

War and peacebuilding opportunities in Yemen

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All the conflicting parties or forces in Yemen are weak and therefore, as I mentioned in many articles I have previously published, there is a balance of weakness. Previous experience informs us that peace dialogue between weak forces will not be feasible. The reason is very simple: each side believes it has the military and the combat decisiveness, while the truth is that neither party can win the battle. For peace negotiations to succeed, historical experiences also inform us that there needs to be a weak force and a strong force, so the strong force may impose peace requirements on the weak one. In a situation of a balance of weakness, peace can only be achieved when the conflicting parties are concerned with the country's needs and not the interests of its narrow leaders. They must have no external affiliations or be acting like internal or external gangs that are fighting and killing, as is happening in Yemen.

In order to achieve comprehensive peace in Yemen, the international community must rethink the issue of local ownership of negotiations. This is expressed in theories of conflict and peacebuilding. Regional

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ownership of peace negotiations in Yemen must be realized and the negotiations must be led by the regional states that contribute directly to conflict and fighting in the name of a proxy war. In my last article on national dialogues as interruptions of wars in Yemen, published in the *Peacebuilding Journal*, I touched on all national dialogues that were held in Yemen from 1962 to 2013. I found that each dialogue in Yemen ended with an internal war because of external dimensions, but when the regional countries entered into a direct dialogue about Yemen in the 1970s, the result was an agreement for a comprehensive peace that lasted almost 30 years. This result reflects the importance of local ownership of peace negotiations as highlighted by the relevant theories. Indeed, regional ownership was absent in peace negotiations in 2013 named by the UN as the Yemeni national dialogue, which contributed to the failure to implement the outputs of this most important dialogue in recent Yemeni history.

The international community should realize the importance of linking peace negotiations with effective development and humanitarian aid, and there is a need to form an international committee to mobilize the necessary funds and paying the salaries for the public sector (payroll 2014) in order to overcome the reality of the devastating famine of people in Yemen. There are UN humanitarian responses in Yemen, and they currently require 4.7 billion dollars, but in reality, most of this money (70%) goes to delivery expenses or operational costs. In my opinion a quarter of this amount could solve the crisis directly by paying the salaries of state employees. This plan could revitalize the economy again. The Yemeni economy before the war was a traditional one that relied on oil for income and had operating expenses on the other side. Paying the salaries of public servants could preserve the public institutions and prevent their total collapse; if they do collapse, large sums of money would be needed to reopen them after the war is over.

Humanitarian aid is currently increasing the chances of an ongoing war, as it is being looted by the conflicting parties and used to attract elements to fight and create martial, political and social legitimacy at local levels. The current international aid distribution strategy works to increase the

intensity of conflict, war and human suffering more than helping the disadvantaged and the poor people, especially with the increase in the randomness in delivery and the multiplicity of sources working in the relief field in Yemen. Since the beginning of the war, the amount spent in Yemen has reached about \$14 billion, and aid is delivered by dozens of organizations (global and local), but famine and suffering continue to grow day after day.

The international community should also give careful thought to putting Yemen not under item number seven of the UN, but under the item of international responsibility to protect civilians in times of war. This item is called R2P, and it gives the International Security Council the right to attack any country that stokes conflicts and wars in other countries, especially if the humanitarian bill is very high as it is currently in Yemen. There will be even a right for the UN Security Council to take all political, economic and military measures to protect civilians who are subjected to killing and hunger due to rival gangs, who are fighting to rule a country without a land.

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