contract to explore part of the East Shabwah Basin last year"* (1987). Other oil companies from the US, France and the UK have signed exploration and production agreements to explore for oil outside the Shabwah area. So, we can see that the resources have been there since the late 1980's and conveniently just before the 1990 split between the North and South. [45]

At this time the bulk of South Yemen's oil reserves were being developed by the Soviet Union but they estimated there was more than 20 billion barrels of oil-in-place at this time, with at least 5 billion barrels available for recovery. Although the Soviet Union was the dominant player in South Yemen's oil development during this time, the participation of Western and other oil companies was growing. It was believed that Moscow will accommodate Aden's request to accelerate development efforts by increasing its drilling activity and accepting Western technology and equipment. Under this scenario, South Yemen oil exports could reach 100,000 barrels per day (b/d) by 1990 and 500,000 b/d by the mid-1990s. [46]



Yemen LNG takes shape in Balhaf - 2012 from article <http://afaq.total.com/afaq2/desc.aspx?AId=15&issue=4>

According to press reports at this time, France's CFP-Total oil company signed a six-year production-sharing agreement last year to explore and develop a 16,000-square-kilometer area in eastern Shabwah Province contiguous to an area under exploration by the Soviet Union. CFP-Total subsequently sold a 40-percent stake in the concession to a US oil company, Union Oil of California, and a 20-percent stake to the Kuwait Petroleum Company. Another French oil company, Elf-Aquitaine, in January 1987 obtained a six-year production-sharing concession for over 19,000 square kilometers of onshore and offshore areas in the Aden/Abyan area. Elf-Aquitaine then sold an interest in the concession to two British oil companies, according to press reports. Kuwait's Independent Petroleum Group (IPG) has onshore and offshore concessions that include part of the Balhaf Basin. The Yemen Exploration Petroleum Company (YEPC), an affiliate of Hunt International Petroleum Company, has a 50-percent interest in the concession, according to press reports. Drilling began in June 1988. Canadian Occidental Petroleum, Ltd., a subsidiary of a US oil company, and Lebanon's Consolidated Contractors Company acquired a 36,000-square kilometer concession in the southern part of the Hadhramaut region in April 1987. This concession was previously held by a group of Brazilian, Spanish, and British companies, according to press reports. Three US oil companies-Hunt International Petroleum, Amoco, and Texaco-have expressed interest in obtaining concessions in areas adjacent to the Soviet-discovered fields. Hunt International is working through its YEPC subsidiary to negotiate an agreement with Aden. Amoco, which has been pursuing a concession in South Yemen since 1984, has seven applications for review and is most interested in an area north of the Soviets' Shabwah concession, according to the US Embassy in Sana'a. [47]

Back in the 1980's Yemen was considered one of the poorest countries in the World, even though there was such potential for its oil and gas resources. South Yemen was among the most underdeveloped countries in the world. Except for oil, the country is poorly endowed with natural resources, and potentially cultivable land is less than 5 percent of the country's total area. Although agriculture accounts for nearly 15 percent of gross domestic product and employs about 50 percent of the workforce, South Yemen has to import about two-thirds of its food requirements. The country suffers from a manpower shortage, primarily because about 20 percent of its total labor force works abroad, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Yemen has been in the perfect position to be manipulated and controlled by various powers since the British Empire abandoned it in 1967, especially Saudi Arabia, who lie to the north and who have a clear and vested interest in what is happening in and around the country.

And in September 2018 Saudi Arabia started construction on a pipeline in the Al-Mahra province in Yemen according to a high ranking Yemeni official. The pipeline will allow the kingdom to bypass the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait to transport oil directly to the Arabian Sea. Residents of al-Mahra are protesting the Saudi military occupation of the province as well their construction of an oil pipeline without local approval. Mint Press New reports: The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the new pipeline would allow Saudi Arabia to export oil from refineries in Al-Mahra through the Rub' al Khali Desert, the largest contiguous sand desert in the world, which lies in Yemen's northeast. As a result, residents in the Al-Mahra province have organized an open sit-in, rejecting Saudi policies in their country as well as the kingdom's dominance over vital infrastructure in the area. Seventeen percent of petroleum imports to Yemen enter from Oman through a border crossing in Al-Mahra, which, along with the province's seaport and airport, is under Saudi and UAE control.

On Tuesday, Saudi-led coalition forces arrested Ali bin Salem al-Huraizy, Al-Mahra's former deputy governor, after he called for protests against the Saudi-Emirati military coalition. Al-Huraizy rejects Saudi plans to build the oil port in Al-Mahra without the permission of the local authorities. He recently told a group of protesters: *They carry out their own projects including a pipeline without government or local knowledge. We hope that the legitimate leadership can be more attentive to what's happening.*"

Al-Huraizy also criticized Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Yemen, Abdullah al-Jaber, for receiving Yemen's former President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is allegedly on house-arrest in Saudi Arabia, at Al-Mahra's airport, claiming it proved that the Saudi ambassador is in control of Al-Mahra.

Saudi authorities claim al-Huraizy used social media to stir up tensions between Yemeni tribes and the coalition by saying Saudi Arabia is occupying Al-Mahra. In an interview with Aljazeera last month, Huraizy said Saudi Arabia is looking to solidify its military presence in the province. Local residents in Al-Mahra back al-Huraizy's sentiments, claiming fishing and navigation in the local port has been prevented and the airport has been turned into a military barracks. Saudi authorities give orders to local security and control customs in the region and exercise control over ports, local authorities and tribal affairs. Al-Huraizy said, *"we feel like the situation is extremely complex at the moment because the legitimate government is being held hostage by the [Saudi] coalition."*

Yemen's Oil and Mineral Ministry has denounced the looting of the country's oil resources by Saudi Arabia, saying the move is a blatant violation of international law. The ministry said in a statement on Saturday that Saudi Arabia transports Yemeni oil to the Arabian Sea through a pipeline which extends from the Rub' al Khali desert to Hadhramaut and Al-Mahrah provinces south of the country. It said that Riyadh's move to plunder Yemen's wealth is done with the complicity of the country's former Saudi-allied government. Experts say the pipeline would allow the kingdom not to be constrained to the Strait of Hormuz or the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, both strategic choke points that affect its current oil shipping routes.

Given all of this, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister, Khalid Al-Falih, still believes oil markets will achieve balance in 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/e706d899-d85f-458c-8731-c603b21e160e>

Back in the early 2000's in Balhaf there was a "golden opportunity", developing local talent. *"The plant has been constructed in Yemen by Yemenis,"* states Yemen LNG's General Manager Rafin. "Five thousand people are employed directly and indirectly and the company is involved in the local community, everywhere from schools to construction to scholarships." HR manager Abdulla Al Wadee says, "We thought we could never start with such a high level of Yemenisation at such a complex plant, but 85 percent of the staff are now Yemenis, the only LNG project in the world to achieve such levels so quickly. The target is to raise this to more than 90 per cent and bring more Yemenis into senior positions."

Abdul Aziz Da'er, General Manager of Dome Petroleum, explains how his firm "started very small" in 1999 but that it was "amazing how the opportunity and hard work" had allowed it to grow. Starting with Total on the Masila oil-fields since 2000, Dome provided electrical works and instrumentation to Yemen LNG. It created jobs for 350 Yemenis at the height of the project, and is now recruiting 50 young people from the Balhaf area for training. On the back of success at Yemen LNG, Dome has won further contracts in Yemen, Algeria and Abu Dhabi. Its local base allowed it to respond to an emergency request from Total E&P within ten days, when a US company would have required eight weeks. Now Dome is working on solar-powered lighting, and wind-farms to be built on Yemen's Red Sea coast. "No-one will build Yemen for us," Abdul Aziz Da'er says emphatically.

So, before the civil war broke out there was a lot of potential growth happening in Yemen, especially surrounding the oil and gas industries, so we must wonder why the war continues today with so many unanswered questions around the control of resources within the country. Who has the most to gain by controlling Yemen?



Train 1 of the Yemen LNG plant at night - <http://afaq.total.com/afaq2/desc.aspx?AIId=15&issue=4>

IS THE UNITED KINGDOM COMPLICIT?

In 2015 £7.7bn of arms sales were approved by the Department for International Trade. The Department for International Trade's figures suggest almost two-thirds (63%) of exports go to the Middle East. Of those Saudi Arabia is by far the most valuable client. Brimstone missiles, Typhoon Jets and Paveway laser-guided bombs have all been sent there. There are strict criteria that companies have to meet to sell guns and explosives. These include if there is a threat they could be used for terrorism or used aggressively against another country. The current links between the death toll in Yemen and arms sales coming from British companies and ending up in the arms of the Saudi's can be clearly seen in two new charts that have been produced and published by The Independent.



Photo by Ibrahim Qasim, CC BY-SA

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), which has mounted a judicial review in court aiming to halt all UK arms sales, is once again calling on Theresa May's government to work on a ceasefire. Andrew Smith, the group's spokesman said, *"For two years now, Saudi forces have unleashed a brutal humanitarian catastrophe on the people of Yemen. The response from Whitehall has been to keep arming and supporting the Saudi regime, irrespective of the destruction it has caused. Ten thousand people have been killed, yet the message being sent out is that their lives are less important than profits for arms companies."*

The UN has verified over 325 attacks on schools, health facilities, markets, roads, bridges and even water points. Over two thirds of the damage to public infrastructure is a result of airstrikes. Violations of international humanitarian and human rights law continue unabated and largely with impunity. (UN, Jan 2017). This is one of the worst crises in the world and is continuing to get worse. Conflict has taken a very heavy toll on the country and its people, exacerbated widespread vulnerability and virtually destroyed household coping mechanisms. As a result, food insecurity, remains unacceptably high. *Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen.*

The UK issued 126 licences relating to military goods in 2017, with a value of £1.129bn - according to Department of International Trade figures, in comparison to 103 licences relating to military goods in 2016, with a value of £679m. In total the UK has licensed at least £4.7bn of arms exports to Saudi Arabia and £860m to its coalition partners. However, Britain is not a member of the Saudi-led coalition leading the war against the Houthis but it still continues to license the sale of arms to the Saudi-led coalition. British forces have provided advice and support to Saudi Arabia, which the government says does not involve assisting or directing combat operations. This is a significant amount of trade, especially for the UK, now going through Brexit.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIONS OF THE EU AND US GOVERNMENTS?

Germany expressed the intention of stopping exports, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel making the announcement to reporters in Berlin, "I agree with all those who say when it comes to our already limited arms exports (to Saudi Arabia) that they cannot take place in the current situation," Merkel said, according to AFP. France's president Emmanuel Macron last Friday sought to downplay the importance of relations with Riyadh, saying the kingdom was not a major client of France.

However, Saudi Arabia is France's largest market in the Middle East, even without arms sales. French exports to the Gulf nation totalled almost €4 billion (\$4.61 billion) between September 2017 to August 2018, according to economy ministry data. Macron said France has suspended some political visits to Saudi Arabia, like Germany, the UK and the Netherlands as he awaited "clarifications" on Khashoggi's death, but is yet to announce a suspension of arms exports. Previously the top exporter of arms to Saudi Arabia, the UK government has faced mounting pressure over their sales to the Middle Eastern country in previous years. Despite issuing a joint statement with France and Germany on Sunday condemning the killing of journalists as unacceptable, the UK has not announced an arms freeze. Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab said it was a "terrible case" but that Britain would not "overreact" and was "not throwing our hands in the air" because thousands of jobs depended on relations with the country.



President Macron meets Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. (SPA)

French President Emmanuel Macron in October 2018, dismissed as "demagoguery" the calls by several European countries including Germany to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia following the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. *"What's the link between arms sales and Mr Khashoggi's murder? I understand the connection with what's happening in Yemen, but there is no link with Mister Khashoggi,"* he told a news conference in Slovakia. *"That's pure demagoguery to say 'we must stop arms sales'. It's got nothing to do with Mr Khashoggi,"* he added. [52]

Spain will similarly not be suspending exports to Saudi Arabia for the moment, despite expressing "consternation" over Khashoggi's death. Saudi Arabia was Spain's third-best weapons customer in the 2013-2017 period, according to [El Pais newspaper](#). Back in September, Defence Minister Margarita Robles attempted to halt the sale of 400 guided missiles over concerns about their potential use in the Yemen War. Yet the prime minister demanded that the transaction go ahead after Riyadh threatened to retaliate by ending a €1.8-billion contract with Spain. Workers also took to the streets in protest demanding their jobs be defended.



Jamal Khashoggi was reportedly killed in a fist fight inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul (Image: Getty)

Donald Trump's response to [Khashoggi's](#) (an American journalist killed in the Saudi embassy in Turkey) death comes in stark contrast to the likes of Germany — shortly after news of the journalist's death, the US president said he did not want to ruin a "tremendous order" of weapons from Saudi Arabia, and that "some form of sanction" would be preferable. Trump has heralded Saudi Arabia's purchase of \$110 billion worth of US arms in 2017, although experts claimed this figure was inflated and some parts of the deal appear to still be up in the air. The other important factor is that the total cost to the Pentagon of those midair refuels for Saudi and Emirati warplanes in Yemen is \$331 M, per [@SenJackReed](#). And after review, the Pentagon have said they will recoup that amount from the coalition. Whether they will actually recoup it or not will be seen in the future.

I think at the end of the day all of this goes to show the significance of arms dealing within the Western world, especially to those situated in the Middle East, and in particular those where joint vested interests lie. And this is the case with Yemen, mostly due to its location and potential future resources, especially in the northern regions of the country, which I already mentioned in [3 days that changed my life](#). ^[48] ^[49] I think the other important factor we should consider here is the Saudi-Iran "Cold war", which has effectively been going on since the 1970s if not before, and we should not overlook what is currently happening in Yemen, with around 20 million people currently on the brink of famine. [Andrew Mitchell](#), a Conservative MP wrote in an article in the [Guardian](#), "*Britain, along with our allies in the US and France, has unique influence to steer Saudi Arabia and the UAE away from this recklessness...As supporters of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and key arms suppliers, we bear a unique responsibility. We cannot look the other way as this catastrophe in Yemen unfolds*". ^[50]

On the positive side of the scale, another [poll by YouGov](#) for Save the Children and Avaaz published in August 2018 found that 13 percent of the British public supported the sale of weapons to the Saudis, while 63 percent opposed them. It also indicated less than one in six people (14%) think that the UK's role in supporting the Saudi/UAE-led coalition reflects British values and interests. The unfortunate sad case is that the governments seem to have a lack of morality when it comes to the war in Yemen, killing thousands and leaving millions on the brink of famine.



by **Shauna Dorothy** Feb 27 2016

"Without the information to start a public debate we will become lost. People being able to question our governments and hold them accountable is a principle democracy was founded on and if nothing changes, more and more people will stand up and ask questions. When they try and scare us into sacrificing our basic human rights we won't be intimidated and we won't give up. We will not be silenced". Edward Snowden.

SO, IS THERE AN ANSWER?

First we should consider what is the biggest question surrounding the war in Yemen? Is it about location, resources, power...? Who has the most to gain from the ongoing war?

Do we pressurize governments to give up the current vast economic resource coming from the arms sales, oil and gas resources?

Will governments even consider their people's voice in front of the profits and kick backs they will be making from the deals currently happening?

Perhaps the unfortunate and sad reality as it stands now, especially when we consider the people involved, the answer will be no. But, if that is the case then what we do and how we act will define our future without doubt!

Philip May, husband of the **ex-UK prime minister**, Theresa May, works for a company that is the largest shareholder in arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, whose share price has soared since the recent airstrikes in Syria. The company, Capital Group, is also the second-largest shareholder in Lockheed Martin – a US military arms firm that supplies weapons systems, aircraft and logistical support. Its shares have also rocketed since the missile strikes last week. ^[51] So, the future in the short term does not look promising but in saying that, Theresa May's position is not looking very positive due to the ongoing issues surrounding Brexit. And on top of this, in March 2018, Britain and Saudi Arabia set out an ambition to build £65 billion (\$90.29 billion) of trade and investment ties in coming years. *"The meeting agreed a landmark ambition for around £65 billion of mutual trade and investment opportunities over the coming years, including direct investment in the UK and new Saudi public procurement with UK companies,"* a spokeswoman from Prime Minister Theresa May's office said in a statement.



Ex-President Donald Trump holds up a chart of military hardware sales as he meets with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia at the White House on March 20, 2018. Kevin Dietsch-Pool/Getty Images

And of course, Donald Trump, who has previously tweeted, *"For the record, I have no financial interests in Saudi Arabia (or Russia, for that matter). Any suggestion that I have is just more FAKE NEWS (of which there is plenty)!"* And it is true that The Trump Organization does not own any buildings in Saudi Arabia, but in saying that, the president has worked closely with officials from the country over the years. Trump has been paid tens of millions by Saudi investors and its government through a variety of business deals. In fact, Trump has long done business with the Saudis:

- Alwaleed bin-Talal, a member of the royal family purchased the 282-foot yacht "Princess" for \$20 million in 1991 after the boat was repossessed from Trump (Trump was nearing bankruptcy at the time) and was part of a group that purchased the financially troubled Plaza Hotel for \$325 million in 1995.
- In 2016, the New York Daily News reported that the Saudi government also purchased the entire 45th floor of the Trump World Tower, for \$4.5 million, in June 2001. Given annual fee fares for the building at the time, Trump also was paid \$5.7 million by the Saudis between the purchase and 2016, the paper reported.

Trump also bragged about his business dealings with the Saudis during a 2015 campaign rally in Mobile, Alabama. *"I get along great with all of them; they buy apartments from me," Trump said. "They spend \$40 million, \$50 million. Am I supposed to dislike them? I like them very much!"*

So where does this lead us too and how should we act?



Udai Faisal, two days before his death from malnutrition in al-Sabeen hospital in Sanaa, Yemen

YEMEN IS UNDENIABLY THE WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

"If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him." — Mahatma Gandhi

The United Nations' humanitarian aid official in Yemen said recently that the civilian death toll in the nearly two-year conflict has reached 10,000, with 40,000 others wounded. [54] The Yemen Data Project has recorded nearly 17,000 air raids by the Saudi-led coalition since military intervention began in March 2015. It calculates closer to 25,000 Yemenis have died since early 2017 alone. [55]

We already know we are aware of this undeniable fact, the point now is how we will act about it. Will we choose to ignore it for monetary gains or will we raise our voices to change. The biggest question we must ask each other is what do we desire more, human rights or capital gain? Which is more important to you?



The world's worst humanitarian crisis spiraled after the Saudi-led coalition launched their offensive to support the government against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels back in March 2015 and very little has changed since. According to the World Health Organisation it has so far killed at least 10,000 people, and this number is expected to get a lot worse in 2019.

The original charter of the U.N. when it was known as the League of Nations was, and i quote, *"...the first international organisation whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. Its primary goals...included preventing wars...disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration...other issues in this and related treaties included labour conditions, just treatment of native inhabitants, human and drug trafficking, the arms trade, global health, prisoners of war, and protection of minorities in Europe"*. [56]

So, what was created at a dark time in our history to shine a light into the world, it is now appropriate to question the original concept and principal mission, and say that it is being completely and totally flawed due to what we have actually seen since the end of World War I. And in fact it could be argued that certain countries that have the largest stake within the U.N. have completely ignored these basic principles, and have done almost the complete opposite all in order to profit and gain. If this is what we can class as civilised society then perhaps we need to re-evaluate our morals and ethics as a species, and this is not the only case in question, as there are a substantial amount of others as well such as global warming, climate change, deforestation, the elderly, equal opportunities, the poverty line and so on!

I go back to my previous article, and a golden rule in life that I very much practice, being, the principle of treating others as I would want to be treated. It is the maxim of many religions and societies but what we seem to be witnessing from a vast majority of people is almost the complete opposite. I myself would urge each and every person take a good hard look in the mirror. Look at your grandparents and your own country's history. See how they acted and now, try and put yourselves in the shoes of these young Yemeni men and women now stuck in a war they cannot escape.

One person may not make a difference but if that one person can inspire another, who in turn can inspire the next, eventually the number will rise and the voices will become all powerful.

I leave you with several thoughts after considering everything I have put forward in this article. Let every moment you have be worthwhile. Let your action back up your voice, your word reflect your thoughts, and your commitment reflect your ambition and desires. How we all choose to act in any given situation will affect not just you but also millions of others, so be wise, be thoughtful and be prepared to be questioned. For without questions there are no answers and without answers we cannot understand.

And finally, with the words of George Orwell talking about the potential future of the world;

"...the old civilizations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except, fear, rage, triumph and self-placement...there will be no loyalty except to the party but always there will be the intoxication of power. At every moment there will a thrill of victory, a sensation of trampling on a enemy who is helpless....the moral to be drawn from this dangerous, nightmare situation is a simple one. Don't let it happen. It depends on you." - George Orwell.

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