Understanding the root causes of the conflict in Yemen

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ABSTRACT

Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Yemen's devastating conflicts have deepened even further, leading the country to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Despite the international community's multiple attempts to resolve this conflict, the conflict seems to have reached a stalemate. To make matters worse, resolving the conflict is made difficult by the large number of parties involved, internally and externally, and by the complex, dual and fluid nature of the relationships they share. Although the media and international community's focus is directed towards the binary conflict between the Hadi Government and Saudi Arabia on one side and Iran and the Houthis on the other, the conflict is greatly multifaceted and far from being binary. This paper critically analyzes and explores other participating actors to comprehend the root causes of the conflict entirely. Although this conflict has been advertised as a proxy war, while others trace back the motivation to sectarianism, this paper argues how this analysis can be misleading and hindering the peace process.

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Introduction

Since the civil war erupted in 2015, Yemen witnessed devastating political unrest and was categorized as the worse humanitarian crisis by the United Nations. The UN reported that 24 million people, representing 80% of Yemen's population, need humanitarian assistance. (Yemen Crisis, 2020) Essentials such as clean water, sanitation, and nutritional food have become difficult to acquire. The outbreak of diseases such as cholera has resulted in the illness of hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, the death toll has been rapidly increasing since the Arab Spring, and more than 3 million were displaced (Humanitarian crisis, 2019).

Although civil unrest has existed in the country for decades, the Arab Spring in 2011 was a turning point for Yemen. The protests escalated abruptly and led to former President Saleh's ousting, who was accused of corruption and violence and led the country into a hole of weak institutions, infrastructure, and economy. The fragmentation within the security apparatus led to a security vacuum taken advantage of by armed non-state groups, such as the Houthis, and terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda. Even following the establishment of the interim government, who had the responsibility of paving the way for significant reforms, the decentralization of authority, the multifaceted nature of the conflict, the fluidity of the relationships between factions, and the lingering shadow and influence of the late former president, contributed to the complexity of this conflict.

For a civil war of this magnitude, it is critical to analyze the root causes to resolve it. While some political analysts attribute the cause of the war to sectarianism, this paper argues that tribalism is behind this devastating conflict. Unlike the sectarian differences between Sunnis and Shia elsewhere in the region, the religious sects in Yemen have minor differences that are not enough to ignite a war of this size. On the other hand, according to historians, tribalism has been influencing violence and conflict in Yemen for centuries, as highland tribes who come from resource-poor areas fought mid and lowland tribes for their natural resources. Tribalism extended to modern-day politics, as was enacted by former president Saleh when his preference for certain tribes influenced high-level military officials' appointments. As will be stated in this paper below, Saleh's tribalism was a major contributing factor to today's civil war. Tribalism was not only influencing political decision-making but has also affected Yemenis on an individual level. It would be unfair

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to disregard Yemen's conflicts that preceded the Arab Spring, which may have planted the seeds for the current civil war. However, some more recent events and factors played a critical role in provoking multiple Yemen groups and provoking violence and unrest. Although Yemen's turmoil has been going on many years before Saleh's reign, the analysis's scope must be narrowed to the period following 2011 to dissect and understand the current civil war fully.

This paper's importance and contribution come from the misaimed focus on the conflict being a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, hindering the analytical process of understanding the roots of the conflict and ultimately stalling its resolution and prolonging humanitarian suffering. It assures that although external intervention has changed the roadmap of the conflict, it is often exaggerated and said to be the sole reason for Yemen's unrest, without realizing that the most potent tension drivers are local. To fully understand that, this paper sheds light on the actors involved in the conflict and the relationships they share, and later sheds discusses the internal causes of the conflict, without the disregard of the external contributions to the unrest.

To answer the questions addressed by this paper, extensive analysis was performed on existing literature covering the Yemeni conflict by employing qualitative research methods. Existing literature was used to collect and analyze information about the conflict, the actors involved, and the mediation efforts to produce a paper that addresses the root cause of the conflict and challenge information that suggests that the civil war's root cause is external, rather than internal. Furthermore, to pinpoint the reasons behind the failure and ineffectiveness of mediation efforts so far, this paper critically studies previous mediations and negotiations that took place and explains the factors that contributed to their defeat.

Historical and political background

Yemen's current conflict and humanitarian crisis is not the first that the country has witnessed. Yemen's struggles have been long-lived. However, to simplify matters and further understand Yemen's most recent conflict, this paper will cover the period following the 1960s in terms of the current conflict's historical background. In 1962 an Arab nationalist revolution started in the armed forces of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen in the North (Hill et al., 2013). This revolution deposed the Zaydi Shi'a Imam Mohammed Al Bader, and a modern Yemeni republican state was declared. This marked the end of the one-thousand-year Zaydi Imamate (Mantzikos, 2011). However, although the Zaydi Imamate was abolished, Zayidism still exists in Yemen and is one of the country's driving forces behind the current sectarian divides (Refugees, 2020).

Revolutions in Yemen were not exclusive to the North, as a revolution erupted in the Southern part of the country and the Federation of South Arabia, which led to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from Aden in 1967 (Hill et al., 2013). This marked the end of the colonial era and the People's Republic of Yemen (Salisbury, 2016), which was later renamed to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in 1969, following a communist coup (Yemen profile timeline, 2020).

The YAR and PDRY engaged in border clashes in 1972 (Salisbury, 2016). The two parties received external support. The North was supported by a Saudi-led coalition consisting of Jordan, Egypt, Iran, the UK, and the US. The South was supported by the Soviet Union, Iraq, Libya, Czechoslovakia, and Cuba (Gause, 1990). Both Sanaa and Aden, the capitals of North and South Yemen, respectively, engaged in hostilities to overpower and merge with the other.

In 1986, thousands of people died in the South of Yemen in a civil war caused by power struggles and conflicts among the Yemeni Socialist Party, specifically between Al Toghmah and Al Zomrah, led by Abdul Fattah Ismail and Ali Nasser Mohammed, respectively. Both factions were competing for power over the Yemeni Socialist Party and the PDRY. This civil war contributed to the South's substantial weakening and eventually led to the unification of the South and North of Yemen (Massacre with Tea, 2020).

The two Yemens united in May 1990 under the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh amidst the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, despite the unification of South and North, conflict continued to overshadow the country. Four years later, in 1994, militias in the South conducted a failed separatist movement in hopes for secession from the North (Yemen profile timeline, 2020). The negligence triggered this movement the South felt from the North, as they felt excluded from critical decision-making. The attempt to separate has led to yet another civil war, costing many civilian lives. The result was a relatively more dominant northern party, which continued to be the case until the Arab Spring in 2011.

Following the Arab Spring in 2011, a crisis of political legitimacy surfaced in Yemen, and conflicts among factions were triggered again. The Yemeni people protested the corrupt elite, exclusion from political and economic matters, and requested Saleh's ousted regime. Those protests tore the already-weak regime, which is ruled by competing elite factions within the country (Hill et al. 1., 2013). Conflicts between Saleh's regime and Islah, a Yemeni Islamist party, sparked a power struggle in 2011. Al Islah protested Saleh's political and financial corruption and called for governmental reforms. Those protests turned into an armed conflict among the two factions in various regions of the country. The struggle for power, specifically in Yemen's northwest, shook Yemen and led to a substantial lack of security in the country. The security vacuum was taken advantage of by non-state actors, including Al Qaeda, to seize power and territory. Al Qaeda expanded its part in the South, while Saada witnessed a seize of control by the Houthis. Other forms of unrest included attacks on critical oil pipelines, which the economy heavily depends on for export revenues. Local tribes carried those attacks to pressure the government to allow the independence of the South (Salisbury, 2016).

Following the vast unrest and the near collapse of Yemen politically and economically, Saleh resigned in November 2011. This was the outcome of negotiations initiated by the states of the GCC and the UN. The GCC initiative, which will be analyzed in this paper,

was one of many mediation efforts towards peace. It called for Saleh's removal while offering him immunity and established a transitional government under Hadi's lead to conduct significant reforms. Soon after the GCC initiative, Houthis ousted the transitional government in the same year, obstructing the GCC plan. Since then, a Saudi-led coalition intervened militarily against the Houthis, to restore the political power to the internationally recognized Hadi government. Below is an analysis of the many facets involved in today's civil war in Yemen, including internal and external groups.

Understanding the Actors

To understand the dynamics of the conflict, one must first understand the participating factions. Yemen's conflict cannot be understood or resolved if the parties involved are not critically analyzed. Yemen's civil war actors are the legitimate and internationally recognized Hadi government, the Houthis, and the Southern Movement known as 'Hirak'. External actors in the current war include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Iran. Those relationships are unique in their dynamism. As will be shown in this paper, the nature of relationships among factions in Yemen's war adapt according to the political situation at the time. Allies and adversaries have changed their relationships to serve their interests best.

The Hadi Government

Abd Rabo Mansour Hadi came into power following a peace deal brokered by the GCC in 2011. The internationally recognized government was given the task of preparing Yemen for significant amendments of its constitution and to pave the way for the upcoming elections. Hadi's government attempted reconciliation among parties by conducting a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC brought together an equal number of representatives from South and North of Yemen and included youth and women. It produced a document that included 1,800 recommendations, and the UN praised NDC's efforts (Lowings, Sami and Cherry, 2019). Hadi's government is backed by Saudi Arabia and works hand in hand with the Riyadh-based Islah movement. On the other hand, it opposes the GPC in Sanaa and fights the Houthi presence. Hadi's government also opposes Iran for its financial and logistical support to Houthis.

The Houthi Rebels

Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, are named after their leader, Hussain Bader Al Deen Al Houthi, and follow the Zaidi Shia sect. They originate from Saada Governorate in the North of Yemen, near the Saudi borders (Lowings et al. 1., 2019). This rebel group began its movement in the 1990s against its government, calling for a halt of Saada and neighboring areas' marginalization and exclusion and protested the increasing number of Saudi-supported Salafist schools in Yemen (DeLozier, 2020). Houthis strongly opposed Saleh's rule, specifically some of his provocative acts in favor of the Sunni sect, against Shias, which led to six military attacks against Houthi-dominated areas in 2004-2010. Those wars resulted in the killing of the Houthi leader Hussein Bader Al Deen Al Houthi under the command of Ali Mohsen, causing the Houthis to fight back relentlessly (Lowings et al. 1., 2019). From 2009 to 2010, Saudi Arabia took military action and joined the forces against Houthis to protect its borders.

In 2011, the Shia group took part in the Arab Spring in Sanaa and seized control over it in 2014. With the help of Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's former president, and his GPC supporters, Houthis were able to mobilize their forces into Sanaa, defeating Islah's strong foothold of the area. After entering Sanaa, Houthis established executive entities such as the Supreme Political Council, the Supreme Revolutionary Council, and the National Salvation Government, which worked jointly with the GPC. Iran supports Houthis by providing financial and technical aid. This includes weapons, oil, aerial vehicles, and logistical and advisory backing. Houthis also receive support and rely on GPC, although this alliance has become complicated following Saleh's killing, the leader of GPC, by the Houthis in 2017 (DeLozier, 2020).

Houthis, to date, are in a war with Yemen's internationally recognized government led by Hadi since 2015 when they seized control over Sanaa, leading Hadi to flee to Aden then to Riyadh. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is also considered another enemy to Houthis, for its backing to the regime and the Salafists in the North (DeLozier, 2020). Furthermore, Islah, whose leaders are currently based in Riyadh, is another Saudi-endorsed Sunni movement in rivalry with Houthis. The fights between the ideologically opposing parties continue to date.

The General People's Congress (GPC)

This party was formed in 1982 by Yemen's former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Although officially, the GPC follows Arab nationalism as its ideology the GPC was established to serve as a support system for Saleh's regime in the country. Members and supporters of GPC often received rewards for their loyalty in jobs and other perks. However, following the Arab Spring in 2011, when Saleh was ousted as President, GPC was divided into factions. One of the factions has continued being loyal to Saleh, and allied with the Houthis against the coalition, who carried out airstrikes in Yemen (DeLozier, 2020). However, in 2017 when the Houthis murdered Saleh, GPC split into three groups, supporting different civil war sides. One group is based in Sanaa, led by Sadeq Ameen Abu Rass, Hadi leads another group in Aden and Riyadh, and the third is based in the UAE and supports Saleh's son Ahmed. The Sanaa-based GPC remains aligned with Houthis in the National Salvation Government. However, despite the alliance, the relationship is marked by tension and instability (Death of a leader, 2018).

Southern Transitional Council

In 2017, STC was founded by Aidarous Al Zubaidi following his ousting as Aden's governor by President Abd Rabo Mansour Hadi. The purpose of this group is to form an independent southern state. STC has a strong belief that the north is occupying the South, and that the Northern part of Yemen breached its agreement with the South after the unification in 1990. Although both STC and Hadi's government work against the Houthis, their conflict is caused by Yemen's outlook, as STC calls for secession, and Hadi's government calls for unification. Naturally, STC and GPC are adversaries, as GPC is aligned with the Houthis. The Southern Transitional Council is also in a fierce conflict with Islah, as Islah was initially founded to counter the South's separatist efforts. Although both STC and Islah are anti-Houthis, they have engaged in violent conflicts multiple times. STC works hand in hand with the Saudi-led coalition against Houthis. Furthermore, they receive financial and advisory aid from the United Arab Emirates, where its leaders live (DeLozier, 2020).

Saudi Arabia

To Saudi Arabia, the Houthis represent the Iranian agenda to create a non-state, non-Sunni movement in the Middle East, which can pressure Iran's enemies, like Hezbollah's operations in Lebanon (Sharp, 2015). Saudi Arabia's intervention in tribal matters has been evident, especially in the North of Yemen. In the 1970s, Saudi's support for the Salafist schools in the north contributed significantly to the Saada wars outbreak in 2004-2010. Another example of its intervention is in 2011, following the Arab Spring, the GCC coalition, led by KSA, brokered a deal that resulted in the removal of former President Saleh and Hadi's appointment as head of the transitional government. When this plan fell apart in September 2014, Saudi Arabia intervened militarily, supporting the Hadi government against Houthi rebels. Although the conflict between STC and the Hadi government has caused some tensions in the STC-Saudi relationship, the two still share a good relationship. Moreover, KSA shares a close relationship with former President Saleh's family, specifically his son Tariq, who leads forces under Saudi's command. Although most GCC member states have withdrawn from the civil war, Saudi Arabia is intensifying its presence in this war's politics and is extensively involved in multiple negotiations.

United Arab Emirates

In 2015-2019 the UAE was a member of the Saudi-led coalition that entered Yemen to Support Hadi's government and counter Sanaa's Houthi occupation. In this intervention, the UAE's role was to carry out airstrikes mostly in the south. Eventually, the coalition, mainly UAE, drove the Houthis out of Aden and Al Qaeda out of Al Mukalla in 2015-2016. In 2019, the UAE withdrew from Yemen and claimed to be involved only in the reconstruction of Yemen and counterterrorism efforts.

Iran

Iran's ties with the Houthis are mainly ideological. Both parties share an antagonistic relationship with the United States and GCC states aligned with the U.S, and both are Shia. However, they belong to two different branches of Shia Islam. Iran's support for Houthis increased significantly when the Houthis seized Sanaa in 2014. Its approval came in the form of missiles, drones, oil, and advisory. This support has made Iran the main enemy of many parties involved in the conflict, including the Hadi Government, Islah, STC, UAE, and naturally the KSA (Sharp, 2015).

Understanding the root causes of the conflict

Conflict is internally caused

The role of external parties in the Yemeni civil war undeniably caused an increase in violence, deterioration of security, and the humanitarian crisis and weakening political legitimacy in Yemen. However, the media, scholars, and political analysts have exaggerated this role and neglected the local factors that led to this civil unrest in the first place. The international community has focused on the civil war being a proxy war, with Houthis and the Hadi government being proxies for Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Conflict is not purely sectarian

An analysis of Yemen's power distribution proves that sectarianism cannot be blamed solely for the country's unrest. Although the main actors in the civil war represent two sects of Islam that are infamously known for being in constant conflict (Shia Houthis and Sunni Hadi government), it would be false to say that sectarianism is the cause. Sects in Yemen are not as incompatible as sectarian differences in Lebanon and Iraq, for example. They are relatively compatible. In Yemen, the primary determinant of power distribution and politics is dictated by the country's geographical nature. Yemenis who reside in highland mountains, from the Hashid and Bakil tribes, aspire to control mid and lowland areas, especially for their resources, especially oil and gas. Those influential tribes' attempts caused conflicts of interest between them and the natives of central and lowlands in various regions, causing instability and rivalries. For this reason, and contrary to public belief that is influenced mainly by media, it can be said that differences in sects do not drive the current conflict. Instead, it reflects a long-existing pattern of tribes seeking to seize control over recourse-rich regions (Day, 2012).

Complexity of relationships between actors

Understanding the actors involved in Yemen's civil war and their relationship with one another is no less important than understanding the conflict's root cause. Understanding the actors helps analyze their perspectives and aids in predicting their actions and, ultimately, the conflict's future. Many scholars have described the Yemeni civil war's political setting as a 'web of relationships'. As seen from the above dissection of actors, the war's complexity results from the number of groups involved and their relationships' fluid nature, driven by current incentives. The current alliances prove that alliances are caused by having common enemies and aligning with the lesser of two enemies against a third enemy. For example, being anti-Houthi does not necessarily mean being pro-Hadi. This nature of relationships has led to odd and unexpected alliances among conflicting factions, such as the alliance between former President Saleh and the Houthis.

Furthermore, as the above analysis has shown, although most factions claim that they stand against foreign intervention, most alliances formed involve a supportive foreign party. However, it is essential to note that those alliances are not straight forward: Yemeni parties accept financial aid but are conservative over their sovereignty and identity and may sometimes refuse foreign parties' advice and orders. Because of this reason, one cannot simply say that the civil war in Yemen is a proxy war, as complexity is the individuality of actors, even within a single group. This is reflected in the internal splits in groups caused by the differences in opinions and thoughts.

Saleh's regime domino effect

This cause of conflict was left to be the last one covered by this paper, and that it because of its comprehensiveness. It can be argued that Saleh's regime has caused a domino effect, with the damages done by his way of ruling reflecting on all aspects of the current civil war. With, it is crucial to note that Yemen has conflicted for many years of pre-Saleh regime. However, today's collapsed Yemen, its humanitarian crisis, destruction, and splits can all be traced back to the former president for multiple reasons.

Firstly, Saleh orchestrated his government cabinet and military so that most high-level posts were assigned to men in his inner circle, including family. By doing this, he prioritized the protection of his regime instead of protecting the sovereignty of Yemen and the safety of its people. Saleh was dedicated and persistent in maintaining full autonomy over decision-making in Yemen. In his book, Lowings (2019) described this as "Saleh's coup-proofing practices", which included assigning sensitive security positions to his inner-circle who were loyal to him, rather than to Yemen. They prioritized his need to stay in power rather than Yemen's sovereignty and territory. Therefore, military and security forces were useless in guarding Yemen and were highly fragmented and unorganized, creating a security vacuum (Lowings et al., 2019). This security vacuum encouraged the rise of multiple armed militias.

Secondly, even after removing Saleh from the presidency following the Arab Spring, his influence over his subordinates remained, and he was still the president of the GPC. With his power looming around Yemen's political stage, Hadi's efforts to manage the chaos and attempt reforms were hindered continuously by Saleh's allies and supporters. While Saleh was in exile in Saudi Arabia, he ordered his subordinates not to comply with Hadi's attempted efforts, obstructing the peace process. The interim government faced devastating resistance from Saleh's allies, who were guarding his plan in addition to their interests (Hill et al., 2013). It can be said that Saleh's agenda inspired the uprising of armed militias, who represent the conflicting factions in the current civil war, which ultimately led Yemen into a chaotic and complicated crisis.

Why mediations and negotiations failed?

The international community has initiated multiple mediation efforts and peace talks, including the GCC initiative, led by Saudi Arabia in 2011. This initiative came following the Arab Spring in the same year to avoid the escalation of Yemen's violence. Through this agreement, political reforms and transitions were sought. The initiative arranged for Saleh's removal and granted him immunity and claims to have worked on improving power-sharing between the new government and the conflicting facets. However, the ousting of the transitional government by the Houthis in 2015 marked the failure of the GCC's initiative. Another important factor contributing significantly to the initiative's failure is the conflicting factions' consistent efforts to seek their interest and expand their influence and power, showing no interest in the initiative's power-sharing (Asseburg, Lacher and Transfeld, 2018). Hadi's oust by the Houthis provoked the Saudi-led coalition into military intervention, complicating matters further and adding salt to injury, especially from a humanitarian point of view.

Another mediation effort is the UN-backed Stockholm Agreement in 2018, which included agreements on Hudaydah, several critical ports, and prisoner exchange (Reuters, 2019). Its primary purpose was mainly to alleviate humanitarian suffering. The Stockholm Agreement was the first agreement among the parties involved in the Yemeni conflict. Although they agreed on multiple issues, and the truce was mostly held, the agreement had marginal on the overall picture of this devastating conflict. However, it is essential to realize that such agreements, even when not fully implemented, help initiate communication and develop trust between factions (OSESgy, 2019).

Internal efforts were made in addition to external mediations, including 10-month long peace talks while working on the new constitution in Sanaa. Even though those talks considered the many facets involved in the conflict and dedicated many seats at the National Dialogue Conference to them, most decision-making was made by Hadi, the Saleh-backed GPC, and Islah (Salisbury, 2015). It can be said that, although on paper, the needs and concerns of all facets were addresses little was done in reconciliation efforts.

With so many groups neglected and the humanitarian crisis's deterioration, Yemenis lost confidence in any attempted transitional measures and felt abandoned. This loss in trust ultimately led to the lack of cooperation among facets, resulting in an empty circle of multiple failed reconciliation efforts. Both external and internal mediation efforts have shown very modest results in the reconciliation of the conflicting parties. As discussed above, such efforts' failure can be attributed mainly to the lack of inclusiveness in the peace process. Most peace talks addressed the elites of the main factions, while neglecting many others. The needs and grievances of the Yemeni people was not a priority on the agendas. Certain elites, especially President Hadi's group, acquired dominance over the National Dialogue and greatly influenced the results of the dialogue. Their power was primarily motivated by the international community's backing, making the National Dialogue biased and ineffective, even though officially it claimed to be inclusive of all. The lack of inclusiveness in the National Dialogue, especially of the Houthis, meant that the other parties could not, for example, pressure the Houthis into a ceasefire for the sake of being heard in the dialogue because they were not keen on participating in the first place.

In addition to the lack of inclusiveness, resistance to reforms is another reason behind peace efforts' ineffectiveness. One of the GCC framework goals was to establish a legitimate military that serves the state's interest, not the part of individual elites. However, although Saleh's inner-circle members who previously held high-level positions in the military were removed from their positions, their military activities' influence continued through powerful informal networks. This resulted in the lack of a loyal legitimate army in the Hadi government. Ultimately, the Hadi government military forces lacked the power and capability to contain the Houthi rebellion.

The bias of the United Nations, specifically the Security Council, has hindered the peace process. While the UN could have condemned Saudi Arabia for its crimes against civilians and the destruction of Yemen's infrastructure, its devastating actions were left unprotested and uninvestigated (Asseburg et al., 2018). This is because the Security Council members all care to have good relations with Saudi Arabia, to maintain Saudi's financial support for the UN and the income it provides for the economies of the permeant members from the purchase of expensive and sophisticated weapons (Lackner, 2018).

The duality in some actors such as Saudi Arabia, as a mediator and a conflicting party also complicate and hinder the peace process further. This duality has disrupted efforts and weakened Saudi's credibility as a mediator (Palik and Aas Rustad, 2019).

Peace prospects and recommendations

As seen from the above section, previous peace efforts' ineffectiveness calls for a more reliable, intensive, and inclusive solution. The core of the problem needs to be addressed with all its parties. The United Nations must initiate, once again, peace talks. However, this time it should be inclusive of all and not specific to certain governorates. This mistake was made when the Stockholm Agreement addressed the conflict between the Joint Forces and the Houthis in Hodeida and neglected other conflicts such as that between Hadi's government and STC in 2019 in Aden (Jalal, 2020). However, the inclusive meditations cannot be led by groups or countries who have a dual role of a conflicting party and a mediator at the same time. As discussed above, having a dual role negatively affects the mediator's credibility and leads the mediator to act in his interest and be biased. This role can be taken by a neutral country or party, as has been previously done by Oman and Kuwait. Because the US and UK have contributed significantly to the Saudi-led coalition's arming, Yemenis have lost trust in those parties as mediators. Hence, comes the importance of appointing a neutral mediator. This will improve the peace process's effectiveness, help Yemenis reestablish their trust in the transitional efforts, and encourage cooperation between the people and the government.

Along with mediation, there must be internal negotiations between the faceting parties to improve relationships before expecting any party to compromise. An extremely crucial step that must be taken is establishing a legitimate and powerful military force that is entirely independent and uninfluenced by any conflicting parties. This will help restore the government's legitimacy, maintain order in the country, fill the security vacuum, and help organize the receiving and distribution of humanitarian aid. The establishment of such force will also eventually lead to more robust and trusted governmental institutions and ultimately improve the country's overall standard of living and alleviate humanitarian suffering.

Conclusion

The unrest in Yemen is complicated and deeply rooted. It is the result of decades, if not centuries, of inner micro conflicts that eventually grew into a multifaceted devastating nation-wide conflict that includes external actors. The power struggle has become brutal, and self-interest has been the main driver of attitudes, policies, and actions. Although Saleh has passed and his regime is no longer officially the legitimate government of Yemen, his influence and shadow haunt Yemen and hinders its progress towards peace. The destruction Saleh has caused is in the past, present, and the future of Yemen. The complexity of the conflict stems from the nature of its participants and their relationships with each other. The number of parties involved in the conflict and the duality and fluidity evident in some have complicated matters even further.

Yemen's people have suffered much from this civil war, and the UN categorized Yemen as the worst humanitarian crisis of all time. Their grievances and needs were not fully addressed, and eventually, they have lost trust in their government. On so many levels, the results of all mediation and negotiation efforts so far can be said to be negligent. This failure can be attributed to the lack of inclusiveness of all parties, the appointment of biased mediators, and conflicting factions. Because of international backing, the

dominance of the Hadi government in the National Dialogue has meant that the produced recommendations were biased and unfair to the remaining factions.

Finally, in hopes of a soon end to this devastating war, any future efforts towards peace must be inclusive, sensitive towards the nature of the conflict and factions, a neutral party must conduct mediations and, most importantly, a powerful legitimate military force must be established to restore order and the government's legitimacy. This will also help organized and facilitate any humanitarian relief sent to Yemen.

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