# Conflict Assessment of the Republic of Yemen

**June 2015**

## Acknowledgements

## About the Author

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**Acronyms & Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| AQAP | al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula |
| CDA | Conflict and Development Analysis |
| DPA | Department of Political Affairs |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GPC | General People's Congress |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IS | Islamic State |
| JMP | Joint Meeting Parties |
| NDC | National Dialogue Conference |
| OECD | The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PNPA | Peace and National Partnership Agreement |
| SASG | Special Advisor to the Secretary General |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| UNHCT | United Nations Humanitarian Country Team |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| WFP | World Food Program |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

# Table of Contents

# 1 Executive Summary

Yemen is at a major crossroads, facing unprecedented challenges in its history. The country's ability to recover from its current political, social, economic, and humanitarian crisis is yet to be determined. Millions were impacted by the current crisis and few have escaped the tensions between the Houthis and their allies, and military response of the Saudi led coalition bombing of Yemen. First efforts to bring the parties together have failed and the chances of a political solution will need to ensure the participation of all parties.

The entire political landscape has changed drastically since Yemen embarked on an extraordinary experiment in the Arab world, the National Dialogue Conference.[1] The political transition, in trouble for some time, began to unravel in September 2014, when the Houthis, a predominantly Zaidi group also known as Answar Allah, took over the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and effectively sidelined President Abdul Rabbo Mansour Hadi's government. Ensuing conflicts over the draft constitution, as well as control over state institutions, led the Houthis and their allies to consolidate their control over the capital. This led to the resignations of President Hadi and the Prime Minister Khaled Bahah. After a forced house arrest, President Hadi fled temporarily to Aden and then to Riyadh, where he is now heading a government in exile composed of eight ministers and with Bahah at its helm.

On March 26 2015, acting on the invitation of President Hadi and in the context of worsening Saudi/Iranian relations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) led by Saudi Arabia and joined by other Arab nations launched airstrikes against Houthi targets in response to their growing expansion towards southern Yemen.

Widespread fighting continues to be reported with a very high humanitarian cost to the people of Yemen and damage to vital infrastructure. To date, no political agreement has been signed in spite of tireless efforts by the United Nations and intermediaries like Oman to broker an agreement. The Houthis and their allies continue to refuse the conditions demanded by President Hadi's government. The conflict has also created a power vacuum, which has allowed Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State (IS) to take advantage.

The escalating conflict in Yemen has generated casualties, internal displacement, and destruction of infrastructure, and has exacerbated a pre-existing humanitarian crisis. It is estimated that close to 80 percent of the Yemeni population are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

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[1] Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, "The Yemeni National Dialogue: Setting a Standard for other Arab Countries", *SCAR Newsletter*, April 2014, Volume 8, issue 3, http://scar.gmu.edu/newsletter-article/yemeni-national-dialogue-setting-standard-other-arab-countries.

The analysis is comprised of ten sections including the introduction, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices. Sections two through seven form the content of the analysis itself and are organized as follows.

Section two is an analysis of the context's recent historical and current contexts. It discusses the 2011 revolution in Yemen and the transition process immediately following. In addition, this section aims to inform readers on the current conflict context, particularly over the last three months' escalation of the conflict.

Section three is an analysis of the conflict factors, and includes discussion on root/structural factors, intermediate/proximate factors, and trigger factors of the current conflict in Yemen. The identified root/structural factors include a culture of impunity for human rights violations; pervasive gender inequality; disputes of legitimate land ownership; deficiencies in governance and political institutions; a divided army and security apparatus; entrenched economic inequality; and a lack of access to, and provision of, essential services like healthcare and education. The most relevant intermediate and proximate factors identified include the extreme humanitarian crisis, the impact of the war economy on livelihoods, and the competition of available resources. Lastly this section includes a listing of past conflict triggers as well as potential future triggers that may serve to escalate the conflict, or begin anew a cycle of conflict.

Section four is an analysis of the various internal and external stakeholders of relevance, including an analysis of the existence and importance of identity groups within the country. These stakeholders include, for example, former President Saleh; President Hadi and his government in exile; Islah; AQAP; various regional actors, including Saudi Arabia and Iran; the international community, including the United Nations; and identity groups such as women, youth, tribes, and political parties.

Section five is an analysis of conflict drivers, and the following section an analysis of potential engines for peace and resilience. Some potential conflict drivers include the catastrophic humanitarian crisis; ongoing human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law; the government and security power vacuum; shifting loyalties and alliances between groups; weakened tribal norms; the media and social media; and external interventions, include the Saudi led coalition bombing and naval blockade. Potential engines for peace have been identified as including family, communal, and tribal ties; local community structures; religion and religious leaders; ideological and political groups; and the business community.

Lastly, section seven is a discussion of potential scenarios and trajectories for the current conflict as well as some suggestions and actions for consideration by the various UN agencies in each potential scenario.

Based on the overall analysis, the study underscores the necessity and importance that all UN interventions maintain impartiality and neutrality. Significantly, this study challenges the notion that "*there is no development without security*" as it limits the UN's role at a critical time of this nation's history.

## 1.1    Purpose of the Study

This conflict analysis study intends to strengthen the understanding of current conflict dynamics in Yemen in order to better analyze the specific context, and assist in developing strategies for reducing the potential impact that the current conflict has on the state in the political, development, and humanitarian spheres. In addition, the study hopes to assist in identifying priorities for UN interventions and programming that strategically addresses emerging challenges and recommendations in incorporating conflict sensitive approaches. The conflict analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the issues potentially driving the conflict in Yemen as well as the dynamics that have the potential to promote peace.

It also attempts to present an assessment of the most important changes that Yemen has witnessed resulting from a shift in the power dynamics between the state, the Houthis and their allies, and the external intervention of the Saudi led Arab Coalition.

The study builds on previous conflict assessments conducted for the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) on the caveat that much has changed in the Yemeni scene and many of the previous trajectories are no longer valid or viable. Nevertheless, deep-rooted issues, as well as structural and cultural sources of conflict in Yemen, persist.

## 1.2    Methodology and Approach

This study is situated within the United Nations Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) tool guide. For the purpose of this conflict analysis, the tool guide was adapted to include conflict resolution theory and best practices research in the field of conflict analysis and resolution.

The study focuses on a situation analysis, factor assessment, stakeholder analysis, and an evaluation of the conflict dynamics and drivers of change or engines of peace and resilience in Yemen. It also presents scenarios and trajectories with the objective of contributing to conflict sensitive programming for the UN.

In addition, the study considers Yemen a protracted conflict, and the analysis is informed by studying all the dimensions related to such a definition. The study included the conduction of a high-level desk review of the current situation in Yemen, followed by structured interviews and focus group discussions with a select sample of Yemeni women

and men, as well as international interlocutors working in Yemen, including the UN Country Team (UNCT).

## 1.3 Limitations of the Study

Due to the security situation on the ground, first-hand testimonies were limited to those provided by interlocutors that were accessible by phone from within the country, or stranded outside Yemen with links to family inside.

The study was also limited in terms of access to non-traditional groups that have recently formed, such as popular committee members who have joined the Houthis or President Hadi, or those Yemeni women and men who have organized amongst themselves to protect their communities. Likewise, some of the war torn areas were inaccessible.

The impact of the conflict on marginalized groups, including women, and youth, was particularly hard to assess, especially in relation to the recently initiated political process.

Assessing the extent of the trauma and likelihood for further post-traumatic stress, as well as evaluating Yemen's capacity for resilience, is difficult at this juncture. Mental health issues and their role in conflict escalation need to be studied further.

Furthermore, success stories, stories of compassion, and turning points in Yemeni society due to these drastic interventions require a more comprehensive study.

The speed of developments and the changing situation in Yemen will understandingly impact some aspects of the analysis. However, deep-rooted causes of the conflict in Yemen have been relevant for previous manifestations of the conflict, and likewise should continue to remain relevant to any future analysis until they are adequately addressed.

The period of study was limited to the sources of conflict and mapping of stakeholders' immediately before the 2011 revolution until the present, June 2015, allowing for brevity and the occasional omission of historical data that pre-dates the revolution and is not directly relevant to this study's analysis.

## 2  Contextual Overview (Situational Analysis)

### 2.1  Background

In November 2011, the former President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, signed a deal brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and supported by the United States and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) in Yemen, to transfer power to his then Vice President, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. This development brought to end the 33 year rule of President Saleh, 12 of which were as the Head of State of North Yemen, before unification in May of 1990.

The resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh was brought about by popular protests in the early part of 2011, in great part led by unemployed Yemeni youth and women activists, who were later joined by leading opposition political parties, some leading members of the military, and individuals from President Saleh's own government. According to Human Rights Watch, the ensuing confrontations between government forces and the protesters over this 10 month period led to a death toll of about 250 people, with 1,000 more injured, and 100,000 displaced.[2] Significantly, women were at the heart of the 2011 protests where they actively participated in demanding a better political life and livelihood opportunities through participation in the protests directly, providing food and medical support, stitching flags in solidarity, and organizing prayers. Yemeni women and men called for reforms and protection of human rights. Women in particular highlighted their desire for better lives, concerns over economic issues, lack of high quality and accessible healthcare, pervasive corruption, and a demand for political change as the many different reasons underlying their involvement in the protests.[3]

Although Mr. Saleh had vowed to stay in power, the increased defections in his government, the looming collapse of the economy, continued armed violence in the country leading to a potential civil war, the United Nations' potential involvement with sanctions and asset freezing, and finally an attack on his palace forcing him to seek medical treatment in a Saudi hospital, all likely contributed to his decision to resign his position.

As part of the agreed upon transitional process, former President Saleh would retain his honorary title of President while his Vice President formed a unity government until elections were held in February 2012. Also included in the deal was a power sharing agreement wherein cabinet posts would be distributed between the JMP and Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC). In addition, President Saleh and his family were guaranteed immunity from prosecution for human rights violations committed during his time in power, including the deaths of protesters during the 2011 uprisings. Finally,

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[2] Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2012: Yemen," 2012.
[3] UN Women, "Gender Situational Analysis," Unpublished Draft Report, 2015.

former President Saleh was set to live in exile, with Ethiopia reported to be his destination. Despite reservations over the terms of the agreement, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi ran uncontested and was elected President of Yemen in the February 2012 elections, ushering in a new era for the country.

## 2.2  National Dialogue Conference

Viewed as an essential component to the transitional process in Yemen, a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was started in March 2013 and brought together key political actors and civil society to explore ways to collaboratively develop a new vision for the country. The NDC was comprised of six main bodies, namely: the General Assembly, General Secretariat, Presidium, Consensus Committee, Working Groups, and finally the Order and Standards Committee.

The objective of the NDC was to propose solutions and resolve some immediate challenges faced by Yemen, such as the threat of secession in the south, armed rebellion in the north, the introduction of transitional justice, reform of the military and security services, and finally the drafting of a new constitution.[4]

At the conclusion of the conference on January 24, 2014, the recommendations that were proposed included: extending President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi's tenure in office for another year, restructuring parliament so that there was an equal representation (50%) each for the north and south, and the transformation of Yemen into a six region federal system.[5] The proposed six regions included four in the north - Azal, Saba, Janad, and Tahama, and two in the south - Aden and Hadramawt. The southeastern Hadramawt province included al-Mahra, Shebwa, and the island of Socotra, while Saba was comprised of Bayda, Marib, and Al-Jawf. The capital city of Sana'a would not be affiliated to a region in an attempt to guarantee its independence and impartiality.[6] *(See map 1 for a breakdown of the proposed regions).*

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[4] "Security Council Demands End to all Actions Undermining Government in Yemen, Expresses Readiness to Consider 'Article 41' Measures if Necessary," June 2012, *UN Press Centre*, accessed May 2015, http://www.un.org/press/en//2012/sc10671.doc.htm.
[5] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies at the Doha Institute, "Outcomes of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference: A Step toward Conflict Resolution and State Building?" Assessment Report, February 2014.
[6] "Yemen to Become Six Region Federation," *Al Jazeera,* February 2014.

*Proposed 6 Regions for Yemen*
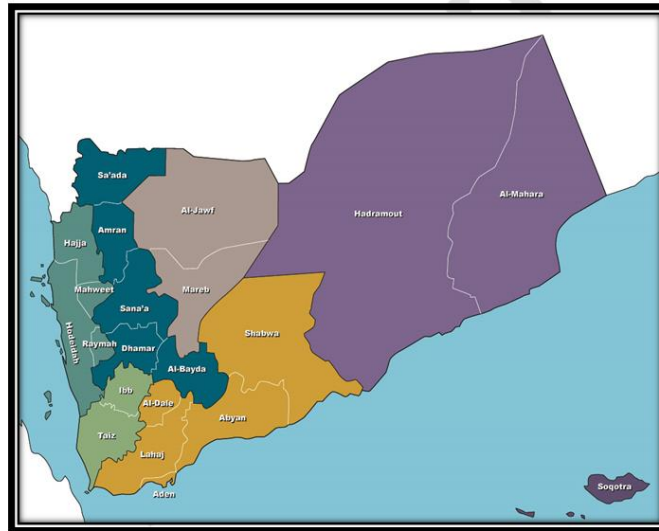


Map 1 (courtesy of Yementimes)

The international community lauded the "positive conclusion" of the NDC process following the report's release.[7] Some of the supposed winners of the NDC process were Yemeni women, who were guaranteed to comprise at least 30 percent of representative positions when the new constitution was drawn up.[8] This was a significant change for women's participation in Yemeni politics. A 2008 attempt to introduce a 15 percent quota for women in parliament was abandoned after intervention from Islamic clerics and tribal chiefs who organized a 'Meeting for Protecting Virtue and Fighting Vice,' and declared that a woman's place is in the home.[9] Women held 0.3 percent of the seats in the former national parliament (one woman out of 301 seats in total). Female representation on local government councils was limited as well with females occupying less than one percent of all seats.[10] During the National Dialogue Process, women were active and visible, representing more than one quarter of the participants. This was viewed as a major positive development compared to the participation of women in previous high level fora in the country. Yemeni women were present in all working groups and led three of them, according to conference documents.[11] Significantly, the NDC outcomes also committed to abolish early and child marriage. Overall, there were more than 173 articles and outcomes related to women. Also of note, the NDC had a female spokesperson.

In addition to the anticipated gains for women, some less traditionally powerful political parties in Yemen (*please see Appendix B on page 83 for a list of registered and unregistered political parties*) were expected to benefit from the proposed shift in

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[7] EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Yemen," February 2014, *Yemen Embassy,* accessed 23 May 2015, http://yemen-embassy.be/en/?p=295.
[8] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, *supra* note 5.
[9] "Country Information: Yemen," OECD, 2015.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Activity Concept Note," 2015.

political systems from an individual candidate electoral system that benefited tribal and traditional elites, to a list system, which has the potential for a more balanced power-sharing arrangement.[12]

Despite the general praise given by the international community, among many groups within Yemen itself, there was widespread dissatisfaction of the NDC's outcome and recommendations. Many of the people who had participated in the protests to oust former President Saleh from power felt that the process had been taken over by the political elite in Yemen and that there was no urgency to see a political change on their part.[13]

In addition, the Houthis, a sectarian Zaidi theological movement, voiced concerns about the proposed six region split. Their main issue seeming to be that the proposed six region federal system was going to absorb their stronghold – Sa'ada – thus reducing the autonomy they were enjoying in the region, as well as their access to necessary waterways.[14]

Another group that firmly disapproved the outcome of the NDC was the Southern Hirak movement, a southern secessionist group whose dissatisfaction also was regarding the proposed six region split. Instead, they favored a two region split or outright independence from the north.

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[12] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, *supra* note 5.

[13] Steven Zyck, "Conflict Assessment of the Republic of Yemen." United Nations, 2013.

[14] "Houthi's High-Stakes Strategy to Secure Political Representation and Control over Coastal Province Raises War Risks in Yemen." *IHS Jane's 360,* August 2014.

## 2.3    Current Situation

**Overview of the Current Conflict in Yemen Timeline**

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|---|---|
| July, 2014 | The Houthis gain complete control of Amram. |
| August 2014 | Government removes fuel subsidies as part of economic reforms leading to a rise in fuel prices<br>Houthis set up armed protest camps in Sana'a against this move |
| September, 2014 | President Hadi sacks his cabinet after weeks of anti-government protests and promises to review fuel subsidy cuts.<br>The Houthis reject this move. |
| | After weeks of deadly fighting in the capital Sana'a, the Houthis manage to occupy key government buildings.<br>The Prime Minister resigns and a deal for a new unity government is signed.<br>The Security Addendum to the agreement is not signed by the Houthis. |
| January 2015 | The Houthis reject the draft of a new constitution and stage what the government described as a "coup" leading to the resignation of President Hadi |
| February 2015 | The Houthis seize power and propose a transitional five-member presidential council to replace President Hadi.<br>President Hadi escapes house arrest and flees to Aden in the South. |
| March 2015 | The Houthis start to advance towards Aden.<br>President Hadi flees from Aden to Saudi Arabia.<br>A Saudi Arabia led coalition of Arab states mounts airstrikes on Houthi targets. |
| June 2015 | Talks on the conflict open in Geneva. |

Figure 1

After the takeover of Amran and the defeat of Islah in the north in September 2014, the Houthi movement gained control of some key government buildings in Sana'a and managed to push through the signing of a Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA). They founded their takeover on the rationale that the transitional government failed to implement NDC outcomes. Present at the PNPA signing ceremony was President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the UN Special Envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar, and representatives from the various political parties.[15] The agreement set out a process for an inclusive government, the improvement of living conditions through social welfare programs and a pay increase for workers in the civil service and security sectors, the reinstatement of fuel subsidies, and the implementation of the outcomes of the NDC.[16]

In January 2015, the Houthis, led by their leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi, and supported by former President Saleh, as well as tribes and military elements loyal to him, managed to take complete control of the capital city Sana'a, including the seizing of state television. The government decried the Houthi consolidation of their control of Sana'a

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[15] "Yemeni Parties and Houthi Rebels Sign Deal to End Fighting, Form New Government." *ABC News* September 2014.
[16] Mareike Transfeld, "Houthis on the Rise in Yemen." *Sada*, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2014.

and state institutions as a coup, whereas Houthi leadership argued that their actions were necessitated by the government's failure to uphold its part of the PNPA agreement.[17]

President Hadi and his government, in protest, tended their resignations to parliament, thus leaving Yemen in a political vacuum. The Houthis quickly filled this vacuum and secured their grip on power by dissolving parliament and announcing that a transitional five member presidential council would replace President Hadi and that a Supreme Revolutionary Committee would run the country temporarily.

In addition, President Hadi was placed initially under house arrest. President Hadi escaped house arrest and fled south to Aden where he rescinded his previous resignation. As the Houthis and their allies marched south towards Aden, President Hadi and some of the members of his government escaped to Saudi Arabia and established an emergency government in exile in Riyadh.

The Houthi alliance with former President Saleh, against whom they had fought six wars, perplexed many.[18] Reportedly, however, when former President Saleh was forced out of power he looked to the Houthi movement, who were historically part of his own demographic base, for support. Saleh further cemented the relationship with the Houthis by sending troops loyal to him and his son, Ahmed Ali Saleh, to fight alongside with them.[19]

On February 15, 2015 the UN Security Council, through resolution 2201, deplored the dissolution of parliament and the Houthi takeover of government institutions.

In March 2015, reportedly at President Hadi's request,[20] a Saudi led Arab coalition launched a military campaign, primarily through the use of air strikes, against the Houthi advances, with targets in Sana'a, Aden, and other parts of the country, under the auspices of "Operation Decisive Storm". Additionally, a naval blockade was imposed. The stated aims of the operation were to defeat the Houthis and restore the government of President Hadi, yet there were overtones of a regional proxy war with Saudi Arabia backing President Hadi's government and assertions that Iran allegedly has backed the Houthi alliance. In addition to the air campaigns, ground fighting between Houthi and Saleh allied forces, and those allied against the Houthi movement increased. Following this development all negotiations were suspended and international UN staff temporarily withdrew from the country.

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[17] Stephen Snyder, "Rebels Take Over Yemen's Capital, but One Yemni Insists it's 'Not Big News'." *OPB,* January 2015.

[18] Hebatalla Taha, "The Power Struggle in Yemen and its Paradoxical Alliances." *IISS,* April 2015.

[19] Abdul-Ghana Al-Iryani, "Building Blocks of a Future Yemen: Recommendations to Restore State Viability." United Nations and World Bank, n.d.

[20] United Nations Department of Political Affairs: Yemen, 2015, accessed June 23, 2015, http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/activities_by_region/middle_east/pid/24705.

Also of note in March, the Islamic State (IS) carried out its first major attacks in Yemen, two suicide bombings in Sana'a in which 137 people were killed, and AQAP took over the southeastern port city of Mukalla. AQAP has made significant gains in territory since the escalation of the conflict and the commencement of the coalition's operation.

Mid May saw the convening of the Riyadh Conference on Yemen, a three day conference that took place during a fragile ceasefire that ended before the conference concluded. Conference organizers stressed that the conference was intended to develop strategies and recommendations on implementation of the NDC outcomes, rather than serving as a platform for negotiations. Conference organizers further emphasized the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 2216 that required the Houthis, and their allies, to withdraw, surrender seized weapons, and allow for the return of President Hadi and his government to power. Although the conference reportedly had participation from many high-powered Yemeni political actors, including representatives from the GPC who have expressed their support for President Hadi and the Saudi led coalition's efforts, there was no participation from Houthi actors, former President Saleh and his supporters, or their allies. Former President Saleh continues to remain chair of his party, the GPC, despite the current divisions in alliances. The Houthis raised two objections at the outset of the conference: first, that it was being hosted by a non-neutral country, and second, that President Hadi had no political legitimacy following his previous resignation and his current support of the Saudi led bombings.

June saw a new round of scheduled talks in the Swiss city of Geneva. Although both Houthi representatives and representatives of President Hadi's government were in Geneva, the very aims of the talks themselves were in contrast. President Hadi and his government in exile continued to maintain that no new negotiations should be considered, and no new agreements made. Instead, the exiled government stressed that the talks should focus on implementation and facilitation of UN Security Council Resolution 2216 to restore their legitimate government to power. The Houthi alliance, in contrast, intended to induce a long-term ceasefire. In addition to the contrasting aims of the talks, both sides failed to send representatives with the power or authority to make significant concessions or agreements, further hampering the potential for success. The talks ended without agreement.

At present both the Houthi alliance and President Hadi's government are holding firmly to their positions and it seems unlikely that a resolution will emerge in the near future. Additionally, the increase in IS attacks and the strengthening of AQAP are further complicating hopes for peace. The coalition air strikes and naval blockade are not manifesting in the quick defeat of the Houthis and their allies as had been initially intended and are creating further divisions in the country, as the Houthis have used the air strikes to position themselves as defenders of Yemen in the face of the Saudi led bombings. Furthermore, the naval blockade has exacerbated the already extreme humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The fighting from both the Saudi led coalition and the

Houthis and their allies have also resulted in a growing number of civilian deaths and injuries, damage to civilian infrastructure, and mass displacement. In addition, the Houthis have conducted limited raids across the border of Saudi Arabia, threatening its internal stability and contributing to the discussion on whether a Saudi led ground assault into Yemen will follow if the current situation is not resolved. Reports of Omani attempts to initiate talks between members of the Yemeni government, opposing factions,[21] regional players, and the international community[22] have yet to yield the desired results of de-escalating tensions.

Lastly, the continued use of drone strikes by the United States and its prioritizing of counterterrorism efforts have had an impact on the destabilization of Yemen and should not be overlooked.
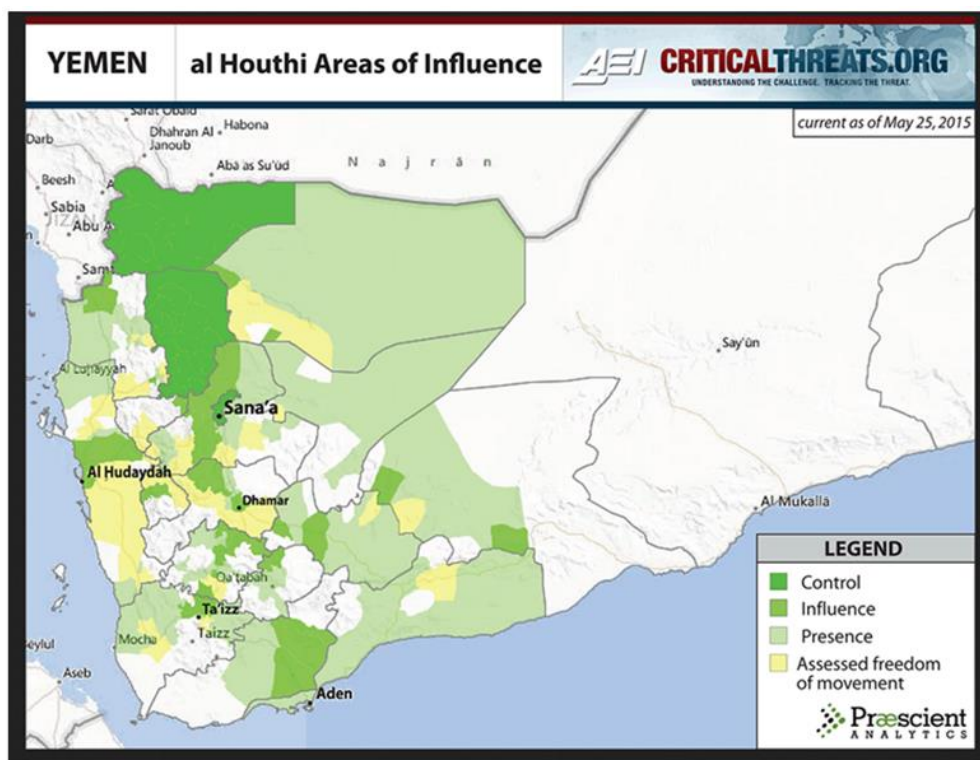


Map 2

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[21] "Oman Talks Narrow Houthi-Hadi Differences," *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), June 2, 2015, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jun-02/300175-oman-talks-narrow-houthi-hadi-differences.ashx.
[22] Sami Aboudi, "Yemen's Houthis in Talks with US Officials in Oman," *Reuters,* May 31, 2015 http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/31/uk-yemen-security-usa-idUKKBN0OG0NR20150531.

## 3    The Conflict in Yemen: Factors and Root Causes

> "*Yemen is a sick patient always treated for the symptoms of its sickness without addressing the underlying causes of its ills.*"[23]

Protracted conflicts are often characterized as being "*stubborn*", i.e. resistant to "resolution".

A number of factors often prevent resolution and are frequently related to the number of issues involved in the protracted conflict; the size, strength, and number of parties to the conflict; the context; and the processes utilized in addressing or mitigating conflict issues. Yemen fits this classification of a protracted conflict.

In protracted conflicts, as in Yemen, there are a large number of issues involved and the issues are complicated, intertwined; even when change has been attempted problems and issues often persist.

In Yemen, the conflict involves a large number of parties including Track I and Track II representatives,[24] non-state actors and armed groups, tribal groups, regional actors, international non-governmental organizations, the international community, and the general business community at large.

Most often, parties in Yemen have their own internal conflicts and consequently these internal divisions affect the kind of approaches and processes they utilize to advance agendas, also motivating unexpected alliances.

Parties often contest each other's legitimacy and use exclusionary language intended to marginalize competing groups. Such language may include labels such as "extremists", "fundamentalists", and "irrational," employed to invalidate. For example, the Houthis have been frequently labeled as "extremist" and more recently "irrational" due to their unexpected alliance with former President Saleh, a past adversary. The leader of the Houthis, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, on the other hand, accuses the Islah party of acting like "Takfereen,[25]" a label he uses to belittle their attempts to question the Zaidi tradition as belonging to Islam.

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[23] Confidential Participant, Focus Group Discussion, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May, 2015.
[24] Track one diplomacy is official government diplomacy whereby communication and interaction is between governments. Track two diplomacy is the unofficial interaction and intervention of non-state actors.
[25] Individuals may accuse another Muslim of being an infidel, "kaffir," which is a serious accusation for a believing Muslim and one that permits capital punishment.

Psychological factors also play a major role in the way the parties perceive and develop attitudes towards each other. Historical narratives and discourses centered on "us" versus "them" conceptions are very much alive, and are perpetuated and reinforced with storytelling and rumors told by Yemeni women and men that leave little room for resolution of differences. In addition, the parties' perception of time is built around a narrative demanding conformity of the "other." Dominant parties advocate for the status quo and are resistant to change.

As Yemen continues to experience internal and external factors, the current conflict context continues to evolve drastically. For example, a war industry has developed, and the north/south divide has widened considerably. The media contributes to the escalation of rhetoric and divisiveness. Significantly, economic and human resources and capacities are skewed and slanted towards the continuation of the conflict. Powerful parties, including third party external actors, have their own interests in the conflict and therefore contribute to conflict escalation.

In addition, competing processes[26] and interventions may be perceived as oppressive, colonial in nature, supporting external agendas, and reflective of asymmetrical power dynamics between and among various stakeholders. This may result in the alienation or marginalization of some groups and stakeholders.

Yemen has suffered from a number of structural factors that has inhibited its growth. These factors are deeply embedded and represent fundamental issues with which the country must deal. A partial list of structural root factors include: poor governance, shadow employment, historic gender inequality, corruption and absence of accountability, a poor record of human rights and a culture of impunity, proliferation of small and medium weapons, high levels of illiteracy, and unemployment and social problems emanating from the use of qat. The most visible proximate factors in Yemen include the dire humanitarian situation, poverty, IDPs, refugees and human trafficking, illicit trade of goods, and the black market economy. Salient issues become overt when critical incidents happen. The 2011 revolution was one major trigger point that forced the entire country to revisit its past, assess its present and dream about its future.

## 3.1 Root/Structural Factors

### 3.1.1 Human Rights Violations, Rule of Law, and a Culture of Impunity

As part of the GCC sponsored agreement in 2011, former President Saleh and his entire family received immunity for human rights violations perpetrated during his reign, as well as during the 2011 revolution. In 2012, Yemen's parliament formalized this condition and granted immunity from prosecution to former president Saleh, and to his

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[26] Examples of potential processes and interventions may include mediation, arbitration, sanctions, and peacekeeping missions.

aides. President Hadi failed to follow up on promises to pass a transitional justice law, establish a commission of inquiry into government abuses during the uprising in 2011, or create any other mechanisms to provide accountability for past violations or prevent future ones.

Saleh's immunity from prosecution was not well received in Yemen; the JMP requested an international warrant for his arrest, and irate youth, in particular, staged protests against the proposed amnesty. Protests that went unanswered and continue to fuel discontent in the state.

According to the February 2015 report of the UN Security Council's Panel of Experts on Yemen, threats and violations of the right to life remain a current means to achieve political goals in Yemen. Continued outbreaks of violence across the country and the absence of a government allow for increased violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by all parties. Assassinations of political and military figures have increased with little accountability for perpetrators.

A general culture of impunity for human rights violations has normalized the perpetration of such abuses. For instance, the violations perpetrated by various parties in the context of several armed conflicts; legal and cultural discrimination against women and pervasive gender inequality, including sexual and gender based violence; continued use of the death penalty as a method of punishment; high prevalence of early, child, and forced marriage; accepted continued recruitment of child soldiers; attacks against journalists; unlawful detentions; human trafficking of migrants; and the lack of accountability for abuses perpetrated by former President Saleh's regime have all contributed to a general lack of awareness of international human rights norms, lack of reporting of human rights abuses, and a lack of any accountability for such violations.[27]

### 3.1.2  Pervasive Structural Gender Inequality

Pervasive gender inequality has continued to remain of concern in Yemen as women face discrimination in both law and practice as a result of their sex as well as due to proscriptive gender constructs and norms. Yemen ranked last in the World Economic Forum's 2014 Gender Gap Report, out of 142 countries included in the report, and has consistently ranked last since 2007.[28] Prior to the conflict and at present, women have limited access to political participation and representation, economic opportunities, educational opportunities, and access to healthcare. In addition, sexual violence and gender based violence have been perpetrated in great numbers, particularly child, early, and forced marriage.[29]

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[27] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2015: Yemen, Human Rights Watch, 2015.
[28] World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2014, World Economic Forum, 2014.
[29] According to a 2010 survey, 54 percent of females interviewed reported that they were married by the age of 16. See UN Women, 2015, *supra* note 3.

### 3.1.3   Disputes over Legitimate Ownership of Land

Land has always been a resource of conflict in Yemen, especially after the 1964 revolution when former president Saleh intentionally distributed land in the south to his followers and supporters; in the north, Islah leaders took over historically Zaidi homes. With time, ascertaining the legitimacy of ownership of the land is difficult and is a source of tension.**[30]** The NDC outcomes recognized it as a key issue that needed to be addressed. With the movement of IDPs and refugees, and with the Houthis' expansion across Yemen, the issue of restoring land to its rightful owners has risen.

### 3.1.4   Governance and Political Institutions

President Hadi's transitional government inherited a patronage system of governance based on family relationships and party affiliations, and informed by a patriarchal and tribal worldview, two cornerstones of Yemeni society. This system was so deeply rooted in the modus operandi [31] of the government that influencing change proved difficult, despite the NDC recommendations for a more equitable distribution of power, transparency, and accountability. All governing bodies were influenced by this working culture and consequently allowed for the formation of "in-groups" and "out-groups" that continuously competed amongst themselves, to the detriment of service provision for Yemeni women and men. It also led to the exclusion and marginalization of less powerful and influential constituencies and groups, resulting in feelings of alienation and discontent.

### 3.1.5   Divided Army and Security Apparatus

The Yemeni army was led by several family members of former President Saleh, including his son Ahmed Ali Saleh, as head of the Republican Guard, his half-brother Mohammad Saleh al-Ahmar, as Commander of the Air Force, and his nephew Tareq Mohammad Abdullah Saleh as the 3rd Republican Guard. Although President Hadi replaced the heads of these institutions during the transition period, their influence and ability to drive opposition against his government continued, as evidenced by the participation and leadership of former members of the Republican Guard in the Houthi takeover of Sana'a.

Former President Saleh's masterful knowledge and management of tribal culture allowed him to manipulate tribal divisions and competing loyalties amongst members of his army. Divisions started to manifest after the 2011 revolution, especially between those loyal to

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[30] The Panel of Experts on Yemen reported several documented grievances related to land disputes. For more details, see United Nations Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2140 (2014), S/2015/125, February 2015.

[31] According to the International Monetary Fund, ghost workers result in a huge government payroll and are a huge burden on the annual budget. See International Monetary Fund (IMF), Country Notes: Yemen, April 2015, http://www.imf.org/external/np/country/notes/yemen.htm.

former President Saleh, and those loyal to Brigadier Ali Mohsen, who led the 310 Brigade located outside Sana'a, and consequently fled the country after the Houthi takeover of the capital.

The security apparatus was likewise fractured and comprised of pro-Saleh and pro-Hadi loyalists, a division that led to public confrontations. Significantly, some groups, including the Houthi, were excluded from participation in these institutions. A demand for inclusion immediately following their takeover of Sana'a was a point of tension between the Houthis and President Hadi.

The NDC recommendations highlighted the need for reform of the army, in particular the need to promote unity, i.e. a national army that exhibits loyalty to the country and its interests, as opposed to an individual leader or group.

### 3.1.6 Economic inequality and access to wealth

The deteriorating economic situation in Yemen is not new; although it is at its worst since the start of the 2015 crisis.

According to the World Bank, Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world,[32] has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, and is one of the most food insecure countries globally.[33] Previous projections for GDP growth showed a decline of two percent in 2014. To complicate matters further, Yemen's scarce water resources are at a critical level due to bad water management policies and weak governance, and have a direct impact on agriculture, a main source of income in rural areas.[34]

The oil industry, one of the country's main economic engines, faced many structural and security challenges. Tribal attacks on both the oil and gas infrastructure continued to disrupt operations, drive away investors, and drain the country's revenue. It also caused continued disruption to electric grids and power, with huge implications for both small and large businesses. The removal of fuel subsidies caused riots in 2014, and attempts by the government for civil service reforms were unsuccessful.

Youth unemployment is also of concern and is tied to the economy, a weak educational system, and is further exacerbated by the patronage system at play in the country. According to the Youth Employment Action Plan by the Government of Yemen for 2014-2016, youth in the age group of 15-29 of age, represent 45 percent of the population. The report acknowledged that widespread youth unemployment fueled the

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[32] Recent data is not available. Latest data
[33] World Bank, Country Overview: Yemen, World Bank, last updated March 2015, http://www.worldbank.org/country/yemen/overview.
[34] Rural Poverty Portal, Country page: Yemen, accessed June 2015, http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/yemen.

protests of the 2011 revolution and the slow pace of progress continues to frustrate Yemeni women and men. In addition, there exists a disparity in youth access to education, employment, and training programs throughout different governorates.

The central government managed all resources and controlled state revenues. Ill distribution of wealth and politicization of service delivery and development contributed to continued discriminatory practices and discontent among segments of the population. In addition, because most of the oil and gas resources and production are located in the south, the south has continuously called for a redistribution of wealth in their own favor.[35]

In addition, the government of former Prime Minister Basindwa during the transition phase was slow in adopting reform. Its decision to lift oil subsidies in 2014 triggered protests across Sana'a and demonstrated how an economic crisis can quickly mobilize people to action. The perception that President Hadi's government has not been able to improve the livelihood of ordinary Yemeni women and men is a source of anger and resentment.

### 3.1.7  Lack of access to and availability of services

Yemen is ranked as second on the Human Development Index for the entire Asia Region.[36] Access to adequate healthcare and basic education[37] are at the root of some frustration among Yemeni women and men,[38] especially in rural areas and the highlands.

With regard to healthcare, a scarcity of water led to weak sanitation practices among Yemeni women and men, resulting in preventable diseases. Food insecurity resulted in chronic malnutrition especially among children. Health inequities in Yemen are huge especially between men and women, with women lacking many basic health services for themselves and their children.[39] For instance, before the current escalation in the conflict Yemen's chronic malnutrition rate was already at 47 percent, with nearly 850,000 children under five reported as suffering from acute malnutrition.[40]

A weak educational system in Yemen,[41] especially in rural areas, makes Yemeni women and men ill equipped and ill prepared for the market place. According to the Education Administration at the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 8.6

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[35] IMF, *supra* note 31.

[36] See United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Index: Table, http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi-table.

[37] Rural Poverty Portal, *supra* note 34.

[38] Zyck, *supra* note 13.

[39] Teresa Logue, Yemen: Health Inequality Between the Genders, *Yale Global Health Review*, May 2014.

[40] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "2015 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview, June Revision." OCHA, 2015.

[41] United Nations Development Programme, Yemen: MDG Overview, accessed June 2015, http://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg2.html.

percent of Yemeni women and men are illiterate. High illiteracy rates among women in particular are impacted by cultural norms and attitudes towards women's right to education. The percentage of Yemeni women who are illiterate is projected to reach 66 percent this year.

### 3.1.8 Southerners Call for Independence

One of the most critical challenges for Yemen is the southern issue and the aspirations of the people of the south to have their own independence from the central government of Yemen and to have control over their resources and livelihood. Promises for compensation[42] and restitution of their rights were either too slow or did not materialize.

Southerners were also divided over the acceptance or lack of acceptance of the proposed six region federal plan. They have little trust that the central government will reform enough to allow for their full participation in key positions, address dire economic conditions, and accept the redistribution of wealth for the benefit of the people of the south. Moreover, the leadership of the southern Hirak movement is divided, adding to the challenges of putting forward a unified set of demands and vision.

### 3.1.9 The Neglect of the North: Sa'dah

The history of neglect of Sa'dah and the Houthi resistance to the republican state of Sana'a played a major factor in the state's attitude towards Sa'dah, the historical home of the Zaidi Imamate.[43] With the rise of the Houthi movement, former President Saleh launched ruthless wars against them from 2004-2010 and deprived the people of Sa'dah of development opportunities. This neglect was articulated by Ansar Allah during their participation at the NDC. They shared stories of their war experiences and its impact on their lives. It also helped create an entire army of men trained in warfare ad proud of their resilience in the face of attempts to control their territory. During the NDC conference, the working group with a special focus on Sa'dah encountered many difficulties in reaching an agreement on issues pertaining to political representation and access to resources for the people of Sa'dah.

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[42] Qatar had promised to contribute $350 million dollars to the Southern Victims Fund, see: Nina Tamaddon, "Transitional Collaboration between the UN and Yemen," *Yemen Times*, December 2013; Al Aryani, *supra* note 19.

[43] Al Aryani, *supra* note 19.

## 3.2 Intermediate/Proximate Factors

### 3.2.1 Humanitarian Crisis

Regrettably, the humanitarian crisis described below is being manipulated by the warring parties with little care for the cost to civilians.[44] Aid is a) held by competing factions to gain advantage over other parties, or b) is distributed to appease certain populations and exclude others. It also confirms difficulties facing the UN to convince the parties to the conflict of the impact of the crisis on civilians. What follows represents a picture of how this humanitarian crisis has played out in the day to day lives of Yemeni women, men, and children. It also demonstrates sources of stress and points of tension that can force civilian populations to take sides to sustain themselves under such difficult conditions, and the vulnerability of certain segments of society to outside recruitment by extremist groups and violent militias. The following information was provided by a variety of sources and draws as accurate a picture of what is transpiring on the ground as possible at the time that this report was written.

Armed conflict in Yemen has escalated rapidly since March. Although most humanitarian organizations were forced to pull out of Yemen due to the conflict, national staff and partners remain in country. The escalation has exacerbated immense pre-crisis humanitarian needs. Recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that 21.2 million people require humanitarian assistance, or 80 percent of the population, a 33 percent increase since the onset of the conflict.[45] Humanitarian needs can be categorized broadly as protection of civilians; safe drinking water and sanitation; emergency food and livelihood assistance; and healthcare. More detailed descriptions of the impacts of the conflict on refugees, IDPs, children, and women specifically, follow this broader section on the humanitarian crisis.

**Protection of Civilians:** Recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that 11.2 million people in Yemen require protection assistance, including IDPs, refugees, migrants, and other conflict affected persons.[46] According to the most recent health facility reports, as of June 2015, at least 2,288 people have been killed as a result of the current conflict, including 1,297 civilians. In addition, another 9,755 people have been injured, including 3,227 civilians.[47]

Of great concern is the need to ensure that all parties to the conflict abide by their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law to

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[44] Confidential Participants, Focus Group Discussion, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May and June 2015; Confidential Interviewees, Phone and in-Person Interviews, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May and June 2015.
[45] OCHA, *supra* note 40.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

protect civilians and civilian infrastructures, and enable the facilitation of safe, rapid, and unimpeded humanitarian aid.

**Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation:** Recent estimates, as of June 2015, claim that 20.4 million people in Yemen are in need of water and sanitation assistance, a number that accounts for nearly 80% of the population.[48] 9.4 million of this number are people whose pre-crisis access to water was cut or severely hindered specifically as a result of fuel shortages. The main source of water for many communities is commercial water trucks, which have been reported as being two to four times more expensive due to the conflict's recent escalation and have stopped serving entire regions of the country due to security concerns.

Sewage and sanitation problems are also concerning. Sewage treatment is at risk in cities throughout Yemen and is only partially operational in Sana'a and Sa'dah.

**Emergency Food and Livelihood Assistance:** In terms of food shortages, 12.3 million people are estimated to be food insecure, as of June 2015 available data, comprising 50 percent of the population of Yemen.[49] This number is a 15.7 percent increase since the data available this past March. Half of this number or approximately 6 million persons are believed to be severely food insecure. This development has led to a huge increase in food prices with the World Food Programme reporting that some essential foods like wheat can only be obtained on the black market.[50]

According to the National Social Protection Monitoring Survey, around 70 percent of Social Welfare Fund (SWF) beneficiary households mentioned SWF cash transfers as the main source to purchase basic food commodities.[51] The fact that the SWF, the key social protection mechanism in Yemen covering almost 35 percent of the population, is not able to provide cash transfers since the first quarter of 2015, further exacerbates the fragile situation of most vulnerable households.

**Healthcare:** The conflict has also affected key infrastructure in the country, including hospitals. June 2015 data indicated that at least 160 health facilities have closed or been destroyed.[52] Recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that 15.2 million Yemeni women and men are in need of basic healthcare.[53] Additionally, reports from June 2015 indicate that there are acute shortages of critical medical supplies and medicines.[54]

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] United Nations World Food Programme, Yemen Market Price Update, June 2015.
[51] "National Social Protection Monitoring Survey," UNICEF and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation-Yemen, 2015.
[52] OCHA *supra* note 40.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

Yemen also faces an erratic supply of electricity, which forces services providers, such as those at hospitals, to rely heavily on the use of generators that run on fuel, which is also in short supply. Some aid workers currently in Yemen have indicated that the Saudi military's blockade on the advancement of the Houthi rebels has also disrupted the flow of much needed humanitarian aid, including fuel, to areas of need in the country.[55] The fuel shortages are also impacting the cold-chain storage of vaccines and other supplies that are temperature sensitive. Lack of available healthcare, clean drinking water and proper sanitation has contributed to outbreaks of malaria and dengue fever.[56]

Also of concern are attacks and harassment affecting healthcare workers and health facilities. As of May 20, 2015, there were seven confirmed security incidents against health workers, which include five deaths and five injuries. There have been 53 incidents affecting healthcare facilities, including damage to the facility itself, attacks, or other forms of harassment.[57]

The UN's Humanitarian Coordinator, Johannes Van Der Klaauw, recently confirmed the significance of the humanitarian crisis in the context of the current conflict, and described it as "one of the largest and most complex in the world."[58]

### 3.2.2 Refugees, IDPs, Migrants, and Host Communities

**Refugees and Migrants:** The crisis is not only limited to Yemeni women and men, but include refugees who have fled to Yemen as a result of the Syrian and Somali war and other regional conflicts. Recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that over 883,000 refugees and migrants in Yemen require humanitarian assistance, a number that includes Yemeni migrants who were deported from Saudi Arabia.[59] Expulsions of Yemeni women and men migrants from Saudi Arabia have continued at a fairly consistent rate of approximately 1,000 people per day through April and May, and more recent numbers are not yet available.

Yemen hosts approximately a quarter of million refugees from other countries, and about 1 million migrants, many of whom have been greatly impacted by the conflict's escalation and remain vulnerable[60]. Despite the conflict and its escalation, new refugees continue to arrive in Yemen. Recent reports indicated that approximately 4,000 new arrivals arrived in Yemen in the month of April alone, mostly from the Horn of Africa. This number shows a marked decrease from the number of refugees entering the country in March.

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[55] "Aid Flights to Yemen Blocked after Saudi Arabian Jets Bomb Airport Runway." *The Guardian* April 2015.

[56] OCHA, *supra* note 40.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Thalif Deen, "UN Struggles to Cope with New Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen," *IPS,* May 2015.

[59] OCHA, *supra* note 40.

[60] Camps have also been subject to bombing creating additional duress on the people who occupy them.

In addition to the number of refugees entering the country, many are leaving, or attempting to leave the country as well. As of May 15, 2015, more than 28,700 Yemenis and third country nationals had left the country, registered to have arrived in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Sudan, and more than 16,000 requests for assistance in evacuating Yemen are in process.[61]

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Host Communities:** Recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that 1.2 million people are in need of emergency shelter or essential household items in the country, including over 1 million people that have now been internally displaced as a result of the conflict.[62]

As IDPs move throughout the country in search of safety and shelter, rental prices are rising, creating a further drain on the economic resources of displaced families. Many IDPs are staying with relatives or friends, a situation that adds additional stress on already vulnerable households.

In addition, a large number of IDPs have set up temporary shelters in the open, or in public buildings, including an estimated 237 schools.[63] Those IDPs living in the open or in unprotected spaces are perhaps the most vulnerable to further harm. They are exposed to harsh weather, environmental issues, fire, and violence and exploitation due to their extreme vulnerability. These risks include a large threat of gender based violence which is described in greater detail later in this study. Also of concern are the issues of overcrowding and lack of clean water and sanitation services, further exacerbated by the lack of healthcare facilities and food shortages.

Marginalized groups in Yemen may face even larger risks due to rejection by host communities or security issues stemming from living in the open. (*See map 3 for a visual representation of the IDP crisis*).[64]

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Yemen Protection Cluster, Task Force on Population Movements' 3rd Report, July 6, 2015.
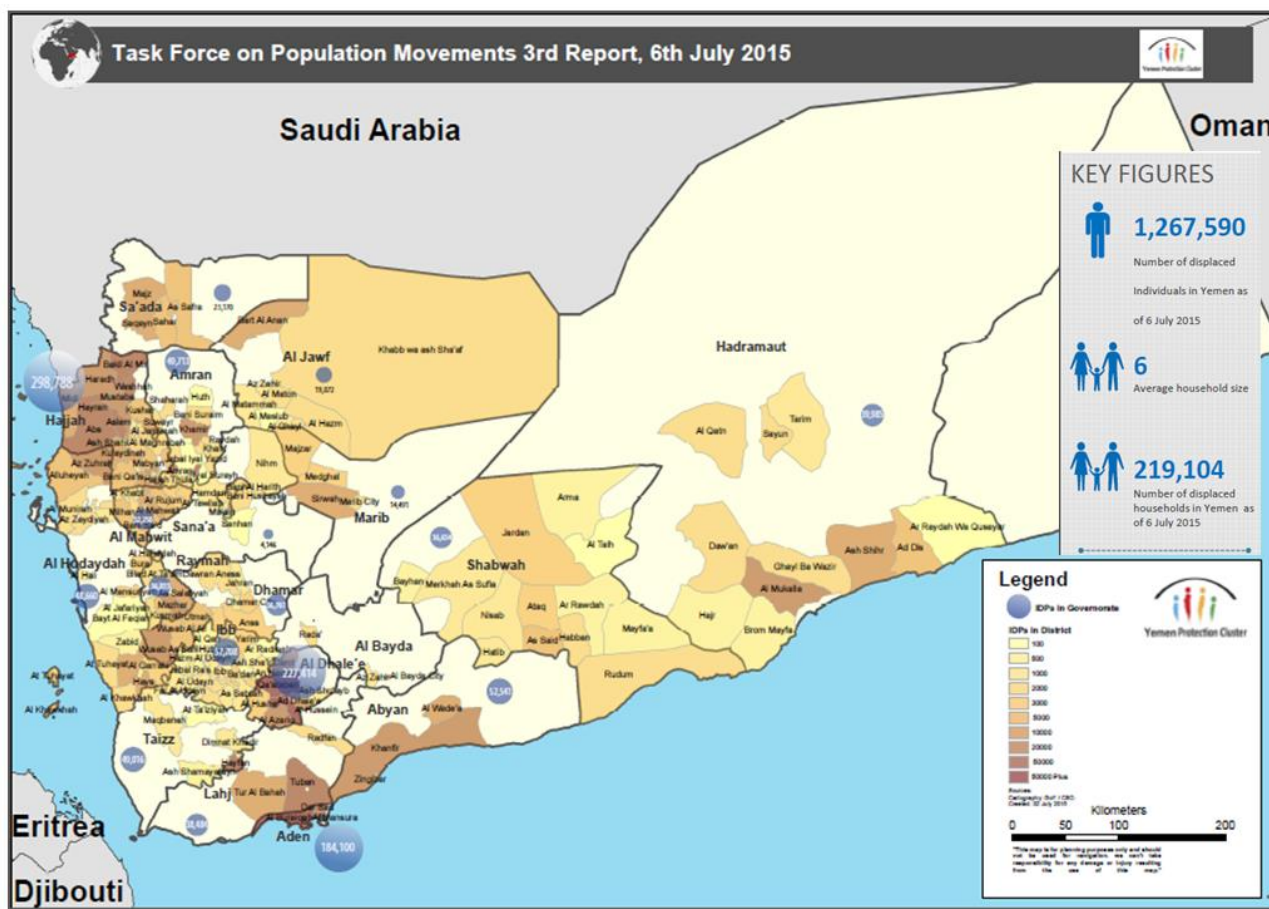
Map 3

### 3.2.3 Impact of the Conflict on Children

The conflict's impact on children has been even direr with extensive human rights violations reported, and magnified effects of the humanitarian crisis.

**Malnutrition:** Currently more than 1.5 million children under five, and pregnant or lactating women, require lifesaving nutrition services for the treatment of acute malnutrition, which is particularly problematic in light of the closure of health facilities across the country.[65] Diarrhea incidence is already rising and measles incidence is likely to increase due to reduced access to healthcare, lack of safe drinking water or sanitation, and falling vaccination rates.

**Education:** Additionally, recent data, as of June 2015, estimates that 2.9 children are currently without access to education.[66] This number has more than doubled since the onset of the crisis, and means that an estimated 47 percent of the school aged population in Yemen is now out of school. The conflict's recent escalation started at a critical time when schools were preparing for final exams in May. Some 3,584 schools were closed

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

(23 percent of all schools in the country), and these children therefore lost more than two months of schooling, resulting with now almost half of all school aged children having no access to education. Four hundred schools will require rehabilitation (96 damaged; 237 occupied by IDPs; 67 occupied by armed groups),[67] a number which is still increasing. In addition 405 schools were already in need of rehabilitation from previous conflicts.

**Protection:** Children are among the most vulnerable conflict affected groups, and partners estimate that more than 7.3 million affected children require protection services.[68] Reports of child deaths and injuries have increased dramatically in the last two months. The number of children maimed in 2015 (260: 199 boys and 61 girls) has already reached the same level as that for the whole of 2014.[69] Reports of unaccompanied or separated children are also rising, children that will be at increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Children's vulnerability is rising amid school closures, decreasing psychosocial support, challenges in maintaining the monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave child rights violations, and a lack of access to other child-friendly services. Lack of screening for unexploded ordnance in conflict affected schools and communities dramatically increase the risks of children being killed or maimed, thereby needing child focused Mine Risks Education.

**Child Soldiers:** Reports on the recruitment of child soldiers have also been rising at alarming rates. The number of verified child soldier recruits in a two month period (159 boys)[70] is almost the verified annual level of that in 2014. A general lack of socio-economic options for children coupled with inadequate screening procedures have resulted in many children below the age of 18 enlisting in armed forces and armed groups. Family members, local religious leaders, and military officers sometimes facilitate such recruitment, while false identification documents declare the recruit to be of acceptable age. Strong social norms and traditional values are embedded in Yemeni society where children are widely expected to take on adult responsibilities at an early age, and boys are expected to carry firearms and protect their community as an initiation to cultural ideas of manhood. Many are from poor families and are expected to be the breadwinners of the family. There are limited educational and vocational opportunities for children/adolescents. In addition, the recruitment of child soldiers is also tied to the high dropout rate of children from schools, especially boys, due to economic factors.[71]

Sources[72] have confirmed that child soldiers and youth are provided with free supplies of stimulants and drugs by unknown entities. It is reported that these stimulants or drugs are

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Julien Harneis, UNICEF Representative in Yemen, Press Statement, June 2015.

[71] Confidential Interview with a Government Official in Amman, Jordan, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May, 2015.

[72] Confidential Interviewee, Interview, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015; Confidential Focus Group Participants, Focus Group Discussions, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.

also used along with qat chewing, which may increase the side effects of such products. Yemeni women and men report that the drugs and stimulants negatively affect the health of users consequently impacting normal behavior and increasing aggression,[73] and the use of such a stimulant by children is particular concerning. The Concluding Observations of the Child's Rights Committee, in its fourth periodic report on Yemen reiterated "its concern about the high number of people consuming quat [sic], including children." Furthermore, the committee expressed its concern of the negative "consequences of quat [sic] on children's health and nutrition, as its consumption decreases appetite…." Lastly, the committee referred to the negative impact that qat may have on the development of children's personalities and mental health due to the addictive nature of qat.[74]

### 3.2.4    Impact of the Conflict on Women

The current desperate humanitarian situation in Yemen is exacerbated by the distinct vulnerabilities faced by women in these circumstances including higher risks of violence, harassment and abuse, sexual and labor exploitation, as well as increases in early, child, and forced marriage. It is highly likely that the current conflict will worsen the issue of sexual and gender based violence in Yemen, increasing the need for adequate protection and support mechanisms.[75] In addition, violence perpetrated against women is often used as a rationale for the retaliatory violence or protection efforts.

**Conflict Related Sexual Violence/Gender Based Violence/Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:**    The recent escalation of the conflict and increase in displacement has also increased risks of conflict related sexual exploitation and abuse and gender based violence. Recent data estimates that 52,000 women are likely to suffer from such incidents of sexual violence and require responsive critical medical care and immediate and long-term psychosocial support.[76] The lack of such services, as well as a lack of safe refuges for victims of abuse compounds the problem as victims may face stigma and rejection from their families and communities. The reported cases of sexual and gender based violence likely only represent a fraction of actual perpetrations due to failures in providing an accessible systematic reporting system.[77] However, lack of knowledge and awareness by the affected populations as to what constitutes sexual and gender based violence, and what acts amount to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law also contributes to generally low reporting of incidents. In addition, cultural norms and stigma related to sexual violence crimes further discourage survivors from both reporting, and significantly from seeking necessary medical and psychosocial services. Cultural norms remain particularly stigmatizing and prohibitive to reporting of

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[73] Confidential Focus Group Participants, *supra* note 70.
[74] United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Concluding Observation on the fourth periodic report on Yemen, CRC/C/YEM/CO/4, January 2014, para. 65.
[75] UN Women, *supra* note 3.
[76] OCHA, *supra* note 40.
[77] UN Women, *supra* note 3.

sexual violence and gender based violence perpetrated against men and boys, crimes which remain severely underreported.[78]

The conflict may exacerbate existing gender roles, including the concept of masculinity.[79] Heightened norms related to masculinity may increase aggression and violence perpetrated toward women, or may conversely be manifest in terms of the male need to protect women.

**Internally Displaced Women:** Available data reports that women account for 54 percent of all IDPs.[80] Displaced women are more likely to experience sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly due to the lack of privacy and security in IDP shelters, and the extremely low degree of power and influence displaced women command, economically, socially, and politically.

**Early, child, and forced marriage:** Also of concern are cultural beliefs wherein girls may be considered financial drains on the family, which has led to traditionally high rates of early and child marriage in Yemen; previous estimates put the percentage of girls married by the age of 18 to be at just over 50 percent.[81] In the current conflict context, young girls may also be used as forms of payment to gain security from armed groups.[82]

3.2.5    **Livelihoods**

Yemen is poised to face more economic hardships as public finances are facing a crisis due to the current conflict, low oil prices, and a decrease in taxes and international grants. There was significant loss of income for many households. By March 2015, half of businesses reported considering layoffs, and a third had already dismissed workers. Also, in April and May 2015 there was a substantial increase in layoffs as domestic economic activity was further disrupted by the outbreak of the conflict, particularly in the economic centers of Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz.[83] Government employees have not been exempt from these issues and salaries at the central level reportedly stopped being issued as of May. In Aden, the situation was even direr as Sana'a had stopped transferring salaries to civil servants in January. This represents a direct loss of revenue for an estimated 26 percent of the population and their dependents.[84]

The informal sector, which predominantly includes traders and daily laborers, also suffered from the indirect impact of movement limitations due to insecurity and the fuel

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] OCHA, *supra* note 40.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Zyck, *supra* note 13.
[83] Edward Christow, "Economic Situation in Yemen," Unpublished Confidential Report, 2015.
[84] "Yemen Food Security Update," Yemen Food Security Information System (FSIS) Development Programme, March 31, 2015.

crisis, as well as low demand.[85] The purchasing power of households was also affected with income losses, combined with rising prices of goods and commodities, and resulted in a significant decrease in household purchasing power, further endangering their ability to meet basic needs.[86]

The average monthly expenditures for each family (about $140 covers the minimum cost of living) is spent on basic needs such as staples, water, medicines and gas. Price increases (gas prices increased more than four-fold, and water trucking three-fold) have fueled negative coping mechanisms such as sale of household assets (cattle and jewelry) to cover the cost of basic food items.

Rural households were also hit hard as farmers missed the planting season due to the increased displacement, unavailability of agricultural inputs, lack of irrigation and the physical destruction of assets in some cases, thus further aggravating the food insecurity in the long run.

### 3.2.6   Competition over resources

With few resources available to the average Yemeni to sustain him or her, increased competition and fighting over resources, especially among different factions, prevent locals' access to basic needs to support their daily livelihoods.  Tactics such as blocking the flow of supplies and goods, and restrictions on the movement of civilians continue to drive tensions and fighting among factions either to sustain the gains they have won or in order gain more. Although the delivery of aid has been hampered, the little that has gone through has been sold on the black market. There are also reports about the hoarding of aid by certain factions or misdistribution of aid in impacted cities. Although the situation in Yemen is dire, other destructive systems of acquiring resources by IS or AQAP have not fully taken root in Yemen.

### 3.3   Trigger Factors

Trigger factors are those incidents that have the potential to serve as excuses or provide rationales for one or more party to initiate an action or series of actions that kicks off a cycle of conflict (*please see figure 2 on page 66 for a visual representation of the conflict cycle and more detailed explanation*). Triggers are leveraged by parties to the conflict as opportunities to remind individuals and groups of past grievances, previously unmet expectations, or past harms. They fuel tensions and can serve as a justification to dehumanize, demonize, or do harm. Significantly, trigger factors often bring alive memories and make salient conflicts overt. The following list though not discussed in detail includes incidents since 2011 that in the author's judgment served as trigger factors to the conflict, inducing one or more of the parties to the conflict to initiate events and

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[85] Christow, *supra* note 81.
[86] Peter Salisbury and Louise Redvers, "Yemen Conflict Fans Food Insecurity," *IRIN*, May 2015.

actions leading to the current cycle of conflict, as well as those trigger factors that may lead to more conflict in the near future..

Examples of trigger factors in Yemen include:[87]
- 2011 revolution and the violent responses perpetrated against demonstrators by the former regime of Saleh for example the Friday of Dignity "Karamah" incident in which many a high number of protestors were killed;
- Shifts in the political landscape and shifting allegiances by al-Ahmar family, particularly their siding with the opposition forces; later on the departure of Hamid al-Ahmar to Turkey;
- NDC, though a positive initiative, was used by parties to bring up old wounds and issues of inclusion and exclusion in the Yemeni political system;
- Direct confrontations between the Houthis and Islah followers in Sa'dah over land, detentions, occupation of properties by either side;
- Public statements made by Abdul Malik al Houthi, former President Saleh, President Hadi, as well as inflammatory statements made by Iranian officials regarding their influence in Yemen;
- The abduction of Ahmed Ben Mubarak as he was delivering the first draft of the Yemeni constitution;
- Assassinations of influential Yemeni politicians and the continuation of such practices;
- Takeover of the 310 Brigade, and the killing of its top military leaders that lead to the departure to the much influential figure Brigadier Ali Mohsen;
- Expansion of the Houthis from Amran to Sana'a followed by the takeover of Sana'a and later expansion towards Aden;
- President Hadi's brief presence in Aden and later escape to Saudi Arabia;  his continued absence from the country;
- Terrorism perpetrated by AQAP and more recently IS in Sana'a and the south;
- External military intervention by the Saudi led Arab Coalition in Yemen.

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[87] The list is not in chronological order and represents a sample of trigger events.

# 4   Stakeholder Analysis

Key stakeholders in Yemen are able to mobilize groups through the influence and authority that they enjoy. They are motivated by their willingness to preserve their interests, influence, and power, and are able to mitigate or instigate conflict depending on their role and interest in the on-going conflict context. They are able to take advantage of social, economic and political conditions to advance their interests and play on the public's feelings and sentiments. Factors serve as trigger points, enablers and justifications that can be manipulated to support and justify actions.

The stakeholders can be grouped into five levels: local, governorate, national, regional, and international. Please note that the stakeholders are listed in these groupings for ease of analysis, and not in order of significance to the conflict.

| | |
|---|---|
| Local level | Leaders in special interest groups with shared and competing interests and aspirations in the community, such as activists, members of popular committees, revolutionary committees. |
| Governorate level | Opponents of the unification; heads of governorates who have strong party affiliations, religious groups and leaders. |
| National Level | The State, political party leaders, tribal confederation, tribal leaders, leadership of armed groups |
| Regional Level | Key external actors like Gulf Cooperation Countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Iran; AQAP, with influence on the national and international levels. |
| International Level | P 5 members of the Security Council: China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US; UN; World Bank; and International Non-governmental organizations working in Yemen. |

Source: adapted from unpublished conflict assessment study

Furthermore, the stakeholder analysis would not be complete without discussion on identity groups and the way such groups are impacted by and impact the conflict in Yemen. Acting as both unifying and dividing mechanisms, identity groups, how they evolve, and the complex nature of intersectionality among various identity groupings remains essential to understanding Yemeni society. For example, shared grievances brought together the participation of youth and women during the 2011 revolution. They allied over shared demands and interest over political, social, and economic issues. They learned how to organize to make their voices heard, and shifts in their increased public participation and visibility were observable during the NDC conference.

## 4.1 Local Level Stakeholders

### 4.1.1 Local committees and community based armed militia and leadership

Grassroots leadership combines both youth and popular committee activists in Aden, Sana'a, and other parts of the country.[88] These kinds of committees and their leadership are interested in defending and rallying others against perceived threats to their community from outsiders. Though such grassroots efforts initially were formed to defend communities against AQAP as well as substituting for the absence of the central government from their cities or towns, they have also become partisan recently, further reflecting political divisions and loyalties in Yemen. Currently, the Houthis and supporters of President Hadi utilize such grassroots organized efforts to achieve their goals and rally their supporters.

For example, President Hadi has leveraged members of popular committees to protect him during his presence in Aden and leveraged his southern roots to rally others to support his efforts against the Houthis. The Houthis on the other hand used such revolutionary committees to police communities and fend off opposition in Sana'a. The confrontations are fierce across Yemeni cities, especially with easy access to arms and conditions that allow for continued competition for power and resources.

## 4.2 Governorate Level Stakeholders

### 4.2.1 The South: al-Hirak Movement

The southern issue has been a critical and persistent political challenge in terms of Yemen's unity, and is largely represented by the al-Hirak movement.

The al-Hirak movement has accused the government of former President Saleh of structural, as well as cultural violence against its people.[89] According to its members, grievances include the lack of representation in the government and civil service, intentional displacement, forced abductions of persons and military personnel,[90] and the confiscation of properties and land that they claim as having been stolen. In terms of land and resources, the south far exceeds the north, and the al-Hirak movement thus argues that unity with the north is both unwanted and unnecessary.

The movement also claims that southern resources were monopolized by the former central government in Sana'a, emphasizing strongly their belief that southerners should be the primary beneficiaries of such riches, and should have the authority to distribute it as they wish.

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[88] Farea Al Muslimi, "The Popular Committee Phenomenon in Yemen: Fueling War and Conflict," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 1, 2015.
[89] Critics of the movement accuse it of having an armed wing, an accusation that is refuted by its members.
[90] President Hadi was accused of holding back money given to him by Qatar in 2013 to compensate southerners for past wrongs and grievances.

Recent research has highlighted that southerners are greatly concerned with the recent $350 million provided by the government of Qatar to help compensate people of the south, and fervently hope this money is fully disbursed in the manner intended.

The movement has a divided leadership dispersed in Arab countries and the West. Al-Hirak leaders rally their supporters around regional, cultural, and ideological differences between northerners and southerners.

Since the conclusion of the NDC, the south has been divided over the acceptance or lack of acceptance of the proposed six unit federal arrangement, and grassroots level sentiments continue to call for a two unit federation.

President Hadi's escape to Aden brought the issues and problems of the north to the south. Recent confrontations in Aden and other southern cities with Saleh and Houthi forces, including al Dhale have created a new dynamic in the south. Additionally, both AQAP and IS have increased their presence.

## 4.3    National Level Stakeholders

### 4.3.1    The Houthi Movement

The Houthi movement, also known as Ansar Allah, was said to have been formed as a response to fears that Zaidism, the second largest religious group in Yemen comprising about 40 percent of the country's population,[91] the majority of which live in the north, was under threat from other religious identity groups, particularly Wahhabism.[92] Zaidis explain that they are a religious group closer to the Shafi'i school of thought in Islam. Shafi'is in Yemen are mostly found in the south, with other minorities living amongst them.[93] Zaidis have often had to distinguish themselves from the followers of the twelver Shiite Iran,[94] particularly with this group's rising influence in the region. In the context of religious identity politics the Houthis emerged as a Zaidi revivalist identity-based group in the early 1990s.[95]

Though the group initially was known to be peaceful, they are said to have turned to the use of arms in 2004 when their protests against former President Saleh's tenure in office escalated and led to armed confrontations.[96] Their concerns at that time bordered on former President Saleh's military alliance with the United States, government corruption,

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[91] Unpublished Conflict Assessment Study, 2013.

[92] Jeb Boone, "The Rise of the Houthis: A Brief History of Yemen's New Power Brokers, *GlobalPost*, January 2015.

[93] Thanos Petouris, "Situation Report: Yemen Country Profile," Tony Blair Faith Foundation, updated February 2015.

[94] Abubakr Al-Shamahi, "Yemen is more nuanced than Sunni and Shia," *Yemen Times*, February 27, 2014.

[95] Unpublished Conflict Assessment Study, *supra* note 89.

[96] Saeed Al Batati, "Who Are the Houthis in Yemen?," *Al Jazeera*, May 2015.

Saleh's support of Saudi-sponsored Sunni-Salafi madrassas in Sa'dah, a Houthi stronghold, and the lack of economic development in Houthi controlled areas.[97]

Currently, the Houthi movement is a heavily armed militia that has gained territory and resources through its use of force. They are often supported by local tribal groups and have gradually gained support within the wider non-Houthi population as well. In areas under Houthi control, they have replaced the state with their own brand of authority. The numbers of fighters of Ansar Allah, the military arm of the Houthis, is very much debated, though it has grown exponentially overtime with the recruitment of allies. Therefore, the Houthi influence grew from a small Zaidi group to a force to be reckoned. Their increased influence expanded from their stronghold Sa'dah, to Amran, and then to Sana'a and Aden.

Their membership in the Zaidi tribal north represents what is often described as the "sacred center of influence"[98] and extends north of Yareem. The Houthis are direct stakeholders in the ongoing crisis, especially with their recent alliance with former President Saleh, consolidated control over vital government institutions, defeat of political parties like Islah, and takeover of military bases. In an alliance with former President Saleh, the Houthis escalated confrontations with Abdul Rabo Mansour Hadi and his emergency government in Riyadh.[99]

The Houthis are motivated by their belief in the unacceptability of the proposal of a six region federal map of Yemen. To secure their demands, they also blocked the adoption of the constitutional draft by abducting, Dr. Ahmad Ben Mubarak, the Chief of Staff of President Hadi, although he was later released. Such actions placed them at the center of the ongoing crisis.

The UN Security Council reacted to Houthi actions by placing sanctions on Houthi military actors, including al Saed Mr. Abdul Malik Al Houthi, the uncontested leader of the Houthi movement, as well as the Houthi armed wing Ansar Allah.[100] Al Houthi derives his strength from his positional power from his "sada" status, a term used for a Hashemite who can prove his lineage from the Prophet Mohammad. Al Houthi calls on his followers to offer "munasara"[101] to their fellowmen. He takes often to the media to

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[97] Ginny Hill, Peter Salisbury, Leonie Northedge, and Jane Kinninmont, "Yemen: Corruption, Capital Flight, and Global Drivers of Conflict," Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013, p. 12.
[98] Interview with Yemeni interlocutor, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, June 2015.
[99] Formerly called the Transitional Government, before the Houthi control of Sana'a and the forced resignation of Ministers.
[100] The United Nations Security Council, in resolutions 2216 and 2140, voted to impose targeted sanctions on former President Saleh, his son, Abdul Malik al Houthi, and two Houthi military leaders, for threatening the political stability of Yemen.
[101] "Munasara" means acting in support of the other on the issues of concern to them, and where they need help and support.

mobilize his followers in a national call against corruption. though he has become less visible during the current bombing probably for security concerns and destruction of infrastructure in Sa'dah.

The Houthis are facing an existential threat as a result of targeted efforts by the Saudi led Arab Coalition to defeat them and weaken their influence. They are skilled fighters and have taken up fighting AQAP. Also, of relevance is the use of child soldiers by the Houthis, which is against international law.

### 4.3.2  President Hadi's Emergency Government in Exile

The Yemeni government's power has decreased with its absence, and current exiled presence in Saudi Arabia; it faces unprecedented challenges to its authority and capacity. President Hadi has formed a government initially composed of eight proto ministers and the Vice President. With a political transition in trouble for some time, the Houthi were able to take control of Sana'a and side line the Government. They placed President Hadi, Prime Minister Bahah, and several Ministers under house arrest and launched a anti-corruption campaign against them.

If the government does return, it will have deal with a dire humanitarian crisis, structural damage to vital services, and a traumatized population. Yemeni's are divided on whether Hadi's request for external intervention was justified and some express anger over the devastating structural and humanitarian results of the intervention[102].  The government will have to manage the criticism and reinstate its authority in peaceful ways that does not fuel tensions nor exasperate divisions among Yemenis.

It will also have to respond to past criticism of exclusion of certain groups in vitial government positions and act in a timely manner to manage whatever next steps are needed to restore trust of the people.
Islah and al-Ahmar family

Islah is a major political party that is comprised of the confederation of tribes, Salafis, and the Muslim Brotherhood Movement.[103] It is led primarily by the al-Ahmar family.[104] The al-Ahmar brothers were dealt a staggering and humiliating defeat at the hands of the Houthis during the fall of Amran when the Houthis attacked and confiscated the al-

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[102] Confidential Participants, Focus Group Discussions, interview Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May-June 2015; Confidential Interviewees inside and outside of Yemen, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May-June 2015.
[103] Al-Islah is a Yemeni Islamist party founded in 1990 by Abdullah Ibn Husayn Al-Ahmar, Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, Abdul Majeed Al-Zindani, and Mohammed Al-Yadumi. The first article of Islah basic law defines it as a 'popular political organization that seeks reform of all aspects of life on the basis of Islamic principles and teachings.
[104] Sadiq al-Ahmar is the leader of the tribal confederation of Hashid. His brother Hamid al-Ahmar was a former Member of the Yemeni Parliament.

Ahmar brothers' personal homes in 2014. Later the Houthis confiscated their businesses in Sana'a as well.The Houthis also defeated Brigadier Ali Mohsen and forced him to leave the country when they took over the 310 Brigade, which he commanded.

The Muslim Brotherhood of Islah is weakened and one of their prominent members Mohammad Al Kahtani is still missing. Islah accuses the Houthis of his abduction. The Salafi branch of Islah is led by Zandani[105] who promotes Salafi ideology.

Historical confrontations between the Zaidi's and Salafi Sunni Wahabi followers of Islah escalated due to the growth of Wahabi schools in Zaidi land and especially in Dammaj. In Shafi'i dominated areas in the south religious text and rhetoric are used to move Sunni tribes to protect Shafi'i land and interests.

The confrontations between the Houthis and Islah have escalated in particular in Aden and Taiz, where Islah fighters engaged in street confrontations with the Houthis and former President Saleh loyalists after President Hadi's departure to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The ideological gaps along with the competition for authority and power are wider as a result of the current crisis.

### 4.3.3 Ali Abdullah Saleh

Mr. Saleh has been able to rally his supporters across Yemen with a unity message and his tribal influence. He has also used his understanding of tribal law to mitigate conflicts between and among tribes and in favor of his own positioning in the post 2011 environment. His enemies and opponents equally agree that he is masterful in understanding his opponents, as well as tribal norms and culture. With more than 33 years in office and as head of the most dominant party, the GPC, Saleh has had plenty of time to build a wealth and empire of influence.[106]

Saleh, and his son Ahmad, have been able to rally the former Presidential guard loyalists to fight with them and the Houthis against President Hadi and his government. The confrontations across the country have taken on very local dimensions with popular committees and revolutionary committees confronting each other in Yemeni cities.

Saleh's main opposition has historically been with Islah and especially al-Ahmar family whom he accused of orchestrating the Presidential mosque attack in 2012, in which he almost died. His relationship with al-Ahmar family also worsened when he stated his intention to pass on the presidency to his son Ahmad Ali Saleh. It is said that Hamid al-Ahmar had similar presidential aspirations and felt that such nepotism was a threat to his

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[105] Zandani is on the terrorist list of the Security Council.
[106] According to the Panel of Experts on Yemen, Saleh has accumulated something between 30 and 66 billion dollars. See United Nations Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, *supra* note 30.

prospects. The rift between Saleh and al-Ahmar increased when al-Ahmar family supported the anti-Saleh counterrevolution in 2011.

Saleh's recent alliance with the Houthis demonstrates his ability to leverage his Zaidi roots in favor of his personal interests when the opportunity presents. The people call him "al Zaeem"[107] and bless him with slogans like "salam Allah ala afash"[108] an indication of his heightened status with his followers.

A resilient Saleh even stood in front of his demolished home in Sana'a and promised a million dollars to aid the victims of the Coalition bombing. The researcher learned that the money is being distributed in Jordan.

During the NDC conference, GPC members refused to allow any transitional justice laws, and although Saleh was able to negotiate immunity for himself and his family in the 2011 GCC agreement, contingent on his resignation and exile, Saleh never really gave up power. This led to the international community sanctioning Saleh in 2014.

The unexpected alliance between Saleh and the Houthis,[109] in spite of the imposed sanctions, perhaps was driven by a hurt ego and his resentment of being pushed aside. Saleh loyalists are still present in many diplomatic missions around the world, a reflection of current divisions present in Yemen.

Also of note, are accusations that Saleh has links to AQAP, and in particular, that Saleh has used AQAP to blackmail the west and regional actors for money and support.

### 4.3.4 Former military personnel, the Yemeni Army, National and Security Sector Apparatus

As previously mentioned, former military personnel, especially from the Republican Guard, have joined former President Saleh and the Houthis, and have actively engaged in fighting against President Hadi's government in exile.  At the same time, the remains of the Yemeni army under the command of President Hadi are attempting to reposition themselves and regain command of the country. Divided loyalties across party, regional, and sectarian lines are driving much of the tensions among all these actors.

The Houthis have been accused of the abduction of al-Asbahi, the Defense Minister during President Hadi's tenure. They have also taken over much of the military bases and weapons and therefore have weakened any military response to their rise. They tried to force Hadi to include their men in the security apparatus and military but he refused leading to increased confrontations between them.

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[107] "Al Zaeem" means leaders.
[108] "Salaam Allah ala afash," means peace be on afash.
[109] Former President Saleh led a six year war against the Houthis between 2004 and 2009.

The security sector, political (al amn al seyasi), and national (al amn al qawmi), is equally divided between those loyal to the north and south, impacting its ability to manage security issues across the country. The rise of grassroots resistance against the Houthis in the south and communal level organized groups continues to confirm shifts in power dynamics across the country.

### 4.3.5 AQAP

The unification of al-Qaeda affiliates in Saudi Arabia and Yemen resulted in the forming of AQAP in 2009, and later and in response to the Arab Spring in 2011, AQAP created Ansar al-Sharia to re-orient itself locally as a populist movement.

In Yemen, Ansar al-Sharia has tried to reach out and win tribal support, and has seen some success with smaller less resourced tribes in Ja'ar and Zinjibar. Ansar al-Sharia has also enjoyed a heavy presence in Abyan, Shabwa, Hadramut, Ma'rib, and Al-Bayda. With the recent increase in sectarian rhetoric, Sunni Shafii tribes have joined AQAP to fight a perceived growth of Shiite influence in the regions. In Sana'a it has used abduction tactics and declared its responsibility for a few orchestrated incidents intending to emphasize its presence in the north.

They have also incurred a recent loss of one of their leaders[110] during a drone attack in Yemen by the US in its counterterrorism efforts. The impact of this targeted assassination is too early to determine.

Since their consolidation of power and control of Sana'a, the Houthi movement in the south has resulted in direct confrontations with AQAP and allied tribal groups.

### 4.4 Regional Level Stakeholders

The influence and involvement of regional actors serves as both a stabilizing and destabilizing force in Yemen.

The conflict, which was initially rooted in local ethnic rivalries, took on a regional dimension when Saudi Arabia started airstrike assaults in Yemen in late March 2015, intending to halt the Houthis' march towards Aden. Other nations in the region also involved in the conflict against the Houthis are Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, UAE, and Sudan. This military coalition became known as 'Operation Decisive Storm'. The intensity of the air strikes has increased since March with huge impacts on the country's infrastructure and the civilian population.

Iran has been accused of coming to the aid of the Houthis, as they view these acts by the coalition of predominantly Sunni Muslim countries unjustified.

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[110] Dana Ford, "Top al Qaeda Leader Reported Killed in Yemen, *CNN*, June 16, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/15/middleeast/yemen-aqap-leader-killed/.

In April 2015, Houthi rebels attacked Saudi Arabia border posts, resulting in a number of deaths on both sides.[111] This development has sparked fears that the conflict, which was contained within the borders of Yemen, could expand into Saudi Arabia. In addition to this, Saudi Arabia since 2013 has been expelling thousands of Yemeni migrant workers.[112] With the current development in the conflict, Saudi Arabia's actions towards Yemeni migrant workers may be a factor in the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict.

Saudi influence with the tribes is also a major factor in Yemeni politics and presents special sensitivities and considerations, especially given Saudi Arabia's leading role in the Arab Coalition forces fight against the Houthis and former President Saleh.

Leaders in Saudi Arabia have been initially able to rally their constituents to support the war and attacks on the Houthis by framing the conflict as sectarian, however, as the conflict continues such support is not as forthcoming. Saudi leaders play on constituents' fear of the Iranian influence and power, as well as their duty to defend Sunni Islam in the face of Shiite expansion. Additionally, Saudi leaders use religious rhetoric to support their actions, and propagandize to build support amongst citizens and their troops to defend king and country.

In opposition to the Saudi-led coalition, Iran has attempted to reinforce Shiite Islamic identity dynamics and has called on all Shiites present in neighboring countries to defend their rights as minorities in Sunni dominated countries. Iran's historical relationship with Zaidi and Sunni communities in Yemen are often explained solely through a sectarian lens, though the relationship also has geopolitical and ideological roots.[113] With many interests in the region, Iran's relationship with its neighbors often dictates its potential expansion of influence, its culture, and the Shiite tradition of "Welyat al Faqih".[114] On several occasions, a number of Iranian officials or individuals close to the Iranian leadership have made inflammatory statements about their influence on Arab capitals. However, the obstruction of the Jihan vessel in 2013 and its cargo of Iranian made weapons allegedly bound for Sa'dah contributed to regional fears and suspicions regarding Iran's role in Yemen.[115]

Also of note, Iran has been suffering from the impact of sanctions for a number of years and is now negotiating with the US for its reentry into the international arena.

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[111] "Saudis Repel Border Attack from Houthis as Conflict Worsens," *Foreign Policy*, May 2015.

[112] Human Rights Watch, "Detained, Beaten, Deported: Saudi Abuses against Migrants during Mass Expulsions," Human Rights Watch, May 2015.

[113] Karim Sadjadpour, "On Saudi Iranian Dynamics," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 16, 2015.

[114] It advocated a guardianship based political system. See: "What is Wilayat al faqih," alIslam.org, accessed June 2015, http://www.al-islam.org/shia-political-thought-ahmed-vaezi/what-wilayat-al-faqih.

[115] United Nations Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, *supra* note 30.

Iranian/Saudi relations, which have been contentious, are set to escalate further as a result of the conflict in Yemen. In his article, Primoz Manfreda[116] described the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a "Cold War" with three potential sticking points. In the first place, Manfreda noted that Saudi Arabia was not in favor of the Iranian government's nuclear aspirations as that could make Iran a more major power than it already is in the Gulf,[117] whose disputed name further reflects the existing tension. Secondly, Saudi Arabia has accused Iran of fueling disgruntlement among Shiite communities in the region. Finally, Manfreda noted that the two nations were also ideological rivals, wherein Saudi Arabia promotes Wahabism, described as an ultra-conservative literal interpretation of Islam that also happens to be the state religion, and Iran promotes a version of Islam that combines elected republican institutions under the guidance of a Muslim cleric, the Supreme leader. All of these issues, combined with the stance that both sides are taking in the conflict in Yemen, potentially make a sectarian conflict possible in the region.

Furthermore, promises made by GCC countries for the funding of different projects and NDC related outcomes also played a stabilizing and destabilizing factor in Yemen. GCC countries funded a variety of non-governmental organizations and political parties. For example, Qatar supported the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Yemen, while Saudi Arabia funded Salafi groups.

As mentioned earlier, Oman has played an intermediary role and did not join the Arab Coalition. In addition, the role of Egypt cannot be dismissed given its long engagement with Yemen and its central role in Arab politics.

## 4.5   International Level Stakeholders

Although the international community is divided on what to do regarding how best to control the Houthis and former President Saleh's new alliance, it has insisted on the legitimacy of President Hadi, and has taken a number of actions in opposition to the Houthi takeover of Sana'a. The United Nations Security Council in resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2140 (2014), voted to impose targeted sanctions on former President Saleh, his son, Abdul Malik al Houthi, and two Houthi military leaders, for threatening the political stability of Yemen.[118]

Given Yemen's strategic location and importance in securing the passage of trade to and from Bab al Mandab, the international community is also more directly interested in the outcomes of the current conflict.  For example, the US drone program in Yemen and the US interest in countering terrorism after the 2011 attacks, coupled with the Russian

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[116] Primoz Manfreda, "Iran and Saudi Arabia- Middle East Cold War," *About News,* accessed May 2015, http://middleeast.about.com/od/iran/tp/Iran-And-Saudi-Arabia-Middle-East-Cold-War.htm.
[117] Referred to by the Iranians as the "Persian Gulf" and by the Arabs as the "Arabian Gulf".
[118] Michelle Nichols, "UN Sanctions Yemen's Ex-President Saleh, Two Rebel Leaders," *Reuters*, November 7, 2014.

Federation position regarding the Houthis and Iran makes Yemen central to ongoing US/Russian relations. Other Security Council permanent members like China, Britain, and France, enjoy historical as well as economic interests in Yemen.

Currently, the countries that are involved in the conflict can be grouped under the following: those offering non-military support, those offering military support, and those opposed to military action. Those opposed to military action are Russia, China, and Iran, although Iran is reportedly providing military assistance and advice to the Houthis. Those offering nonmilitary support are the United States, United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and Belgium. Finally, those who are offering military support are led by Saudi Arabia and include Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Senegal, Sudan, and Malaysia.[119]

International political dynamics remain complicated. There exists a layer of cooperation and adversity among different state actors dependent on context. For example, analysts point out that the United States supports Iranian backed militias in Iraq but are against Iran's alleged support for the Houthis in Yemen.[120] The UAE and Egypt, who are part of the Saudi offensive against the Houthis, are bombing factions in Libya supported by Turkey and Qatar, who also happen to be part of the Saudi led offensive in Yemen.[121] To complicate matters further, the Houthi movement also shares some of the same enemies with the US and other stakeholders in the conflict, including authoritarian systems more generally, AQAP, IS, and Salafi Islam. In addition, Russia has emphasized that the Saudi led attacks on the Houthis, as well as continuous accusations of Iran meddling in Yemeni affairs, were having an adverse impact on the nuclear talks between the Security Council and Iran.[122]

To date, all attempts to resolve the conflict through a negotiated peace process have failed; the latest attempt made by UN Special Envoy Jamal ben Omar in June 2015 likewise failed, due to the parties' inability to reach any agreement on core issues such as the Houthi withdrawal from Sana'a and submission to the government of President Hadi. It was even reported that there were physical attacks between the parties during the negotiations.

Beyond Security Council actions, other United Nations involvement in Yemen is mainly focused on development, humanitarian, and political assistance endeavors. The political process had failed but with the appointment of a new Special Envoy to Yemen has resumed once more.

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[119] "Yemen Peace Talks to Resume in Shadow of Conflict," *Al Jazeera*, May 20, 2015.
[120] Karl Vick, "Why the US is Fighting Beside Iran in Iraq and Against it in Yemen, *Time*, March 2015.
[121] David D. Kirkpatrick and Eric Schmitt, "Arab Nations Strike in Libya, Surprising US," *New York Times*, August 25, 2014.
[122] "China-Russia FMs Discuss Yemen Crisis," *The BRICS Post*, March 30, 2015.

The level and extent of continued engagement of the UN in Yemen is contingent on its ability to manage security issues on the ground. A number of attempts to intimidate the UN with abductions of its personnel or direct threats have placed it at the center of the conflict. The notion that there is no development without security has also limited the UN's role in the current crisis.

The UN's relationship with regional players is also of great importance in the Yemeni context especially given their interest and role in either brokering agreements, or funding, as is the case of Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, to mention a few. Oman in particular and its well-known role of serving as an intermediary is unique, and can be leveraged by the UN.

## 4.6    Identity Groups: Unifying or Divisive?

Identity groups in Yemen have the ability to serve both as a driver of conflict and a source of resilience in mitigating conflict.[123]

Identity based conflicts are often mistaken for disputes over material resources.[124] In an article on the topic, Jay Rothman argues that "attempts to resolve such misdiagnosed conflicts generally fail, since the resolution efforts do not address the real underlying causes of the conflict. Hence the first step in effective resolution is correctly identifying a conflict as an identity conflict."

Interest-based conflicts tend to be more concrete, the issues more clearly defined, and the potential for mutual benefit more obvious; as interest-based conflicts are perhaps easier to understand they generally receive greater attention. However, identity-based conflicts are much more abstract, ambiguous, and intangible because they are based on individuals' psychology, culture, basic values, shared history, and beliefs. Identity conflicts, due to their more complex nature, may be expressed as material disputes in an attempt to give focus to the parties' concerns. Additionally, material disputes may evolve into identity conflicts as disputants invest themselves in a conflict, and come to identify strongly with their positions.

The challenge then becomes one of correctly analyzing the nature of the conflict.  Once it is correctly analyzed, the next step toward resolution is to make explicit the sources of identity threat and insecurity, and the parties' needs. Resolution proceeds by having parties dialogue about their needs, interests, and values. Such dialogue has the ability to promote the empowerment and recognition of distinct identity groups and may aid in transforming the conflict into a more productive relationship.

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[123] Unpublished Conflict Assessment Study, 2013.
[124] Tanya Glaser, "Book Review of Resolving Identity-Based Conflicts: In Nations, Organizations, and Communities by Jay Rothman," Conflict Research Consortium, accessed June 2015, http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/roth7516.htm.

Therefore, to understand the on-going sources of conflicts in Yemen fully, and the relationship between different identity groups, one would need to fully analyze these identity based conflicts and how competition among them drives much of the conflict dynamics in Yemen. These identities are shaped and formed around ideology, political parties, religion, geography, and tribal affiliations.

With the current escalation and crisis in Yemen, identity groups have hardened their positions and escalated their adversarial rhetoric against each other; distinct identity groups are more polarized than perhaps ever before.

The following represents a discussion of these various identity groups in an attempt to explain how their differences and worldviews inform their behaviors and actions either resulting in actions that mitigate conflict or escalate it.

### 4.6.1  **Women**

Yemeni women took to the streets of Sana'a in defiance of tradition and customs. The 2011 revolution resulted in a joint call among women for equality and an opportunity to influence Yemen's future. More conservative Islamic movements participating in the NDC conference voiced concerns over such demands, highlighting the ongoing tension over how to reconcile the Islamic identity of the Yemeni state with desired progress on issues such as reproductive health and the public participation of women.

The UN played a major role in ensuring women's participation in the NDC in compliance with UN Security Resolutions 1325 and 2122. Like youth, women, as an identity group, were probably the most marginalized in the negotiations in Riyadh; in addition women suffer the trauma and stress resulting from the loss of family members to the conflict. Through the NDC, and for the first time in the country's history, women were able to achieve important agreements, including the 30percent quota for women's political participation and a law to increase the age of marriage to 18 years, to form part of the new constitution. There seemed to be genuine commitment to these agreements among all parties involved.

Women's visible participation in the protests encouraged them to reclaim their voices. It helped them to gain immensely from a moral and social point of view, and paved their way to actively participate in the following transitional period.

### 4.6.2  **Youth**

Like Yemeni women, Yemeni youth organized as a distinct identity group and played a major role in the 2011 revolution, seeking change for themselves and for their country. One can expect that their aspirations and expectations of better economic and educational opportunities were dashed with the increased humanitarian and economic crisis in the country.

Yemeni youth are a diverse group and reflect regional differences in Yemen between urban and rural identities, and northern and southern interests and wants. However, their demands for inclusion in the political process are perhaps limited and perhaps falling on deaf ears as political leaders and armed groups continue to compete for power and control.

Youth in the current context are probably among the highest impacted by the crisis; their aspirations for higher education, employment, and self-realization have been replaced by the need to find work to support families that have been adversely affected by the current escalation of the crisis and the Coalition bombing of Yemeni cities.[125] Despite this need, Yemeni youth continue to suffer from high numbers of unemployment. Additionally, youth are expected to join the fight, and have been committed by their families to fight and defend the family's honor and political standing.

### 4.6.3   Activists and Civil Society Members

Members of civil society often come together over shared interests and goals. These organizations have been heavily funded by the international community and therefore reflect donor interests and values.  For example, funders promoting democratic values that argues for the separation of church and state support organizations that differ drastically from funders that promote Islamic principles and jurisprudence in governance. Members in each of these organizations come together around such beliefs and values. Nevertheless, this shared identity has been constructed, i.e. created by the founders of various civil society organizations, and supported by its members. It is sustained by the desire to advance the discussion of issues pertaining to rights, inclusiveness, political participation, social dynamics, development, and humanitarian concerns.  Members of these constructed identities may also come to compete against each for funding and resources, dependent on different ideologies and their potential contrasts in values.

### 4.6.4   "al Qabila"- The Tribe

Yemen is known for its tribal system, particularly for the way this tribal system dominates northern politics. The tribal system is not only central to Yemeni culture and society, but it is also an identity that has been leveraged and of manipulated by politicians and external parties. The tribal system is a source of pride, and tribal identity is a shared identity that is "culturally rooted and politically shaped".[126]

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[125] Confidential Youth Participants, Focus Group Discussion in Amman, Jordan, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May, 2015.

[126] Khaled Fatah, "*Tribes and Tribalism in the Arab Spring*," Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East, and Islamic Studies, October 26, 2011, http://cemmis.edu.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=280%3Atribes-and-tribalism-in-the-arab-spring&catid=77%3Apoints-of-view&Itemid=95&lang=en#_ftnref5.

In Yemen, there are three major tribes, namely the Hashid, Bakil, and Madhaj confederations. For a number of years, the Hashid tribe, of which former President Saleh is a member, fought alongside the army against the Houthis in the six wars against them in the north of the country, from 2004-2010. Tribal groups are armed with light, medium, and often, heavy weapons, acquisition of such hardware is relatively easy; although, the exact extent of weaponry compiled by the tribes is difficult to assess.

Tribes are heavily involved in the current crisis. Some northern Zaidi tribes have formed an alliance with the Houthis, facilitating the Houthi ascent from Sa'dah, takeover of Amran, and eventual consolidation of power in Sana'a. Other tribes from Maareb have fought alongside AQAP in defense of what was framed as a Zaidi revival, and an attempt to return Zaidi rule to Yemen. Regardless of motivation and political affiliation, changing alliances demonstrate how important tribal groups are in Yemeni politics. Former President Saleh used this aspect of Yemeni identity for his politics of divide and rule.

Former President Saleh manipulated the tribal structure for political gains, and took two different approaches to the tribes as a means to consolidate power. The first was incorporating established sheikhs into patronage networks and empowering new sheikhs. The second was to undermine those sheikhs who had been reluctant to take part in political corruption practices.[127]

In addition to their active involvement in the conflict, Yemeni tribes also have the capacity to contribute to a sustainable peace. Yemeni tribes have their own dispute resolution mechanisms, which have been leveraged for centuries to mitigate communal as well as political conflicts.[128] The extent by which these systems have changed or been manipulated by political corruption is not the focus of this study, however, is worth mentioning as it may have a direct effect on the credibility of a tribes' influence and role in its community.

### 4.6.5 Religious Identity

Religion is one of the most important facets of the identity of Yemeni women and men, and Islam is the state religion.[129] The Zaidi/ Shafi'i distinction is important to Yemeni history in how it played out in times of crisis, competition over resources, and power.

The Shafi'i and Zaidi identities can serve both as a unifying and divisive factor for followers. Leaders have historically manipulated this aspect of Yemeni identity to their advantage. More importantly, it has become politicized and intertwined with pre- and

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[127] Confidential Personal Testimony, documented by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[128] Erica Gaston and Nadwa al-Dawsari, "Dispute Resolution and Justice Provision in Yemen's Transition," United States Institute of Peace, April 2014.
[129] Yemen is home to four major religious identities, which make nearly 99 percent of the population, they are: Zaidis, Ismailis, Shafi'i Sunni, and Salafi Sunni.

post- NDC politics, with the inclusion of the Houthi movement and their growing influence in Yemen. Though the historical narrative relates that the Zaidi are closer in ideology to the Shafi'i Sunni tradition of Islam, external labeling of Zaidis as followers of the Iranian Shiite form of Islam (check how it is named) have contributed to the fears of Sunni Shafi'i tribes. Also of note is the growth and support of Wahhabism in Zaidi land.[130]

### 4.6.6  North/South Dichotomy and the Role of Geography

Geography played a major role in the shaping of identity politics in Yemen. The north/south divide may also be characterized as a rural/urban split, or even a tribal/secular distinction. The picture is further complicated by the concentration of significant and vital resources in the south. Southern identity is driven by a secessionist desire for autonomy from the north. It is a source of resilience for many and is one that unites those that identify as southerners.[131] This identity has been threatened an intentional public policy to destroy these aspirations for independence.

In addition, President Hadi's roots in the south played in his favor as he was well received in the south when he escaped Sana'a. A review of the social media showed references to his southern roots. There were brief attempts to raise the southern flag on the Presidential Palace in Aden during his limited stay and before he took off to Saudi Arabia.[132]

Deteriorating events in the south have forced southerners to act in self-defense against the Houthi and Saleh expansion in the region. The presence of AQAP and the advent of IS controlled areas are of additional concern. Also, the influence of Islah and their tribal partners has increased confrontations between Islah supporters and Southern Popular Committees. In addition, unresolved transitional justice issues in the south (dismissals, land confiscations, etc.), have all come to exacerbate north/south relations in Yemen.

### 4.7  Ideology, Worldview & Political parties

Yemen has approximately 23 political parties.[133] Yemeni parties vary in size, influence, and ideology.

Identity politics in Yemen are often manifested in the form of political developments. Trigger events such as the resignation of Saleh in 2011, the takeover of the Houthis in

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[130] The Saudis supported the opening of a Wahabi school in the heart of Zaidi land in Sa'ada, which were a perceived as a threat to Zaidi identity and an intentional aggravation.
[131] Confidential Participants, Focus Group Discussion with Southerners from Yemen, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[132] Confidential Interviewee, Interview with Yemeni Official, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[133] Fifteen are officially registered and eight are active. See Appendix B on page 83 for a comprehensive list.

Amran and Sana'a, the escape of President Hadi to Aden, and ongoing political assassinations of key Yemeni figures, lead to shifts in party strategies, sometimes in contradiction with the party principals. For example, the new alliance in 2014 between former President Saleh and the Houthis is one example of such a shift in strategy.

The most dominant political party in Yemen is the GPC.[134] Its strong influence has shaped and informed the identity of its members and continues to be chaired by former President Saleh, despite his sanctioning by the UN Security Council. Although rumors of rifts between party members circulated confidentially, the animosity became public when President Hadi and former Prime Minister Abdul Kareem Al Aryani[135] were dismissed from the party by former President Saleh, likely as an act of retaliation in response to President Hadi's closing of GPC offices in the south. Additional divisions among party members manifested during the Saudi sponsored Riyadh conference where prominent GPC members decided to attend the Riyadh conference in defiance of former President Saleh.

The JMP[136] formed as an answer to GPC dominance, and aimed to establish a critical mass to balance the power asymmetry due to the size and influence of the GPC.

As mentioned previously, Islah, a Yemeni Islamist party, is leading the fight against the Houthis in the South, and Ali Mohsen, a top Yemeni General, and Abdul Majid al-Zandani a Yemeni cleric, though out of sight, may be advancing Salafi agendas across the country.

For other political parties to stay relevant, they will have to join the negotiations and present a message that allows them to compete against the more powerful dominant parties. The sectarian tone of the conflict also has implications for the JMP where some previous membership in this coalition was based on creating a critical mass to confront the GPC.

As for the Houthis, they have yet to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, though they are the de facto power on the ground. They represent a new generation of young leaders versus the older established leaders of parties. They carry a revolutionary agenda of fighting corruption and outside intervention. They are suspicious

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[134] Former President Saleh is the head of the party. He refused to relinquish his position as Chair to President Abdul Rabbo Mansour Hadi when he was forced out of office.
[135] Al Eryani held several prominent positions in the Government of Yemen during the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh.
[136] The JMP consists of different parties with varying ideological backgrounds and interests, such as the Yemeni Socialist Party, the Unionist Party, the Popular Forces Union Party, and Al Haq Party, among others.

of what the other parties are planning against them,[137] which requires that they stay agile and continue to show their power at the negotiation table and on the ground.

Only two of the major parties came spoke out publicly about the Saudi led coalition air attacks in Yemen, the GPC and the Islah Party. The GPC issued a statement against the air strikes, but was very careful in disassociating the party with the Houthis. At the same time, the Islah Party issued a statement supporting the Saudi led coalition air assaults publicly.[138]

The Socialist Party (*Hizb al Eshtraki*) spoke at the beginning of the war and demanded that the Houthis stop the invasion of the south and also demanded that the Saudi-led alliance stop their military operation. All parties, like the *Nasris* and *Wahdawi* stood against what Houthis were doing, and supported an initiative to stop the war by both sides

More often than not, internal divisions drive new alliances or new strategies and offer opportunities for external players with interests in Yemen to leverage these internal divisions in their favor. For example, the Houthi leveraged a perceived weakness with the Muslim Brotherhood arm of Islah to their advantage and put their leaders under house arrest. They also took advantage of the discontent with Al Ahmar sons of Sheikh Abdallah al Ahmar and signed peace agreements that facilitated their takeover of Amran and passage to Sana'a.[139]

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[137] Confidential Interviewee, Interview with Yemeni Interlocutor, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[138] Saeed Al-Batati and Tom Finn, "Saudi-led Bombing Campaign Deepens Rifts in Yemen," *Middle East Eye*, April 10, 2015.
[139] United Nations Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, *supra* note 30.

## 5   Conflict Drivers in Yemen

In Yemen, a combination of economic, social, and political grievances serve as the main factors of many of the conflicts that the country has faced. For example in 2011, the initial uprisings against former President Saleh were the result of widespread unemployment, poor economic conditions, and corruption concerns. The source of poor economic conditions in the country was in itself a product of pervasive income inequality, with the majority of the wealth concentrated in the hands of a few families. In addition to this, former President Saleh's decision to amend the constitution to enable him to run again for president prompted even more demonstrations against him.[140]  Other issues also contributed to the eventual ouster of former President Saleh, including poor access to healthcare, competition over resources, the use of qat, and human rights concerns including the rights of women and children.

Although a new government took over the country's leadership in 2012, their continued failure to resolve many of the conflict factors that had led to the ousting of former President Saleh from power also came to impact their own ability to govern. The Houthi rebellion in the capital arguably emanated in part as a result of a fuel increase implemented by the government, which was a trigger factor that exacerbated root and proximate factors, such as concerns over economic inequality, provision and delivery of services, and a poor governance structure that centralized wealth and power. Additionally, the new government's inability to resolve ideological differences between north and south also played a significant part in the ensuing conflict. Thus, a further inability to address and resolve conflict factors will continue to drive Yemen to conflict.

The drivers of conflict emanating from the recent political crisis will need to be understood in the context of the post NDC environment. Raised expectations and unfulfilled promises for change and reform have led to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction with the country's leadership.   As noted earlier in section 2.2, President Hadi's transitional government was slow to respond and to implement NDC outcomes which resulted in over a thousand recommendations to help organize the State, shape its relationship with its citizens and address national issues such as the Southern issue and the case of Sa'dah.

According to Abdul-Ghani Al-Iryani, "the constraints on development will be an added load of constraints that Yemen faced before the conflict, such as low institutional capacity, scarcity of skilled personnel, poor job descriptions, poor oversight and lack of accountability, prevalence of perverse incentives that discourage good performance and reward bad and corrupt practices.[141]"

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[140] Borzou Daragahi and Noah Browning, "Tens of Thousands Turn out for Rival Rallies in Yemen," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2011.
[141] Al-Iryani, *supra* note 19.

Although most conflicts in Yemen are interlinked and cannot be easily delinked for the purposes of analysis, the following represents a primary list of conflict drivers presented in the context of the latest shifts of power in the country.

Internal divisions among Yemeni women and men are not new phenomena, and splits are growing wider with the current conflict. The local and national impact of the ongoing war between and against Yemeni women and men is a crosscutting factor impacting every Yemeni woman and man that tears at an already weakened social fabric.

Though this study addresses the sources of resilience of Yemeni society directly following this section, all forms and sources supporting the capacity of Yemeni women and men to maintain any form of social cohesion are currently under attack. With the continued structural, as well as, cultural violence perpetuated by Yemenis against Yemenis, external interventions in Yemen's internal affairs are causing a further widening of gaps. It can be argued, that Yemeni society is facing unprecedented stress, making it almost impossible to retain any form of social cohesion or a unified national identity, particularly if the current state continues unchanged.

An analysis of the conflict dynamics helps to identify the relationship between factors that may drive conflict or support engines of peace and resilience and stakeholder actions. The following is an assessment of the conflict drivers in Yemen, which can be defined as dynamic processes that contribute to the exacerbation or perpetuation of the conflict. Conflict drivers often manifest as the result of structural or proximate conflict factors affecting stakeholders, and thus triggering a response.

## 5.1    Competition and power dynamics among local populations

The rise of popular committees, local militias, and resistance fighters on the local level has risen considerably as a direct result of the security and governance vacuum. The escalation of fighting among these factions and their continued desire to exert control over their communities and resources continues to drive the conflict.

This is further exacerbated by ongoing political divisions arising as a result of the expansion and dominance of the Houthis and their allies into many Yemeni cities, as well as the refusal of the allies of President Hadi to succumb. It has also brought forward the power of AQAP and its ability to leverage the Sunni/Shiite rhetoric to recruit local supporters from young Sunni and Shafi'i tribes.

## 5.2    Catastrophic Humanitarian Crisis

As described above in section on proximate factors to the conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has risen to drastic levels, and continues to worsen as the conflict persists. The humanitarian crisis, although a factor to the conflict, is also a conflict driver. As Yemeni

women and men become more desperate to meet their basic human needs, they become increasing vulnerable to manipulation and the support of others. This may cause the nearly 80 percent of the population in need of humanitarian aid to resort to such drastic measures as committing crimes, carrying of arms to protect themselves, or even perhaps aligning themselves with armed groups or other parties to the conflict if they feel it may increase their chances for survival. Armed groups may leverage service delivery in exchange for support. Male youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, and female youth may face early, child, or forced marriage due to financial strains or the payments of familial debts.

## 5.3   Ongoing human rights violations

In addition to the culture and history of impunity for human rights violations, as discussed above, ongoing human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law are contributing greatly to and driving the conflict. As of early June, the OHCHR verified nearly 4,699 reports of conflict related human rights violations, an average of 67 a day. Some examples of the vast array of ongoing human rights and humanitarian law violations include, but are not limited to, the following: recruitment and use of child soldiers; gender based violence and conflict related sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation; early, child, and forced marriage; indiscriminate targeting of civilians, particularly through the launching of artillery rockets, and the illegal use of cluster bombs; illegal blockades of humanitarian aid and essential supplies of fuel.

Persistent human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law impact the humanitarian crisis, particularly as the number of civilian deaths and injuries continue to rise, as well as by exacerbating fuel, food, and water shortages throughout the country. Blockades of humanitarian aid and fuel are drastically impacting humanitarian needs of Yemeni women and men. Additionally, as the civilian death toll and numbers of civilian injuries rise families are increasingly finding themselves losing potential breadwinners and suffering extensive grief and trauma. Conflict impacted civilians may also find themselves  more vulnerable to manipulation and propaganda, particularly should one group frame another as being the sole perpetrator of human rights abuses and violator of international humanitarian law. Desperation and anger may cause an increase in those taking up arms in protection, in survival, or in order to join the fighting on the side of one or another armed group in retaliation.

It is important to note that these violations are not limited to one or two parties to the conflict and are being perpetrated broadly. All parties to the conflict are responsible for choosing means of attack that minimize the potential for civilian harms or casualties, are able to be directed solely at recognized military targets, and in addition attempt to minimize harm to civilian buildings and infrastructure.

## 5.4 Government and Security Power Vacuum

The power vacuum left by lack of a legitimately recognized government in Sana'a or at a local level, armed groups are taking advantage of the lawlessness and absence of a controlled security apparatus.

This security situation has also allowed AQAP[142] to operate more freely, including its actions naming itself as the defender of Sunni rights, and its recruitment of fighters by playing on the sectarian fear of Shafi'i youth.

## 5.5 Security and survival motivated shifting loyalties and alliances

Given the political maneuvering for dominance in any given region in Yemen, individuals and groups are faced with a few choices regarding their personal safety and security. Yemeni women and men may take sides with more powerful groups in order to gain their individual protection in the high intensity conflict. Yemeni women and men also suffer legitimate fears for their own safety and futures should the winner of local, regional, or national conflicts be a group harboring ill will against them.[143] Lastly, Yemeni women and men may choose to follow the money, regardless of its origins, in order to sustain themselves.

These shifting alliances are playing into the escalation of conflicts in certain areas like Taiz and al Dhamar, to mention a few.

## 5.6 Politicized security forces and military

Yemeni institutions that should protect Yemeni women and men are highly politicized and are currently divided between those loyal to the former regime, i.e. former President Saleh and his current ally, the Houthis, or to President Hadi and his exiled emergency government. In the absence of a national Yemeni identity, the security forces and military are participating in the current armed confrontations.

## 5.7 Politicized power struggles and external loyalties

Confrontations with President Hadi and his exiled emergency government have taken on new dimensions especially with the new alliance between former President Saleh and the Houthis.

This picture is further complicated when parties' allegiances shift to external third parties who may not have the Yemeni interest in mind or prioritized. Another level of

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[142] 2014 witnessed a rise in AQAP activities according to United Nations Security Council Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, *supra* note 30.

[143] Interviews with interlocutors cited Zaidi fears that if Houthis lose they will face retaliation for their actions and may be targeted by Shafi'i dominated groups, Confidential Interviewee, Interview with Interlocutor, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.

complexity is the presence of foreign interests in Yemen represented by the Houthi/Iranian alliance and the Hadi/Saudi alliance. As allegiances, interests, and agendas continue to shift, the prolonged conflict grows even more complex.

In addition, competition for power is at an increase on the local and national levels. Armed groups are competing for power on the ground, and competition for power continues between the popular resistant movement, popular committees, and revolutionary committees. Confrontations between the different groups reflect the struggles between the main political actors and existing power dynamics that carry a local dimension.

## 5.8    Weakened tribal norms and unexpected alliances

Some tribal sheikhs revealed that tribal rivalries were continuing in the country, leading to some violence and fighting, even amongst themselves, and at other times between the tribal confederations. This has recently been exemplified by the fighting between the Houthi and the Islah affiliated tribes, which now involves in Ma'rib, Al Bayda, Radaa, and Taiz, the Houthis and their affiliates on the one side, and the Sunni-Shafi'i tribes on the other. Other examples are the ongoing Houthi conflict with the Tehamah tribes in Al-Hudaydah, and with the Arhab tribes.

A direct result of the sectarian rhetoric of the Sunni/Shiite divide, Shafi'i tribes are said to have on occasion joined forces with AQAP to defend historically dominated Shafi'i territory against Zaidi expansion, represented by the Houthis and their ally former President Saleh.

## 5.9    The role of media and social media

An extremely politicized media has played a major role in the conflict in Yemen. Social media activists and bloggers have also leveraged this medium to voice opinions, spread rumors and report directly on what is transpiring on the ground. This mix of truth and lies has led to the spreading of rumors and provocation. As rumors and propaganda are repeated they may reinforce conflict narratives and entrench divisions, leading to further recruitment of fighters into armed groups, and further tearing at the social fabric of the society.

## 5.10    Access to a military arsenal

The Houthi takeover the 310 Brigade in Sana'a in 2014 resulted in the looting of substantial government military weapons. Other government military installations were also overtaken and in many instances their military personnel declared their allegiance to the Houthis.

Former President Saleh was summoned to Sana'a to explain the disappearance of weapons that were under his purview when he was leading the Republican Guard. The weapons were never accounted for despite his denials of responsibility, and former Republican Guard personnel are now fighting alongside the Houthis.

More importantly, former President Saleh's military base Raymat Humaid, located in his hometown Sanhan, is known to be a depository of weapons and a heavily fortified base. Consequently, the sum of looted weapons and weapon depositories in the hands of the Houthis and former President Saleh has weakened the Yemeni government's ability to counter the Houthi and Saleh forces.

There is also the danger of the Houthis and Saleh having had access to more sophisticated weapons that had belonged to the Yemeni government, and continue to present a threat to the entire region. Details of the established links between them are difficult to document at this stage of the conflict. Further investigation is required to fully understand how these issues play out.

## 5.11  Role of Gulf Cooperation Countries

The GCC countries played a major role in negotiating the transition of power between former President Saleh and President Hadi. The UAE hosted Ahmed Ali Saleh, the son of the former President in his role as Ambassador of Yemen to the UAE after he was forced to give up his position as the Head of the Republican Guard and much of Saleh's family live there. Given the role of former Republican Guards in the current expansion of the Houthis in Yemen, the UAE recently revoked Ahmed Ali Saleh diplomatic immunity.

Although the GCC countries, with the exception of Oman, have taken a united stand through Operation Decisive Storm, succeeded by Operation Restoring Hope, [144] individual members have also been involved by supporting different political parties in Yemen. Saudi Arabia in particular has played a major role supporting Salafis and the spread of Wahabi schools in predominantly Zaidi land in the north, especially in Damaj. Qatar has supported the Muslim Brotherhood, which is part of the Islah party. The ideological differences among political parties also reflect the diverse interests of GCC Member States in relation to Yemen.

In summary, relationships between GCC countries and Yemeni political parties and armed groups continue to drive competing loyalties and agendas in Yemen. Given that there is currently little access to data on the ground, there is no updated information on how their influence impacts the ongoing crisis.

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[144] Ishan Tharoor, "What Saudi Arabia has Achieved After Bombing Yemen for a Month," *Washington Post Online*, April 23, 2015.

## 5.12 Coalition Bombing of Yemen

Yemeni women and men are divided in sentiments and feelings regarding the legitimacy of the Saudi led bombing operation, focused on stopping the Houthi advance. Differing loyalties among the Yemeni population contribute to and are responsible for this division in opinions and may exacerbate an already fractured Yemeni society. This divisiveness in opinion will likely carry over after a truce is reached, feeding into the further polarization of an already fragmented Yemeni population.

## 5.13 Donor impact on Yemen

Economic factors are a major driver of conflict in Yemen since Yemen is largely dependent on foreign aid to sustain itself. Donors however, often have national agendas, and organizational interests tied directly to where the funding is channeled.

Corruption and mismanagement, including delays in implementation, have characterized projects. The Houthis have taken advantage of the public's discontent and criticism of President Hadi's government, and have mobilized people to act against their government, publicly humiliating and forcing the resignations of corrupt individuals.

## 5.14 International Community's framing of the conflict

The international community's framing of the conflict as one between Shiites and Sunnis has played out on the local, national, regional, and international levels. It brought forward identity based politics and contributed to the escalation between the different parties, especially between the Houthis and President Hadi's government. One example is when the Vice President of Yemen, Khaled Bahah urged "army units to end their support for Shiite rebels."[145]

## 5.15 External interventions

International interest in Yemen is not new due to its strategic location and proximity to the Horn of Africa and the Bab Al Mandab waterway. However, how this interest is playing out in Yemen currently is a new development. Although the international community was more or less united with Security Council Resolution 2140 to act in opposition to individuals who serve as spoilers to the peace process, the direct intervention of member states and their support of certain parties in the conflict drive tensions and may be causing the escalation of the conflict.

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[145] "Yemen Vice President Calls for an End to Support of Shiite Rebels," *Reuters*, April 16, 2015.

# 6 Peace Engines &Resilience, Potential for unity and harmony

Nations become vulnerable to internal conflicts and outside interventions when they become unaware of the inherent sources of resilience in their culture. It should also be noted that the same sources that offer resilience and serve as catalysts to peace have the potential to serve as conflict drivers. The challenge is to create the environment and conditions that a) stop fueling the drivers of conflict (political, social, economic), and b) rewards shifts in behavior and actions that can build confidence and trust.

Engines of peace can be broadly defined as those elements within the society that have the capacity to mitigate the emergence and proliferation of conflict and strengthen the foundations for peace, essentially through drawing on innate resilience in the society.

The following engines of peace and sources of resilience in Yemen can be identified on the local, communal, social and institutional levels in Yemen.[146]

## 6.1 Local community structures

Communal membership is of great importance and comes second in significance after tribal affiliation. Local councils and communal linkages are a source of strength to Yemeni women and men. They rely on these linkages for services and for support in their daily lives.                                                    .

In times of peace, communal membership plays a major role in stabilizing communities. Prior to the current crisis, "lijan Shabiya," local committees, provided services in the community in the form of aid to farmers, access to water, and safe transportation. Leaders in the community can rally people to come together and work to building on the values of local community structures.[147]

Also, community based CSOs may raise awareness on issues pertaining to the community and often have earned their respective community's respect. Community based CSOs can be a source for strengthening the community's capacity to mitigate conflicts and tensions.

## 6.2 Strong Family Ties, Tradition, and Tribal Norms

Strong family ties and tradition have long been staples of Yemeni society. Yemeni women and men are known to help each other in times of hardship. Caring for one's family and neighbors, and preserving family ties is of high value to Yemeni women and

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[146] Peace engines exist in all societies and are often the result of courageous leadership among individuals and groups, who do not see or believe in the value of war, worry about the impact of the ongoing conflict, experience fatigue from war's continuity, and see value and rewards in bringing peace to their communities.

[147] Erica Gaston and Nadwa al-Dawsari, *supra* note 126.

men. Women may also carry much of the burden in keeping these ties alive and present. Perhaps, they are the most vulnerable when such ties are broken by war and tensions in the community. Yemeni women and men report that they have lived with little and sustained themselves with basics for a very long time. They manage their desires and manage to survive.

Women, men, and children can decide to hold dear those ties and traditions and to take bold steps in the face of adversity and external attempts to threaten social norms and cohesion. They also have the capacity to take leadership in their actions, and provide moral guidance amidst the ongoing conflict.

In addition, as stated earlier, Yemeni tribes have strong social networks and norms. Tribal leaders play a major role in mitigating conflicts based on traditions that have served their communities for hundreds of years. These mechanisms are a rich source of resilience in communities, and success stories of such interventions have kept that tradition alive and fostered trust among tribal members and the tribes' ability to serve them.

Tribal leaders who understand the value of peace can play a major role in resolving community based problems and disputes. They can also serve as facilitators among tribes by promoting the rich tradition of tribal dispute resolution.

## 6.3   **Religion**

Yemeni women and men take pride in their faith. They believe that good Muslims demonstrate patience in the face of adversity. They cite a Hadith by the Prophet Mohammad indicating their sense of worth as emanating from their Islamic identity.[148]

Yemeni women and men believe that God cares for them and they trust in his ability to save them from hardships and in his wisdom even in the face of deprivation. They also believe that God will hold those who commit crimes accountable and that he is the final arbitrator of their actions.[149]

Institutional memory held by different religious groups and sects in Yemen varies.  For example, for centuries Zaidis have held in pride their customs, traditions, and beliefs. These norms and traditions have served their communities in times of adversity. They further believe in the concept of "al nusra," an act of support that they demonstrate to each other, which has sustained what they perceived as intentional attacks on their Zaidi identity.[150]

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[148] Confidential Participant, Focus Group Discussion, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[149] Confidential Interviewee, Interview, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah,  May 2015.
[150] Confidential Interview, Interview, interview by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.

Sunni followers of either the Shafi'i or Salafi groups believe God is on their side and heavenly rewards are awaiting them if they do well and therefore derive strength and perseverance from these religious beliefs.

Religious leaders can also be leveraged in times of hardships as they can rally their constituents to come together, protect their communities, and work together. They can use religious values inherent in tradition to help people find strength and perseverance. More importantly, they can call for unity, harmony, and peace.

## 6.4    Ideological and political groups

Yemeni women and men place a great deal of trust in their political parties and the various ideologies they present are grounded in trust and faith in their political leadership. This may have been weakened with the internal tensions amongst and between political parties, and may result in shifting alliances.

The north/north and north/south divisions among Yemen are often labeled as being between the tribal culture in the north and the urban socialist culture in the south. The geographical and cultural divide manifests in different sources of resilience. Southerners speak about resilience based on a narrative of fighting injustice, a history of independence from the north, and grievances emanating from perceived marginalization. The north derives its resilience from religion and divine values that support their actions.

Should leaders across ideological and political differences see value in having a common goal, they can play a major role in bringing their constituents to respect agreed upon political processes to manage differences and competition for power.

## 6.5    Business Community and Private Enterprise

Yemeni women and men are known for their business acumen and entrepreneurship. Some major business leaders participated in the NDC and played a major role in the writing of recommendations related to private sector reform. The business community has much to lose when the country is unstable as it is a direct threat to capital and assets. The business community is organized mainly through Chambers of Commerce across the country, and with one or two private clubs with closed membership. The recent crisis has certainly impacted the interests of the business community, and has forced many to release their employees from work due to the difficult security conditions on the ground.

It should also be noted that Yemeni small and medium business represents most of the private enterprise in Yemen. These businesses have been the most affected given their limited resources and local presence. Small shops in cities and towns are evident to anyone who has travelled the country. Limited resources and a weakened economy have further threatened livelihoods.

For centuries the business community in Yemen has survived regardless of central government leadership. Although there is a huge business community outside of Yemen, those who stayed have often played a major role in working across political divides as their interest is in maintaining and expanding their business and wealth.

The business community can also play a major role in bringing people together in times of adversity by depoliticizing their hiring practices.

They can play a role in the recovery process by making available their resources, including transportation vehicles for humanitarian relief efforts and power generators to support communities until electrical grids are operational.

# 7   Scenarios / Trajectories

This study attempted to provide an overview of the conflict in Yemen and an analysis of the factors and issues impeding resolution. It highlighted trends and ongoing factors that influence the conflict and identified triggers that can refuel tensions.

The following section presents three potential future scenarios/trajectories for the conflict in Yemen. It is important to note that the hypothesized scenarios are not predictions but rather potential trajectories discussed solely as an exercise. The considerations that follow are likewise suggestions that were raised as part of the discussion in the focus group exercise that led to these scenarios.

These scenarios are discussed using a cycle of conflict framework that argues that all conflicts go through a cycle of escalation, deadlock/hurting stalemate, and de-escalation. These cycles often commence in response to a trigger point that kicks off a new set of issues, responses, and strategies by the parties. (*See figure 2 on page 66 for a visual representation of the conflict cycle*).

To understand the cycle of conflict in any context, one has to pay attention to the sources of the conflict that may have their roots in individual psychology, psychosocial dynamics, and/or structural and economic factors, including scarcity of resources, and threats to the basic human needs of a group, individual, or community.

Trigger points[151] kick off the cycle of conflict and force parties to choose amongst five employable strategies: cooperation, compromise, avoidance, contention, and accommodation. All five strategies have their relative strengths and weaknesses, and the parties may choose one or the other depending on context or interests.

Factors that may contribute to the escalation of a conflict include the role of institutional structures, and the role of leaders in polarizing and dehumanizing other groups. External parties may also play a role in escalation. Internal factors that may be specific to a party or parties include social and psychological factors that impact the parties' behaviors and may include cognitive dissonance, feelings of entrapment, use of selective recall

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[151] For example: Iran decides to escalate the confrontation with the GCC countries especially in Bahrain and in the Eastern province in Saudi Arabia where a sizable percentage of Shiite communities live; the Security Council is divided and divisions lead to escalation between the P5; individual Member States' interests solely inform their strategies in Yemen; Yemeni workers working in Saudi Arabia decide to react to the ongoing bombing in Yemen and find support among the Saudi public creating tensions and new internal dynamics in the Kingdom; Americans escalate and are able to revive their drone activities and kill Abdul Malik al Houthi and or Ali Abdullah Saleh; IS expands beyond Lahaj and creates another dynamic on the ground; AQAP escalates its activities and attacks; Saudi Arabia arms the tribes and confrontations escalate between different tribes across Yemen; a large scale border confrontation between the Saudis and the Houthis result in infiltration of Yemeni's into Saudi Arabia; or, a massive exodus of Yemenis by sea and land (Saudi Arabia) occurs.

strategies that support past and current discourse on harms and grievances, and strong feelings of anger, fear and the need to revenge wrongs.

A deadlock may occur when parties insist on their positions. It starts hurting the parties when it becomes costly and often alternative opportunities present themselves, particularly with assistance or intervention of third party actors.

Finally, a de-escalation phase happens when either one party overwhelms the other, takes advantage of the situation, yields to the other, avoids the other, or the party becomes intolerable for all other parties to the conflict. Gestures of reconciliation may be initiated and the parties may evaluate their initial strategies, arrive at concessions, or engage in negotiations and problem solving. Hopefully this phase will lead to a settlement or resolution, rather than the victory of one party over the other, or another trigger event beginning the cycle of conflict all over again.

The following scenarios follow the logic inherent in the cycle of conflict and take into consideration the potential role of the UN in each of them. It should be noted that the changes in context described are written to represent the most possible probabilities to the Yemeni context, and by no means represent a comprehensive list of potential changes, due to the scope of issues with which the country is facing.



**Deadlock:**
Hurting Stalemate-
Continuing the conflict
becomes too costly

**De-Escalation:**
-One party overwhelms the other
-One party takes advantage of the situation
-One party yields to the other
-One party avoids the other

**Escalation of Conflict:**
Increase in intensity of means, scope, and number of participants

*Internal*
(Social/ Psychological)
-Cognitive dissonance
-Entrapment
-Selective perception
-Emotions
(anger, fear, revenge)

*Organizational*
-Role of leaders
-Polarization
-Dehumanization
-External Parties

*Conflict Strategies*
-Accommodating
-Contending
-Avoiding
-Compromising
-Cooperating

**Trigger Point:**
Something happens to make latent conflict manifest.

**Possible Sources of Conflict:**
-Individual/Biological
-Social/Psychological
-Structural
-Economic
-Basic Human Needs (identify, security, recognition)

**Termination:**
-Resolution
-Settlement
-Victory/Defeat

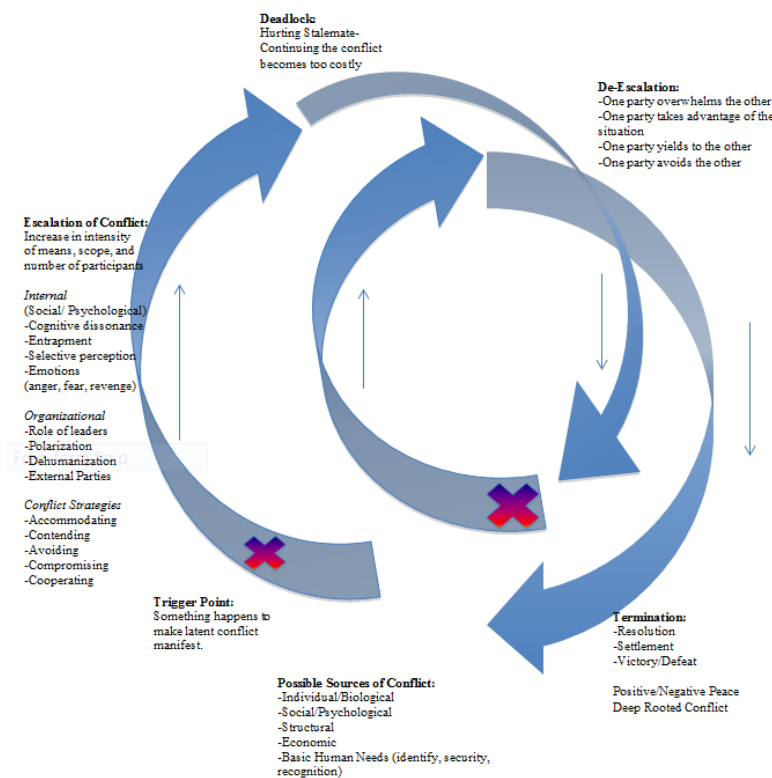Positive/Negative Peace
Deep Rooted Conflict

Figure 2- The Conflict Cycle
(Adapted from Cycle of Conflict by Dr. Cynthia Irmer)

**Scenario 1: The conflict continues to escalate**

In this scenario, the conflict continues to escalate due to the absence of political will to end the crisis, as well as movement by the stakeholders away from any potential resolution.

Potential changes on the political level:

A political vacuum is created with the departure of President Hadi; the transitional government in exile resigns; the main parties become fragmented and civil war breaks out, additional parties may become involved; Sana'a comes under siege like Aden; AQAP and IS expand their influence in additional parts of the country; inter and intra tribal tensions rise and tribal engagement with the conflict increases; Saudi Arabia experiences internal opposition to the war from certain segments of its own population; increased terrorist incidents take place inside the country; the Yemeni population in Saudi Arabia campaigns against the bombing, petitioning the King to stop it; Iran is increasingly engaged in the conflict; women are increasingly marginalized; the south declares independence; Oman and Bahrain act as intermediaries; foreign troops enter the country based on a Security Council resolution.

Potential humanitarian impact: the humanitarian situation gets worse; funding from the international community is delayed; the focus for outside intervention continues to be on political dynamics at a high cost for the development and humanitarian needs of the country; the number of IDPs and refugees increases drastically; resources on hosting communities become increasingly overstretched and lead to increased tensions; there is an increase in human rights violations; there is an increase in violence against women and children; higher civilian casualties are reported; the environment is polluted due to the bombing; there is further increased insecurity; the situation for Yemeni women and men who are stuck outside of Yemen gets even worse; host countries to refugees become frustrated and are faced with additional burdens; tensions between third country nationals and migrants become exacerbated.

Potential impact on development: Economic conditions become catastrophic, for example there are shutdowns of key industrial enterprises, non-functioning local and rural markets, lack of basic commodities and food produce, loss of income and livelihoods due to unemployment; only warlords continue to profit; donor money is not released due to the continued escalation; security concerns hamper all local efforts.

In a scenario where the conflict continues to escalate it is recommended that the UN consider:

- Evaluating the division of roles and responsibilities between the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure better coordination between humanitarian and development UN responses

- Increasing coordination among UN Headquarters in NY and Country Offices

- Continuing to address the root causes of the conflict in order to alleviate the drivers

- Initiating discussions to evaluate the Saudi role vis-a- vis the UN role in Yemen and implications for the future of Yemen, Saudi/Yemeni relations, and UN/Saudi relations

- Developing and agreeing upon clear UN guidelines in dealing with different parties and political groups; avoiding divisions by working towards a joint UN strategy

- Maintaining impartiality and avoiding external pressures on how and by whom support is delivered

## Scenario 2: Deadlock/hurtful stalemate

In scenario 2 the conflict reaches a deadlock or hurtful stalemate. This may occur if the political will to end the crisis is missing and parties insist on their positions either publicly or in private. In this type of scenario the cost is high for all parties with the needs to maintain leverage, power, and credibility warring with conflict fatigue.

Potential changes on the political level: War becomes the new normal; borders become even more unsafe; there is a transition in which Prime Minister Bahah takes over the emergency government in Riyadh; the Houthis reorganize and gain more power; coalition forces reassess strategy; leaders and actors are recycled; non-state actors continue to take over government roles and responsibilities; the international community continues to push for a political solution; more weapons come into the country; Oman and Bahrain continue to mediate; increased divisions among the international community surface; the south declares independence

Potential changes on the humanitarian front: the international community continues to explore entry points for humanitarian aid to get into the country; catastrophic conditions continue or worsen and assistance is stalled or blocked; people continue to take stock of their losses; unsafe borders allow increases in human trafficking; the economy is at a standstill except for the warlords who continue to profit from the status quo; there is an increase in casualties, which means an increase in the number of orphaned children and

widowed women who need assistance; food shortages and economic insecurity remain high; needs and vulnerabilities of displaced populations both inside and outside the countries increase.

<u>Potential impacts on development</u>: development at the grassroots and local levels may occur depending on local conditions and the influence of warring parties in the area; donor fatigue may manifest and define the period

In the context of the conflict reaching a deadlock or hurtful stalemate it is recommended that the UN consider:

- Evaluating the division of roles and responsibilities between the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure better coordination between humanitarian and development UN responses

- Increasing coordination among UN Headquarters in NY and Country Offices

- Initiating discussions to evaluate the Saudi role vis-a- vis the UN role in Yemen and implications for the future of Yemen, Saudi/Yemeni relations, and UN/Saudi relations

- Developing and agreeing upon clear UN guidelines in dealing with different parties and political groups; avoiding divisions by working towards a joint UN strategy

- Increasing its presence in Yemen, delivering humanitarian aid, and trying to negotiate its entry while managing security threats that may impede it work[152]

- Continuing to look at root causes, especially those that address issues of justice and fairness

- Continuing to prepare a comprehensive approach to encompass reforms, local, and international processes for a ripe moment to provide more support

- Promoting success stories to restore hope, particularly those stories that are positive and support political solutions and promote peace engines;

- Supporting local peace initiatives

- Engaging donors and promoting larger goals beyond  the individual interests of member states in regards to Yemen

- Promoting the UN's image on the ground and increasing communication regarding its role and successes

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[152] Challenge the notion that "there is no development without security".

- Reestablishing ties with local communities

- Leveraging opportunities for inclusiveness in programmatic activities

## Scenario 3:    Political agreement reached

Scenario 3 imagines that a political agreement has been brokered

Potential changes on the political level: the agreement includes all political parties and includes the redesign of the federal regions; a temporary government with legitimacy and acceptance is operational; on the social level, communities try to restore relationships, although with difficulty; parties build up constituents and have internal, as well as external, discussions on how best to move forward; reconciliation initiatives are in process; regional reconciliation efforts are discussed.

Potential changes on the humanitarian level: the blockade is lifted; humanitarian aid enters slowly and is reaching impacted areas, although perhaps with difficulty given the level of structural destruction on the ground; local agreements are reached, with communities supporting local leadership in building and reconstruction

Potential impact on development: development partners are engaging with local actors across Yemen to build trust and partnerships; limited donor money comes in; small businesses try to resume work; larger businesses take stock of their losses and try to rebuild; the international community slowly returns, including aid organizations and multilateral organizations

In the context of a political agreement being reached it is recommended that the UN consider:

- Offering its technical expertise to ensure that the agreement is fair, inclusive of women, minorities, and marginalized groups, i.e. work hard to counter any potential deficiencies or negative aspects of the agreement; and incorporating lessons learned from transition

- Avoiding the endorsement of any agreement that provides immunity for war crimes and human rights violations; ensuring that parties commit to the agreement if such agreement was brokered by the UN

- Returning with a new strategy to implement on the ground based on outreach to local actors; and supporting local initiatives

- Conducting a joint post-conflict needs assessment in collaboration with the World Bank and European Union with clearly defined roles and responsibilities based on

mission and mandate in order to ensure that it results in a joint comprehensive strategy

- Offering technical expertise on peacebuilding efforts on the local, and national levels including transitional justice mechanisms

- Enhancing advocacy and communication on issues that promote social cohesion and inclusion

- Considering additional sources of funding while maintaining prudence on the donor role in the current crisis and to balancing the influence of individual member states

Differences in the three scenarios manifest in the UN's ability to gain entry on the ground and break the security barriers that inhibit its ability to deliver on services and technical expertise.

The role of member states in supporting the UN's work on the ground is crucial to the success of any future scenarios and trajectories. It is also important that the UN remains neutral in order to maintain its credibility, particularly in the use of its power to influence.

Without doubt, the failure of the political process in Yemen had an impact on the UN and its image in spite of its ongoing support, and work on the humanitarian level and development initiatives. A stronger transitional strategy for Yemen is required.

# 8    Conclusion

This study aimed to strengthen the understanding of the current conflict dynamics in Yemen in order to better analyze the specific context. It intended to analyze the most relevant conflict factors, stakeholders, conflict drivers, and engines for peace in the current conflict in Yemen. Further, it presented suggestions and considerations for potential priorities for UN programming that strategically addresses emerging challenges and recommendations in incorporating conflict sensitive approaches.

This analysis also argues that identity based conflicts should be approached differently than interest based conflicts, as they incorporate worldview analyses of the parties concerned and thus require a different toolkit.

Based on the overall analysis, the recommendation also call for improved coordination among UNCT, and UNHCT, and confirms the importance of DPA's continued engagement and neutral stand as it is essential to the UN's ability to deliver on its humanitarian and development mandate. To this end, a practical and context-sensitive segregation of DPA and UNCT/UNHCT duties is required.

A number of focus group discussions provided recommendations for actions to be undertaken by the UN in Yemen. They are based on the experiences and observations of the participants who represent Yemeni men and women, organizations and experts working on Yemen, and UN personnel working inside and outside of Yemen. For a full list of the recommendations and suggested actions please see Appendix A on page 78. Further evaluation of these recommendations is necessary yet any UN intervention or programming should incorporate the broad-based participation of UN agencies so that a better integrated approach is achieved.

In 2013, under the slogan "Let the world know what you want!" the My World campaign[153] was launched. The campaign in Yemen set out to reach 10,000 Yemenis. Now close to a quarter of a million Yemeni women and men have responded to the survey and the number continues to grow. In the survey, respondents expressed their aspirations, hopes, and desires for the future- for a good education, better job opportunities, an honest and responsive government, affordable and nutritious food, better healthcare, protection against crime and violence, access to clean water and sanitation, support for people who cannot work, phone and internet access, equality between men and women, freedom from discrimination, better transportation and roads, political freedoms, reliable energy at home, and the protection of forests, rivers and oceans.

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[153] See United Nations: My World Survey, accessed May 2015,
http://data.myworld2015.org/?country=Yemen.

Yemeni women and men of all socio-economic levels and of all ages deserve the opportunity to fulfill their hopes and aspiration. Hopefully, this study contributes to these goals.

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# 10  **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Recommendations**

The following recommendations are a result of a number of focus group discussions that are based on the experiences and observations of the participants who represented Yemeni men and women, experts working on Yemen, and UN personnel working inside and outside of Yemen.

The recommendations assume that donors immediately fulfill their commitments to Yemen and ensure conflict sensitive programming, i.e. programming that is sensitive to the local culture, norms and traditions, and does not reflect outside agendas, but rather works in partnership with Yemeni women and men to meet their needs and reflect their interest.

The recommendations also call for improved coordination and encourage a focus in a larger extent on building local capacities and partnerships through humanitarian and development programmatic activities. Participants encouraged the UN to create parallel plans to ensure diversity of approaches and a broad-based strategy to include all sectors of society. The typology of immediate, intermediate and long-term actions requires and assumes the involvement and consultation across agencies on all actions.

**Main recommendation:** **Restore basic services: ensure reliable, consistent, and effective service delivery as quickly as possible.**

**Immediate gap filling actions[154]**
1. Deliver rapid food, water, healthcare, and psychosocial services relief to affected areas, particularly those areas most impacted by attacks to infrastructure.
2. Facilitate, in coordination and cooperation with respected local community leaders to be identified, the opening of a locally run emergency clinic.
3. Facilitate the organization of camps to provide shelter for IDPs and refugees located in Aden, Taiz, Sa'dah, and Sana'a, and provide immediate assistance to IDPs and host communities impacted by the conflict and infrastructure devastation.
4. Assist in securing freedom of movement, particularly safe passage to and from Aden, Taiz, Sa'dah, and Sana'a.
5. Coordinate the safe and timely delivery of oil and fuel supplies to all areas affected areas and especially to vital service providers like hospitals and clinics,

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[154] These areas were most affected and mentioned by interlocutors: Aden, Sana'a, Taiz, and Sa'dah.

including through the promotion and support of local peace initiatives to facilitate such delivery.

6. Make available seed money to support local communities in undertaking leadership in a) identifying the needs of local populations and communities affected by the crisis, including IDP and host communities b) coordinating the distribution of goods and aid, [155] as well as supporting efforts aimed at strengthening coping mechanisms and stabilizing livelihoods, and c) providing timely (early) warning on rising tensions in their areas.

**For Yemeni Women and Men Trapped Outside of Yemen**
1. Provide support to Yemeni refugees trapped outside the country. Work with country authorities to provide humanitarian assistance and facilitate their safe departure to a third country should they so desire.
2. Improve living conditions for refugees in camps outside of Yemen and encourage the Friends of Yemen to prioritize humanitarian and economic agendas and depoliticize aid efforts.

**Intermediate and Foundation Building Actions**
1. The UN and the international community should devise and implement assistance programs that target community structures and actors with the purpose of increasing their capacity to deliver basic service delivery- water, electricity, solid waste and debris management, supporting better sanitation conditions, nutrition, health, the provision of basic fuel, and social protection or vulnerable population groups through established social networks, [156] as well as strengthening mechanisms of local governance.
2. Support the resumption of SWF cash transfers to 1.5 million beneficiaries.
3. Rebuild and renovate key socio-economic infrastructure at the community level, including schools, hospitals, and government buildings in order to restore normal livelihood. Support the (r)econstruction of roads and bridges to facilitate people's mobility, access to market, and resumption of local economic activity.
4. Implement catch-up classes for the students once the new school year starts in September, if the situation has improved.
5. Ensure medical treatment for children under the age of five affected by severe acute malnutrition; and ensure targeted supplementary feeding programs for children under the age of five affected by moderate acute malnutrition and pregnant and lactating women. Assist in capacity building of healthcare workers and community health volunteers in the area of community based management of acute malnutrition.

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[155] This recommendation may have to be evaluated in the context of how politicized these local communities are and how it may influence their decisions on distribution of aid.
[156] Azd El Kasadi and Ali Saif Hassan, "Socio-economic building blocks for Yemen: Analysis and Recommendations," Paper presented at the World Bank retreat, May 12-13, 2015.

6. Strengthen and implement child focused Mine Risks Education in communities and conflict-affected schools to minimize the risks for children from unexploded ordnance.

7. Focus on improving the livelihood of Yemeni women and men in both rural and urban areas. Establish and support community-based assistance programs that support all facets of economic needs.

8. Promote strategies to develop structures parallel to those used in tribal groups, "al Qabila", to engage with Yemeni society and the Yemeni Government.[157]

9. Leverage the well-respected Yemeni Social Fund for Development to channel donor money to assist in funding and implementing initiatives, targeting vulnerable groups and communities.[158] Be aware of potential risks in channeling funding through SFD, particularly where it may create a parallel structure that detracts from the role of district and governorate authorities and opportunities for long-term capacity building. A careful complementarity and coordination between SFD and the district/governorate authorities will be necessary.

10. Develop short term reporting strategies on human rights violations and support the development of transitional justice mechanisms.

11. Provide technical expertise on security sector reform, legislative and judicial reform, DDR, and accountability mechanisms.

12. Leverage the Public Works Project for development funding to be channeled towards reconstruction and recovery efforts, linked with short-term employment opportunities for livelihood stabilization.

13. Fund efforts to engage Yemeni inclusive political groups in a sustainable dialogue to help address internal divisions that may sabotage peace and security in the country.

14. Develop a Track II dialogue as method with two components: confidence building measure among key stakeholders; and facilitated inter-group dialogue among midlevel community leaders.

15. Fund efforts to engage Yemeni inclusive political groups in a sustainable dialogue to help address internal divisions that may sabotage peace and security in the country. For example, the Common Space Initiative in Lebanon is a strong model for a community-based resource center that may be replicated in Yemen.

16. Enhance local capacity and use of extra-judicial conflict resolution skills.

17. Focus in a larger extent on building local capacities and partnerships at the local level through humanitarian and development programmatic activities.

18. Create integrated plans, including but not limited to addressing rule of law, governance, humanitarian aid, development, and human rights, to ensure diversity of approaches and a broad-based strategy for Yemen.

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[157] Confidential Participants, Focus Group Discussion with Representatives from UN Agencies Working in Yemen, interviews by Alma Abdul Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.
[158] Confidential Government Official Interviewee, Interview in Amman, Jordan, interview by Alma Abdual Hadi Jadallah, May 2015.

19. Conduct outreach activities to local tribes and elicit their support of UN efforts.
20. Identify sources of resilience among the Yemeni women and men and tap into their potential for recovery efforts and for bridging peace and harmony.
21. Think beyond Sana'a and the NDC participants to win the hearts and minds of Yemeni women and men from all walks of life.[159]
22. Ensure that the gains acquired by Yemeni women are sustained and that Yemeni women are actively allowed participation at every stage of the peace process.
23. Increase funding to support gender mainstreaming.
24. Manage the influence of external parties on UN programmatic activities.
25. Sponsor regional reconciliation in the aftermath of Operation Decisive Storm that promotes regional respect for sovereignty and harmony.
26. Partner with regional member states to support economic development in Yemen related to infrastructure projects.
27. Develop and support anti-corruption and transparency mechanisms to oversee the distribution of revenue from oil and fishers, among other Yemeni resources.
28. Networks that have already been established during the yearlong NDC conference may need to be reestablished nurtured.  Leverage NDC facilitators and trainers to facilitate dialogue between and among their networks, to reconcile differences, and promote peace in their communities.
29. Promote targeted support to provide alternative livelihoods and economic opportunities for youth and women.
30. Develop programs that help rehabilitate child soldiers.
31. Support mental health and physical health rehabilitation centers targeted at victims of war, who will likely require psychological, as well as trauma related therapy.
32. Support local expertise and national efforts for better management of natural resources in Yemen and to deal with the pollution and environmental damage that resulted from the bombings.

**Long Term Actions[160]**

1. Fund community based development projects that target areas with severe social vulnerabilities and encourage social solidarity. Projects should focus on food insecurity, access to water resources and water management, malnutrition, and on creating livelihoods and economic opportunities for vulnerable groups through social protection support.
2. Support ideas and options that can help diversify sources of state income and that support decentralized development governance practices.
3. Invest in the agricultural sector to help strengthen self-reliance of food supplies and production in order to counter food insecurity in Yemen and increase employment in rural areas.

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[159] Work beyond the elite community that is based in Sana'a.
[160]  These may also be considered intermediate actions, dependent on the UN's assessment of developments on the ground.

4. Given the scarcity of water in Yemen and projections of depletion of aquifers, support projects that teach sustainable water management in rural and urban areas.
5. Encourage local institutions that promote saving and investments to build community wealth and assets.
6. Support infrastructure projects to all parts of Yemen so that the people of Yemen can regain trust with their government and fulfill their right to live with dignity.
7. Establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or a similar reconciliation process.

# Appendix B: Political Parties in Yemen

Given the latest political developments, there are effective parties that are not registered but are major political players in the current political life. Due to the difficult access to Government, this list represents data available on the internet and through other sources of verification. For example, the Al Rashad Union party established in 2012.

Registered Parties:

1. General People's Congress
2. Al-Islah
3. Yemeni Socialist Party
4. Nasserist Unionist People's Party
5. Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party - Yemen Region
6. National Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party of Yemen
7. Hizb ut-Tahrir
8. Al-Haqq Party
9. Socialist Arab Baath Party
10. Federation of Yemeni Popular Forces
11. National Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party
12. Yemeni Unionist Congregation
13. Yemeni Green Socialist Party
14. Unionist Popular Liberation Party
15. National Socialist Party

Unofficial Political Parties

1. Ansar Allah (Houthis)
2. Al-Hirak Al-Janoobi (South secessionist)
3. Justice and Development Party (those who separated from GPC after 2011)
4. The Youth Part (pending approval for registration)
5. The Green Party (Pending approval for registration)
6. The Tribal Union Party (North Al-Ahmer dominated party)
7. The Republican Party (Hussien Al-Ahmer).
8. The Free Democrats (Taiz Youths)