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Yemen on the Verge of Total State Collapse While the Global Community Remains Silent

Six years after the successful protests of the so-called “Arab Spring” leading to the resignation of former President Ali Abdallah Saleh, Yemen is facing a war on multiple fronts. The Arab world’s poorest country is suffering from a political situation that has already been fragile and is now on the verge of total state collapse. The violence has triggered a humanitarian disaster with at least three million Yemenis being internally displaced and a famine threatening the country. An end of the conflict is not yet in sight. The international community seems to follow their own interests instead of trying to conclude a ceasefire and peace agreement.

Schlagwörter:

Arab Spring - Yemen - Civil War - Sunni-Shia - Conflict Saudi Arabia-Iran - Houthi - Saleh - International Intervention

YEMEN ON THE VERGE OF TOTAL STATE COLLAPSE WHILE THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY REMAINS SILENT

|| Charlotte Hohmann / Sail AlDailami

Introductory Remarks

Six years after the start of the 2011 uprising and the successful protests of the so-called “Arab Spring”, leading to the resignation of former President Ali Abdallah Saleh, Yemen is facing a war on multiple fronts. The combination of proxy wars, sectarian violence, state collapse and militia rule has sadly become part of the everyday routine. Even though the political process seemed promising, the transition has failed. There is little hope in producing a lasting settlement within the near future, as “nobody is likely to win such a fight, which will only benefit those who prosper in the chaos of war”¹.

As a matter of fact, Yemen is at war. The Arab world’s poorest country is suffering from a political situation that has already been fragile and is now on the verge of total state collapse. What at first began with localized fighting has since escalated into full blown war, characterized by vast diffused dynamics, including a large number of different actors – a war which is systematically creating one of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters and bringing up conflicts that seemed to be long time forgotten, including inter-religious and regional struggles.

Generally speaking, Yemen is now divided between two warring parties. The country has been devastated by a struggle between forces loyal to the internationally recognized government under president Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement. Since March 2015 at least 10,000 civilians have been killed and 42,000 injured² – the majority due to air strikes effected by a Saudi-led military intervention. The violence has triggered a humanitarian disaster, leaving between 70 and 80 percent of the population in urgent need of humanitarian assistance³

Yemen is on the verge of a famine, leaving almost 500,000 children at the risk of starving to death. Over half of its 26 million citizens face severe food insecurity. The restrictions of food and fuel import due to a variety of aerial and naval blockades have led the people being deprived of life-sustaining commodities and basic services⁴. Civilians have been repeatedly victims of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. *Human Rights Watch* has already discovered and documented a large number of unlawful airstrikes and other war crimes committed by both warring parties⁵. Furthermore, more than half of Yemen’s health facilities are currently either not functioning or only



According to UNICEF, half of Yemen's population currently lives on less than \$2 a day. The country's health facilities are either only partially working or not functioning at all. Source: HSF Tunisia.



Almost 500,000 children are suffering from severe malnutrition, leaving them at the risk of starving to death. Source: HSF Tunisia.

partially working. This means that half of the society suffers significantly from insufficient healthcare⁶.

The conflict has fragmented a weak state, destroyed the country's poor infrastructure and paved the way for terrorists groups like *Al-Qaeda in the Ara-*

bian Peninsula and the so called *Islamic State* to grow and take advantage of the country's catastrophic and chaotic situation⁷. As a result, the country's refugee flow is increasing rapidly: At least three million Yemenis are currently internally displaced.

A vast picture of a variety of actors that is not able to show who is fighting who characterizes Yemen's crisis and the war. However, it is certain that the current crisis has many causes, but was ultimately precipitated by Yemen's former political dynamics and the intervention of regional powers at the cost of basic services including water, healthcare, security and justice⁸. Not only has the country struggled with the failure of the political transition but also with the uprising of old conflicts between religious and regional groups underlying structural issues. Problems that the country already overcame long time ago are now characterizing the war.

Historical Background

In order to demonstrate how Yemen got into its current crisis, the following extract will point out the historical background by underlining the different phases the country went through from a divided to finally united nation. It will be important to realize that during the last decades Yemen has already dealt with the conflicts that are now characterizing the present critical situation.

After the final withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century, Yemen went through different periods from developing two separated states followed by unification, revolution and reorganization including international intervention and recurring

tensions. Obviously, the country had to cope with many ongoing conflicts struggling to maintain internal cohesion throughout all its history. Considering Yemen as the Arab world's poorest and probably most violent country, it is not surprising that the history was shaped by a large number of perennial civil wars between various groups.

To begin with, the present tensions or rather fighting between northern and southern movements can be traced back to the former division into north and south regions with their own distinct developments:

North Yemen

Since the Ottoman Empire had withdrawn its control from the country, the rule of Zaydi imam Muhammed Yahya was formally recognized in the north of Yemen. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Ahmad. His reign was mainly shaped by growing repression, renewed friction with the UK and growing pressures to support Arab nationalist objectives. He died in September 1962 and his son took over the power leading to the creation of the *Yemen Arab Republic* (YAR). This was followed by growing tensions with forces loyal to the Kingdom in the south, including interventions by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt which started the North Civil War. The fighting ended by the recognition of the Republic in 1970⁹.

Shortly after, fighting erupted again between north and south Yemen, including repeated intervention by its neighbor Saudi Arabia and the USSR. The conflict was short-lived and led to the 1972 Cairo Agreement that already included a

plan to unify the two countries. However, this change was not supposed to happen at this time. In 1978, Ali Abdullah Saleh became president of the still separate north and guided the YAR towards a centralized system of government characterized by a focus on the control of the country's resources and a concentration of power within his regime¹⁰.

South Yemen

Regarding the south of Yemen, it has to be emphasized that Yemen's location across the Gulf of Aden has always played an important role in the course of its historic development. The first, who saw an economically important key point in Yemen, was the British government. Already in the early 19th century, the *British East India Company* had captured the port of Aden in order to provide a coaling station for ships, established as the Aden Settlement. It gained even more political and strategic importance after the opening of the Suez Canal that still remains one of the most important waterways through which oil shipments are passing¹¹.

Until 1937 Aden was ruled as part of British India as the colony of Aden, that should stay in its own right but was tied to Britain by treaties of protection. During the following decades, Britain signed agreements with local rulers and created the Aden Protectorate, later divided into East and West protectorate for administrative reasons.

Given the fact, that the economic development was largely centered in the port city Aden flourishing due to the discovery of crude oil, whereas the rural

regions around the city stagnated, pressure for the British to leave the territory grew. Soon the government of Egypt, fighting against British rule in the Middle East, tried to increase the pressure on the British by creating the *United Arab Republic* in order to incorporate Yemen. On the other hand, Britain formed the *Federation of Arab Emirates of the South* with various southern states. They wanted to incorporate all of the Aden Protectorate into the Federation during the 60s, which was renamed later the *Federation of South Arabia*¹².

During the following years further fighting between different actors backed by Egyptian forces and British-led movements broke out in order to gain power in the southern region until Britain announced its withdrawal in the late 60s leading to the creation of the *People's Republic of South Yemen*.

Shortly after, a radical Marxist wing of the NLF, the *National Liberation Front* that was created during the aforementioned conflicts, gained power leading to the renamed *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen* (PDRY), establishing the *Yemeni Socialist Party* (YSP) as only legal party. Consequently, the south set up close diplomatic relations to other communist countries.

Despite the fact that at this time Yemen was officially separated into two independent states and the coexistence remained relatively friendly, the next years were shaped again by recurring civil wars not only between north and south but also between distinct movements within the regions. After the civil war of 1986 in the south, the state became owner of all major enterprises and

land providing the government as main source of employment¹³.

Unification

Meanwhile, the north was struggling more and more financially and the south had to face bankruptcy regarding the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result the two states were forced to agree to merge in a deal between the leaders of the YAR, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the PDRY, Ali Salim al-Baidh. They were supposed to work on a draft for a unity constitution. *The Republic of Yemen* (ROY) was declared on 22 May 1990 with Saleh becoming president and al-Baidh vice president.

The constitution had already included a large number of terms that fit to the nowadays understanding of democracy such as free elections, a multiparty political system and respect of basic human rights¹⁴.

However, continuous negotiations between northern and southern leaders restarted and it seemed that the two states had not been properly merged. Clashes intensified and another civil war broke out in 1994 with most of all the fighting concentrated in the southern region. Consequently, southern leaders declared secession and the creation of the *Democratic Republic of Yemen*, which was not recognized by the international community.

Following the civil war, the Saleh regime further consolidated its control over the country's resources and institutions, reserving all of the economic advantages for the inner circle of the government. In effect, the regions outside of urban centers were excluded which led

to an increasing tribal animosity towards the state¹⁵. It is important to realize that the areas where oil and gas were produced remained among the least developed in the country. Despite international initiatives to invest on major infrastructure projects and a series of new laws aiming at the creation of elected local councils, the socio-political situation became fragile and the living standards started to deteriorate. Additionally, the political culture was characterized by the promotion of corruption. Furthermore, members of Saleh's regime became more and more aware of the fact that he was attempting to advance the interests of his family by leaving behind other elite powers¹⁶.

Due to growing tensions within Saleh's regime and increasing resentment on the part of the people, rebel movements such as the Houthis, a Zaydi Shia identity based group, as well as the southern movement, which was calling for a new secession, started to arise more and more during the early 2000s. Therefore, the regime was threatened by a loss of legitimacy. In order to ease the uprising tensions, the government held a conference composed by opposition groups in 2009 and 2010 that, however, finally didn't really succeed. Therefore, Yemenis followed the initial stages of the Tunisian development at that time and took to the street to call for a political change¹⁷. The protests were mostly against unemployment, economic conditions and corruption in order to finally force president Saleh to resign.

Considering the historic development of Yemen, it is therefore not surprising that the country arrived at this crucial point as one of the many Arab

countries that participated in the so-called "Arab Spring".

Religious Impacts on the Historic Development in Yemen¹⁸

In contrast to the widespread assumption that most of the conflicts in the Middle East, including Yemen, can be attributed to struggles between religiously distinct groups, there is quite evidence that this statement cannot be applied for the case of Yemen. Although the country is consisting of two major religious groups, the Zaydi Shia Muslims in the north and the Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school in the south and east, their history has been mainly shaped by a peaceful coexistence since many decades. "The religious divide has historically been of limited importance"¹⁹.

However, internal conflicts have always existed, but they were certainly driven by political, economic, tribal or regional differences. Even though they coincided sometimes with religious disparities, they have never been the source of the conflict. However, Zaydi-Shafi'i sectarianism has always remained an undercurrent in politics and society. Even though the constitution of the *Republic of Yemen* banned the creation of religiously based political parties, a variety of sectarian parties were established, including the Islah party, considered as the biggest Sunni party. Furthermore, uprising rebel movements like Houthi and the Southern movement have used religious terms as a new and effective way to gain more supporters and fighters.

To sum up, although religious impacts cannot be seen as the source of former and recent conflicts, they certain-

ly have become “more heated, reorganizing Yemeni society along sectarian lines and rearranging people’s relationships to one another”²⁰.

Important state and non-state actors²¹

Considering Yemen’s development prior to the 2011 uprising and the following dynamics, it might be useful to present some of the major actors that played a role in the vast diffused picture characterizing the current crisis.

Houthis

After being a locally limited protest movement, the Houthis have developed to one of the most powerful political forces in the north of Yemen. In the beginning, the rebel group that was mainly marginalized economically by the Saleh regime focused their efforts on the preservation of their Zaydi (Shiite) identity. It started as a religious and revivalist movement among practitioners of the Zaydi Shi’ism, native to the Sa’da governorate in the north. Since the “Arab Spring” in 2011 the Houthis have seen themselves as political actor on the government level.

However, the group is separated into two wings – the moderate and militant political wing – both of them pursuing different targets. The Houthis are fighting against former (corrupted) elites, sunni islamist groupings prepared to use violence and the international intervention, especially the United States. Their approach is characterized by violent armed force. According to critics their only aim is to gain the complete power over the country which contrasts with some of the leader’s rhetoric

to improve the humanitarian situation. Therefore, the movement is challenging the growing distrust of their supporters. In fact, their interests are based on the aim to gain the access and power over essential resources and to remain their control over the territory around Yemen’s capital Sanaa²².

Southern Movement (Hirak al-Janoubi)

The south of Yemen is consisting of a large number of different groupings that have many different objectives. Considering the region’s former independence, it is not surprising that most of its tribal areas and leading authorities are continuously calling for secession as soon as tensions with the northern part arise as shown in the aforementioned historic development. In 2007, southern leaders finally created the Southern Movement, an organization committed to represent southerner’s interests. Whereas most of the supporters aim at gaining a new secession, other parts of the movement recognize the opportunity to work together with the north in order to improve the current situation.

AQAP and other separatist organizations

Although AQAP, *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*, has been operating in Yemen since the early 1990s, the conflict that has fragmented a weak state paved the way for them to grow and seize more territory. According to international assumptions, the Al-Qaeda affiliate in Yemen is the world’s most dangerous. Due to the separation of security forces after the 2011 uprising and the consequent lack of security, AQAP was able to expand their territorial control and is now competing with other violent

groups like the so called Islamic State (ISIS) to recruit more militants. However, AQAP is already cooperating with Yemeni tribal networks and therefore more integrated, whereas ISIS is rather seen as a foreign force.

The high propensity to violence and the willingness to seize more and more territory in order to establish protected areas for terrorist fighters, characterize these movements. AQAP, ISIS and further separatist groupings are benefiting from the current chaos. Certainly, these groups have to be considered as one of the biggest threats for Yemen's development regarding a long lasting settlement of the conflict.

General People's Congress (GPC)

The former ruling party, the *General People's Congress* (GPC), to which both Saleh and Hadi belong is now divided into two different wings. One wing keeps being loyal to Saleh, who is still chairman of the party; the other wing is calling for Hadi to become new representative and is willing to cooperate with other political parties. Between 2011 and 2014 half of the ministers were members of the GPC. However, the power struggle between Saleh and Hadi pushed the party into a more deep division and Hadi succeeded in excluding Saleh totally.

Considering the party's internal division, its interests are mainly focused on securing its political existence and the retention of power.

Islah Party

Although the Islah party was part of the first Parliament after the unification

in 1990, it has been dampened significantly during the recent development. As a Yemeni grouping supporting reforms and consisting of various tribal and religious groups, they are benefiting until now from a large number of supporters. However, the party has to challenge a loss of allies within the Yemeni army and a loss of tribal militias. As a result, there is an urgent need for reorganization in order to assure its political survival and the retention of power.

Saudi Arabia

Since many decades, Saudi Arabia has played a powerful role in the Yemeni context. The Kingdom sees the current conflict, especially the growing penetration of the Houthi movement, as a threat regarding its contest with Iran to gain regional dominance. Furthermore, having a hostile neighbor would also threaten its southern borders. Therefore, Saudi Arabia takes a clear stand on the internationally recognized government under President Hadi and established an anti-Houthi coalition backed by Western and *Gulf Cooperation Council* allies that President Hadi is cobbling together. They consider the Houthis as Iranian proxies – a stance that pushes them closer to Tehran. The Saudis even moved their embassy to Aden and support anti-Houthi tribal movements in the governorate of Marib and the South. In March 2015 the coalition, consisting of a large number of Sunni Arab and other countries (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, Egypt and Senegal) as well as parts of Yemen's army and tribal movements, launched a campaign of air strikes aimed at restoring Hadi's government. The multinational coalition received logistical

and intelligence support from the US, UK and France.

Socio-political and Security Dynamics after 2011

It seems that the big and accelerating dynamics of change having happened in the different places from the first day of the so called Arab spring until today let us sometimes forget the starting point trying to shape the scene and to examine who was standing for what and which actors entered the scene and changed the whole transformation process at a certain point.

During the six years after the “Arab Spring”, Yemen has passed through different phases of the transformation period, each of them characterized by its own distinct dynamics. The initial peaceful transition of power after the protest movements, started with the resignation of former President Saleh in November 2011 by handing over his power to the interim President, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, and his former deputy in February 2012. Hadi was chosen as president for a two-year transitional period. Presidential elections were held, he was, however, the only candidate. In return, Saleh was ensured immunity from prosecution for himself and his family, stated in the *Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative* which was the result of negotiations in Yemen between numerous of crucial political actors.

Remarkably all negotiations and their impacts were conducted in the most peaceful way – despite the fact that Yemen has been suffering from tribal conflicts for a long time and is one of the Arab world’s poorest countries. Furthermore, there is a widespread owner-

ship of arms in society. Yemen’s population possesses around 60 million conventional weapons. With this in mind, it should be a country with a high rate of violence or rather a population with willingness to use it.

The Initiative provided an implementation mechanism that should lead to a new constitution, reforms in the security sector and a ten-month *National Dialogue Conference* (NDC) in order to develop recommendations for the political future of the country. It was an attempt to integrate all actors that played a role in this essential period. UN members and important socio-political actors of the international community participated in these discussions. As a result, it reached constructive conclusions on the political future and gave useful recommendations that were supposed to be applied by the interim government.

However, some of the important key issues, such as the country’s federal structure, as well as new uprising actors on the political level, including the Houthis, the so-called “Revolutionary Youth” that participated enormously in the protests of 2011, and the tribal mobilization in the south, have not been considered as much for the final round of talks. In fact, the southern independence movement did not even participate in the conference, because it demanded the division of the country which was not part of the negotiations.

The results of the conference were supposed to enable the interim government under President Hadi to overcome the imminent division of the population, politics and military within a short period of time. However, former elites kept sharing the power over the country and

the government was composed by the former as well as new ruling party GPC and the opposition party Islah. Furthermore, Ex-President Saleh remained, after being deposed in 2011, chairman of the GPC, even though he was excluded from the political scene.

In general, the situation was characterized by a weak president and a wide range of further authorities that were sharing the power. In fact, Yemen has always been like this: The president's power has always been limited to the big cities and their surroundings while his controlling power over the rest of the country depended on his cleverness. Contrary to Ex-President Saleh, Hadi was not appropriately qualified for this task.

For this reason, the government did not succeed in fulfilling its promises to end corruption and improve the humanitarian and economic situation, as determined in the recommendations of the NDC.

Instead, Yemen's socio and security-political situation continued to deteriorate more and more. To put it another way, it seemed that the promising peaceful start of the transition would reach a crucial turning point very soon. And this is what happened shortly after²³
^{24 25}.

Turning Point

As mentioned before, the government, composed by the former governmental party and a coalition of the former opposition, was unable to implement concrete requirements the population had longed for since 2011. In fact, they were engaged with internal reforms and conflicts between each other to a point that they could not follow up on

their ordinary governmental affairs. Hadi's government struggled with a variety of problems, including attacks by Al-Qaeda, the separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of many military officers to Saleh as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity. Additionally, there was a lack of available funds in order to conduct necessary projects.

Therefore, the government lost its legitimacy and the confidence of Yemen's population very fast which opened vast opportunities for new actors to grow and gain power. Moreover, President Hadi did not have the sufficient military power in order to continually prevail against his political competitors. All of these circumstances led to the current situation. Already during the NDC the northern movements, such as the Houthis – a predominantly Zaydi / Shiite group – in cooperation with Ex-President Saleh, have tried to extend their power through gaining control over northern regions and essential resources by armed force. Saleh had taken advantage of this popular dissatisfaction on the part of the population and tacitly allied himself with the Houthis against their common enemies to stage a political comeback – not necessarily for himself, but for his son and the people from the Sanhan tribe, the region he comes from.

Political assassinations of leading Houthi / Saleh supporters followed and the situation deteriorated once more. The political transition which had already been in trouble for some time, began to unravel in September 2014, when the alliance of Houthi militias and fighters aligned with Saleh captured the capital Sanaa and forced thereby the

interim government under President Hadi to step down.

Shortly after, a new consensus government was established, consisting of technocrats under premier minister Khaled Bahah, which also stepped down in January 2015 due to the Houthi's interference in governmental affairs. As stated before, tribal interference in the politics and government scene is a consistent element of governing in Yemen.

In March 2015 the Houthi / Saleh alliance captured a strategic military base north of the port city of Aden and took the defense minister hostage. Rumor has it that President Hadi was preparing the division of the north and south into two states given that he would become President of the south. What followed can be considered as a race between northern and southern movements, including terrorist groups that had already been supported by neighboring countries, to gain control over the different regions. As a consequence, the President was forced to go into exile to Riyadh. However, the international community still considers the government under Hadi as the official government, regardless that an election was supposed to be held after two years. Saudi Arabia entered the scene and changed the path of transformation in another direction.

The Houthis were blocking the governmental business and occupied important institutions like the Central Bank and the National News Agency. Consequently, they destabilized further regions and paved the way for dangerous armed forces, such as AQAP and ISIS. Besides however, it also has to be considered that these groups have already been operating in Yemen long time be-

fore. In this context, it has to be demonstrated which role the international community, especially Saudi Arabia and western countries, play^{26 27 28 29}.

The Role of the International Community

As previously stated, the international community still recognizes Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and his government as Yemen's legitimate governmental representatives – even though the government stepped down and Hadi left into exile to Saudi Arabia. The questions are now, what kind of role do other states around Yemen play and why do they follow a certain strategy.

Speaking of the role of international political actors, it has to be considered that every state always pursues its own targets, including economic and security-political interests as well as intergovernmental conflicts. This relates especially to the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran that seems to have its roots in religious and economic backgrounds, but in fact is a matter of the fight for supremacy in the Middle East. In other words, who will establish itself as foremost regional power? The conflict between the Houthis and the government is also seen as part of this regional power struggle between Shia-ruled Iran and Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, Yemen is strategically important regarding its geographic location. Yemen is controlling the *Bab al-Mandab* strait, a narrow waterway linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden through which the world's oil shipments pass. With this in mind, it might be easier to understand the role of the international community in this situation.

Thus all the international actors are interested in recreating Yemen's stability not only in order to pursue their aims regarding development objectives, but also for economic and security-political interests. What happens in Yemen can greatly exacerbate regional tensions.

In April 2014, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2216, a one-sided document that essentially called for the Houthi / Saleh alliance to surrender. The Yemeni government and Saudi-led coalition have used it repeatedly to legitimate its military or rather violent intervention. The Saudis want to prevent the Shiite Houthi Group from taking over the power on their southern borderlines at all costs. In addition, they pursue the aim to demonstrate their strength in front of important countries like the US and distract both the international community as well as their own people from internal problems. Therefore they forcibly started air strikes and occupations of the regions controlled by the Houthi, working together with national allies and opposition tribes.

Continued fighting between these groups, especially the Saudi-led coalition's attempt to capture the Red Sea ports among other things, stifling blockades and unilateral moves will deepen intra-Yemeni divisions and deteriorate the humanitarian situation once more. To give an example, the risk of famine has highly increased.

Moreover, it has to be stressed that Saudi Arabia's military approach does not make any allowance to Yemen's citizens. There is evidence that it has repeatedly violated the laws of war by killing non-combatants. This might be related to the religious background of this

conflict. Actually, Western states such as the US or European countries that have supported UN efforts to end the conflict in the first place, continued to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia and consequently participate indirectly in this bloody war as well. On the other hand, Iran is accused of supporting the Houthi / Saleh movement with weapon supplies and guidance. However, according to official statements, Iran is condemning the war in Yemen. In addition, supplies couldn't reach the Houthi controlled areas anyway because of embargos blocking the sea, air and land.

Generally speaking, the international community, including the United States, Europe, the Saudi-led coalition and presumably Iran, seems to follow their own interests instead of trying to conclude a ceasefire and peace agreement as soon as possible. Moreover, after numerous rounds of peace talks and failed ceasefires, even the UN has lost credibility with all sides. After all this fighting no side appears close to a decisive military victory.

In fact, we are speaking of an international alliance of states as mentioned before, supported by Yemeni southern military forces and paid northern tribes of Yemen that is fighting the Houthi / Saleh movement without any significant success.

Despite the military campaign and blockades, pro-government forces have been unable to dislodge the Houthi rebels from their northern strongholds, including the capital Sanaa. They also maintain a siege of the southern city of Taiz and are not willing to surrender. Ending this war will require an agreement that will end Saudi Arabia's mili-

tary intervention, establish intra-Yemeni negotiations to chart the country's political future and immediate ceasefire inside Yemen and along the Yemeni-Saudi border – which, however, seems unlikely to happen right now.

To summarize, one of the major issues that led to this confusing war, was the violation of the basic principle of non-interference by the international community, mostly neighboring states that took side with a government that stepped down and a President in exile.³⁰

^{31 32}

Conclusion

To draw a conclusion, the following main problems / conflicts should be pointed out:

To begin with, the transition period, leading to this terrible war ignited an old conflict between the north and south that was supposed to be settled in 1990 with the unification of the former separated country. These north-south tensions are based on regional affiliation that even triggers hate between the regional groups.

The second conflict that characterizes Yemen's current situation arose inside northern groups, which means inter-tribal problems rooted in economic interests. To clarify, this conflict can be seen as a struggle between pro-Saudi and contra-Saudi movements, considering the pro-Saudis as paid henchmen of the Saudi-led multinational coalition.

Equally important is the third clash that complicates the country's deteriorating situation: This regards notably the

different views of southern groupings. On the one hand you can find proponents of the imminent renewed separation of the south from the north. On the other hand there are movements that want to stick to the union or at least follow the legal way. Not least to mention are terrorist groups like AQAP and ISIS coming from the northern borders in order to pursue their own targets which are highly connected to territory interests.

Another conflict that arose again after years of peaceful co-existing and that must be remembered is the repeating struggle between Sunni and Shiite groups which can be partly referred also to Saudi-Arabia's intervention.

And finally there is the confrontation between the poor north that is mainly depended on the tribal order of society and the rich south with its oil resources and its valuable waterway as mentioned before.

These conflicts shaped the six years after the "Arab Spring" in 2011. Yemen has to face one of the world's most critical social and security-political situations. Indeed, there is need for immediate action in order to prevent further deterioration. The international community has to assume its responsibility and admit its part in the development of the current crisis. To achieve a long lasting settlement, neighboring countries and the rest of the international community should help the main actors to promote intra-Yemeni negotiations that address especially unresolved issues, such as decentralization and the status of the south as well as solutions for the humanitarian crisis. Moreover, further negotiations should include actors beyond the

Hadi government and the Houthi / Saleh alliance, such as the Sunni Islamist party Islah, southern separatists, tribal groupings, Salafi groups and civil society organizations including women's groups. Only in this way, they might find an agreement and be able to recreate a kind of stability.

In fact, the EU, including Germany and other international actors, are well qualified to rebuild the credibility of UN-mediated peace talks leading to a ceasefire and settlement through foreign and development policies. Especially the EU should be able to mediate between the warring parties due to its widespread neutrality – despite some few countries that took bilateral positions. The member states should build on their efforts by focusing on securing a ceasefire and working on an improvement of the humanitarian crisis.³³

However, recent projects in the course of development policy are focused on awareness campaigns: raising awareness of the population to participate in elections or raising awareness of society for women and gender issues. On the other hand, it is worth stressing that awareness-raising and training courses for Western decision-makers could be equally useful in order to let them be aware of the consequences of their decisions and non-decisions respectively. After all, they are part of the factors that determine the fate of these countries. However, they always play a role at the beginning and they seem to be left behind in the course of the dynamics that follow.

Even if the war would end tomorrow, the effects of the alliance's strategy of

the gradual starvation and extinction of a whole nation will keep the country in a situation of chaos and lack of government structures for the next decades.³⁴

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