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Understanding Peace Require- ments in Yemen

Needs and Roles for Civil
Society, Women, Youth, the
Media and the Private Sector

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This report serves as a background paper to five short studies Yemeni-international researcher tandems will jointly develop in the course of 2019. It places a particular focus on 'peace requirements', a term that seeks to draw attention to the manifold challenges to establishing stability and building peace in Yemen and the resulting efforts which will be required. This report analyzes the current situation in Yemen by looking at social structures, current conflict dynamics, the role and situation of state institutions and external factors, and then moves on to focus on what is required to build peace in Yemen. In laying out these peace requirements, the report focuses on the following relevant sectors: economy, politics, culture and society, as well as security and justice. In a last step, it takes a look at the challenges to and capacities of five different actor groups in Yemen to address these needs: civil society, women, youth, the media and the private sector.

Introduction

Against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Yemen, CARPO is implementing the project 'Research Cooperation on Peacebuilding in Yemen' on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project seeks to bridge, in the context of the ongoing conflict, the increasing academic isolation of Yemeni researchers and the inaccessibility of Yemen to international researchers by bringing both sides together in joint research and publication efforts. This report serves as a background paper to the short studies the Yemeni-international researcher tandems will jointly develop in the course of 2019. A particular focus is placed on 'peace requirements', a term which seeks to draw attention to the manifold challenges to establishing stability and building peace in Yemen and the resulting efforts required. The report analyzes the current situation in Yemen by looking at social structures, current conflict dynamics, the role and situation of state institutions and external factors, and then moves on to focus on what is required to build peace in Yemen. In laying out these peace requirements, the report focuses on the following relevant sectors: economy, politics, culture and society, as well as security and justice. In a last step, we take a look at the challenges to and capacities of five different actor groups in Yemen to address these needs: civil society, women, youth, the media and the private sector.

Analysis of the Situation in Yemen: Politics and Society

Social Structure and Fault Lines

The conflict in Yemen is often described with flawed binary dichotomies that do not do justice to the complexity of Yemeni society and the situation on the ground. The most common framing constructs the conflict as a binary proxy-war between the Shi'i Huthis, supported by Iran, against the Sunni, internationally recognized government, supported by the Saudi-led coalition. Yemeni society is, however, marked by more complex and intersecting regional, confessional, urban-rural, tribal, and economic divisions, all of which are being exploited and exacerbated in the current conflict. Markedly more pronounced than sectarianism are regional identities. These regional identities are not only determined by historical experiences, but are also shaped by geographical, economic and confessional differences, which have contributed to the emergence of distinctive regional lifestyles and forms of social organization.

The division between Northern and Southern Yemen was never genuinely overcome with the unification of the two formerly independent states in 1990. Instead, the outcome of the 1994 civil war (when the South tried to regain independence) cemented the dominance of the North and kept aspirations for an independent South alive. These aspirations are principally pursued by groups located in the urban south-west Yemen, particularly Aden, al-Dhali' or Abyan, as opposed to Hadhramawt and al-Mahra to the country's extreme east, which have their own distinct identities. Another regional identity is constructed around central Yemen, situated north of the border dividing the former two Yemeni states, but south of the northern highlands.

The northwest of Yemen, the country's highlands, is the heartland of the Zaydi tradition, which is nominally part of the Shi'i branch of Islam. It is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the Yemeni population are adherents to this Islamic tradition. In central Yemen, Zaydis give way to Shafi'is, a school belonging to Sunni Islam, which is dominant in southern Yemen and the coastal areas. The practical differences between the two streams are minimal: adherents of both strands of Islam have prayed together in the same mosques and have intermarried in the past. During the time of the Imamate, however, political authority lay solely in the hands of Zaydi Hashemites (descendants of Prophet Muhammad), which has had profound impact on social organization in the Yemeni highlands.

The densely populated area of northern highland Yemen is tribally organized and home to the two largest tribal confederations: Hamdan (which consists of the two independent confederations Hashid and Bakil) and Khawlan b. 'Amir. The arable land of central and southern Yemen, in contrast, gave rise to land-owning families. In the sparsely populated and Shafi'i southern Yemen, moreover, the external influences of British colonialism and the socialist state established in 1967 molded the southern tribes differently from the ones in the highlands. Generally, tribal structures are stronger in rural areas where state presence is weak.

The line between tribes and the state cannot easily be drawn. Particularly the tribes in the northern highlands enjoy access to the state's resources, with tribal leaders acting as quasi-military commanders or serving as commanders in the country's security services. Social groups and tribes excluded from this patronage network, as was the case with the tribes in the central Yemeni governorate Marib, had a rather antagonistic relationship with the state. Being cut off from state resources, these areas often lacked the most basic infrastructure. The expansive patronage network of former President 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih thus cemented divisions, on the basis of access to the state, its resources and economic opportunities.

The urban infrastructure of the capital allowed for a modern lifestyle, with a tight net of healthcare and educational facilities, roads and highways, and centralized albeit weak water and electricity networks. This infrastructure reinforced the dominance of the northern elite living in Sana'a over the rest of the country. However, it is part of the general urban-rural divide that infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals or electricity, is often almost completely absent in rural Yemen. These fault lines, along with external influences, shape the dynamics of the Yemeni conflict.

Conflict Dynamics

In December 2011, a first consensus government was formed as a result of the GCC Initiative: The agreement was brought forth by the GCC countries, brokered by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Jamal Benomar and supported by the international community. The consensus government was composed of the former ruling General People's Congress (GPC) and former opposition parties under the umbrella of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) coalition in which the Islah Party was the dominant partner. All of these forces had sustained former President Salih's rule in the past and the agreement thus ensured that the Northern elites remained in power. Former vice president 'Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi was confirmed as president in a single-candidate election in February 2012 and tasked with overseeing a transitional process outlined by

the GCC agreement. Central components of the transitional roadmap were security sector reform; the resolution of the various conflicts plaguing the country and discussion of the future structure of the Yemeni state, tasked to the National Dialogue Conference (NDC); and a transitional justice process. The third component never really moved forward, however, in part due to the fact that 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih and his family were granted immunity as part of the deal that resulted in his resignation.

While Hadi was successful in meeting the benchmarks of the roadmap, his government increasingly lost legitimacy throughout the transition process. Lacking inclusivity, the process resulted in a fragile national consensus, while ensuring the continued dominance of the Northern elites. Between September 2014 and February 2015, nearly a year after the conclusion of the NDC, the government was pushed out of power by the Huthis: This move was initially welcomed by parts of the Yemeni population which perceived the government to be corrupt and incapable of solving the numerous crises facing the country. In contrast to the government, the Huthis were perceived by many as a new force emerging from amidst the people and the tribes, uncorrupted by political power.

The Huthis, who refer to themselves as Ansar Allah [partisans of God], are a Zaydi armed group originating from the rural northern highlands of Sa'da, bordering Saudi-Arabia, and named after the al-Huthi family, which leads the group politically and spiritually. The group has its roots in the increasing religious tensions of the 1980s and 1990s, when the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood originating from central Yemen, Salafi groups supported by Saudi Arabia, and the central government began promoting Sunni Islam in the Zaydi Yemeni highlands. The defense of the local religious and cultural identity, as well as political and economic marginalization of Sa'da, motivated the group to take up its oppositional stance, resulting in a protracted war with the central government between 2004 and 2010.

After having participated in the anti-regime protests targeting former President 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih and his family in 2011, the Huthis participated in the transition process, including the NDC. However, parallel to their political participation, the group also expanded militarily in northern Yemen, targeting particularly the adherents and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in the area, which were organized within the Islah Party. The Islah Party was one of the main profiteers of the transitional process, having gained nearly half of the ministerial portfolios in the consensus government. Availing themselves of the lack of political agreement after the NDC had concluded, as well as the legitimacy crisis of the consensus government, the Huthis swiftly took over the capital Sana'a in September 2014. Hoping to take revenge for his ouster

in 2011, former president 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih granted the Huthis support from military and security forces still loyal to him, thus allowing the group to gain unprecedented political and military power.

Despite the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) of September 2014 to form a new technocratic government in consensus with the Huthis and the Southern Movement, the emerging Huthi-Salih alliance continued to expand militarily. The expansion escalated when President Hadi escaped to Aden in February 2015, subsequent to his and his government's resignation and house arrest in the capital Sana'a, due to increasing Huthi pressure in January of that year.

The incursion of Northern fighters into the South, where calls for independence have been on the rise since at least 2009, prompted the Southern Movement (al-Hirak al-Janubi)¹, as well as local youth and militias, to take up arms to form a southern popular resistance. The southern resistance sided with President Hadi only to the extent that both countered the Huthis. Southern independence being the resistance's end goal, al-Hirak did and continues to accept Hadi as legitimate president, but only to the extent that such an acknowledgment serves their immediate interests (mainly support from the Saudi-led coalition, particularly the UAE).

The military intervention of the Saudi-led coalition of March 2015 halted the expansion of the Huthi-Salih alliance, and won back Aden and the surrounding areas which the Huthis had taken, in June/July 2015. The frontlines currently run along the Red Sea coast, through the city of Tai'z, and the tribal areas of al-Baydha' and Marib. While the Huthi-Salih alliance was easily able to take full control of the northern highlands, areas that were less integrated into Salih's patronage network, as well as areas with other regional, tribal and sectarian identities, resisted the alliance's violent incursion.

State Institutions

With the take-over of the capital Sana'a and its state institutions by the Huthis in 2014/15, the Yemeni state fragmented, with some structures broken down completely, others taken over by non-state actors, and new parallel structures emerging. In the northwest, the Huthis established new institutions and infiltrated old ones with "supervisors" to cement their control over the territory. The so-called "constitutional declaration" of February 2015 concluded

¹ The roots of the Southern Movement date back to 2007, when retired army officers of the former southern army protested against their forced retirement and the suspension of their pensions in the aftermath of the civil war of 1994. The continued marginalization of the South and sentiments of a unique Southern identity created conditions for the Southern Movement, a network of groups pursuing independence, to emerge.

the Huthi's coup d'état and established the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), a ruling body composed of five members and headed by Muhammad 'Ali al-Huthi. In July 2016, the Huthis and their former ally, the General People's Congress (GPC), formed the Supreme Political Council (SPC), a ten-member institution, with the goal to institutionalize the authority of the Huthi-Salih alliance. The council formed the National Salvation Government under Prime Minister 'Abd al-Aziz b. Habtur in October 2016. However, the SRC was never disbanded, giving the Huthis the upper hand within the alliance, as it continued to act as quasi-government in the Huthi-held territories.

The Huthi government lacks international recognition. Rather, the international community exclusively recognizes the government under President Hadi. Today, the internationally recognized Yemeni government is composed of a 30-member cabinet, headed by a vice president and a prime minister who report to President Hadi. The Hadi government has not been able to call any remaining loyal members of the national parliament to hold a session. Furthermore, as parliamentary elections in Yemen were last held in 2003, the representative power of its members – let alone their legitimacy – needs to be generally questioned.

Since spring 2015, the Hadi government has increasingly been operating from its temporary capital Aden, although President Hadi remains in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Nominally, the areas outside of Huthi-controlled territory are under the authority of the internationally recognized government. Its reach is limited, however. In September 2016, Hadi moved the Central Bank to Aden in an attempt to gain full control of state spending and exert financial pressure on the Huthis. The move split the Central Bank, with its branches now operating independently from one another in Sana'a, Aden, Marib and Hadhramawt.

In the South, the internationally recognized government's authority is rivaled by the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which was formed in May 2017. The council claims to represent Southern Yemen and is composed of leaders of the Southern Movement, as well as government officials who were previously part of the Hadi government. The fighters affiliated with the STC, particularly those of the UAE-supported 'Security Belt', have increasingly taken over positions of the internationally recognized government with the goal of cementing their control over vital infrastructure in the South, particularly in Aden.

The state security institutions are likewise split. While the Huthis were able to gain control of military institutions, infrastructure and arms, particularly after the death of 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih at their hands in December 2017, other parts of the military have remained under the control of the Hadi government. In the context of the Huthis' expansion, numerous militias have formed, with some integrated into the anti-Huthi military alliance. Often, however, these militias continue to act independently, pursuing their own interests.

On the sub-national levels, the political positions of individual institutions are determined by the loyalties of the respective officials. To assure compliance in the territories under their control, the Huthis assigned supervisors to state institutions, allowing the group to rely on state structures to enforce their rule. Within Huthi-controlled territories, governors were either newly appointed, or, as was the case with many members of the mostly elected local councils, they shifted their loyalties to the Huthis, often under significant pressure from the rebel group. After the death of 'Ali 'Abd Allah Salih in December 2017, the Huthis took complete control over the northwest of Yemen, with Salih supporters being arrested or killed by the Huthis if they were not able to escape or did not pledge rebel allegiance. The loyalties of sub-national officials outside of Huthi-held territory are distributed among the internationally recognized government, the GPC, the STC, in addition to loyalties grounded in local structures, such as tribes or Salafi militias.

External Factors

The conflict in Yemen is shaped by the interventions of regional and international actors who pursue their own interests in the conflict. The Saudi-led coalition was initially composed of at least ten Sunni Muslim states (some have since withdrawn their cooperation), with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) investing the most in the conflict. The coalition intervened militarily after President Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia from Aden in light of the Huthi-Salih alliance's advance on the city in March 2015.

The professed goals of the Saudi-led intervention are to re-establish the internationally recognized government in the capital Sana'a and to return to the political process in the framework of the GCC Initiative. However, the Saudi-led coalition also represents a Sunni alliance against Iranian influence in the region. Saudi Arabia views the Huthis as an Iranian proxy and, with the Huthis' increasing control of the country, Saudi Arabia fears Iran will gain control of Yemen.

Although Saudi Arabia and the UAE share the interest to combat the influence of Iran in Yemen, they cooperate with different local actors and pursue distinct strategies in their engagement. Saudi Arabia relies on airstrikes and the financial and material support of troops fighting in the anti-Huthi alliance, as well as on an air, land and sea blockade of Huthi-controlled territories. The UAE concentrates its efforts on southern and central Yemen. A combination of ground troops and UAE-trained forces, such as the Security Belt in Aden and the Special Forces in Hadhramawt, have allowed the Emirates to exert indirect control over territories in the South (some observers refer to this development as a new form of colonialism). Because the UAE avoids cooperation with

the Islah Party, as the UAE is antagonistic towards the Muslim Brotherhood, it has partnered with the STC and Salafi militias, both of which undermine the authority of the internationally recognized government and contribute to the further fragmentation of the state in those areas nominally under the control of said government.

Since the beginning of the military operation, the alliance has not been able to achieve its goals; instead, Saudi Arabia has come under increasing criticism due to the cost of its military strategies to civilian lives. Although Saudi Arabia believes Iran to be behind the Huthi takeover of the Yemeni capital, as well as missile transfers to the rebels, Iranian influence on the Huthis is limited. While Iran may be able to advise the Huthis regarding strategic decisions and policy-related actions, the Islamic Republic is not able to directly influence Huthi behavior, which is mainly determined by local factors and alliances. Iran has provided the Huthis with military and media training, money transfers and political support. Some missile parts used by the Huthis are produced in Iran: However, evidence collected by the UN Panel of Experts on the exact origins and transport of the missiles remains largely inconclusive.

Bridging the gulf between these two regional powers, Oman has not joined the Saudi-led alliance, but has remained neutral, aiming to keep an open window to the Huthis and Iran. The Sultanate has repeatedly hosted delegations from Sana'a and thus remains an important actor in the peace process. Conversely, its open channels to the Huthis and Iran have resulted in strong criticism and backlash from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Peace Requirements

Economy

The stabilization of the economy is a precondition for peace in Yemen: It is a major driver of the conflict and the main reason behind the country's humanitarian crisis. The war economy further fans the conflict and young men see no other option but to join one side or the other as members of militias in order to gain a salary to feed their families. According to a YPC survey, poverty and living conditions rank highest among the people's concerns.²

² The survey was conducted by the Yemen Polling Center in February and March 2017. This survey targeted 4,000 respondents (50 percent women) nationwide (except Sa'da and Soqatra) and was funded by the European Union. The survey reflects the urban-rural population distribution in Yemen, with 68 percent of interviews having been implemented in rural areas. One of the co-authors of this report, Marie-Christine Heinze, acted as consultant to YPC in the framework of this research.

The Yemeni economy was already weak before the escalation of violence in 2014, with Yemen ranking lowest in development among all Arab countries. A combination of various factors since the beginning of the war has caused a catastrophic blow to its already fragile financial state. Overall, the conflict has resulted in a significant shrinking of the economy, which has led to approximately 50 percent of Yemenis, working as employees or on farms, to lose their source of income.

The contentious and ill-prepared relocation of the Central Bank from Sana'a to Aden in 2016 not only split the institution, leaving it with a divided leadership and no central steering, but also further weakened the country's economy and the Bank's financial steering capacities. The Central Bank's currency deposits are dwindling, with the government's main income having shrunk after the suspension of hydrocarbon exports (which make up 40 percent of government revenue) and the loss of foreign financing from international donors. It has become increasingly difficult for the state to pay salaries, affecting an estimated third of the population. As a result of these and other factors, the Yemeni Rial has experienced depreciation and high inflation, and has lost more than 75 percent of its value since 2015.

Furthermore, the systematic destruction of the country's industry and agricultural infrastructure by the Saudi-led coalition has not only diminished the financial income of workers, but also shrunk the labor market and halted the local production of goods. Additionally, Huthi militias are involved in the diversion of humanitarian aid to sales on the black market. These dynamics are coupled with a thriving war economy in which new actors have begun making considerable amounts of money. These actors will have no interest to end the ongoing war.

The loss of jobs, the devaluation of the Yemeni currency and the inability of the internationally recognized government to pay the salaries of government employees (including teachers, university staff, doctors and nurses) throughout the country has resulted in the humanitarian catastrophe Yemen is facing at this point in time. Food is available on the Yemeni markets, but people are no longer able to buy it. Addressing problems related to the management of the Central Bank, stabilizing the Yemeni Rial and bolstering Yemen's economy are thus important peace requirements.

Politics

In the political realm, the most pressing requirements for peace are threefold: a peace agreement within the UN-led peace process and an inclusion of further parties in a subsidiary process; restored function to state institutions; and the consideration of the local level in policy-making.

The UN-led peace process, should it succeed, will most likely lead to some form of transitional government that should ideally include representatives of all major sides to the conflict. For such a process to be successful, it requires more than the buy-in of the two parties currently addressed by the UN-led process: The inclusion of other relevant actors on the ground, particularly representatives from the South, is essential. A subsidiary process that can help a fractured Southern Movement to come to an agreement, on its goals as well as its representatives, to a broader peace process is therefore of the essence.

Functioning state institutions that can provide the citizenry with desperately needed services, including water, health, education and security, and thus re-establish trust in the state, is a further peace requirement. This would require state-building on the local and on the national level. Local councils introduced with the Local Authority Law in 2000 are nominally tasked with assessing the needs of the community and ensuring the provision of services. Since the onset of the war in 2014, most local councils are no longer able to fully fulfill this function, particularly due to lack of funding. The resulting gaps are often filled by non-state actors that do not always pursue state building but rather seek to bolster their own legitimacy while profiting from the war economy. In a state-building process, the capacities of the local councils to enact their mandate need to be enhanced, even as activities of non-state actors ought to be subsumed under the authority of the state. Also, monitoring mechanisms should ensure service provision adheres to the principles of good governance.

On the national level, a requirement for peace in the mid- to long-term future is the formation of a political system that equally and fairly represents the different regions of the country. A pre-condition for this is a solution to the question of how the relationship between the regions and the central government is regulated. Federalism was agreed upon by the delegates of the NDC as the future form of the Yemeni state; however, the form and number of regions need to be renegotiated, as well as the relationship between the central government and the regions. This will require a revision of the draft constitution from January 2015 so that it can be equally supported by all Yemeni regions and actors.

Culture and Society

On the national level, the conflict has divided Yemeni society on an unprecedented scale. The pre-existing regional divisions have been deepened by armed conflicts. The conflict has torn apart Yemen's social fabric and shattered social cohesion. With radical groups using sectarian language and mosques to spread their ideology and mobilize fighters, the conflict has deepened, as well as newly created, sectarian divisions. This complicates the process of finding a national consensus, as the conflict has diminished trust between the

various social groups and regional identities. Thus, a requirement for peace in the longer term is the construction of a consensual Yemeni identity that the various regions of the country can relate to, while at the same time recognizing the diversity, and its value, within Yemeni society. In the shorter term, measures aiming at trust-building and cooperation on the local and regional level, as well as (where possible) transitional justice (to be further defined and adjusted to the Yemeni context), need to be discussed as peace requirements.

On the local level, religious differences are less of a cause for conflict than political differences, as well as the lack of availability of food, fuel, medicine and money. The unavailability of government services, ongoing land disputes, and non-existent job opportunities contribute to conflicts within families and neighborhoods. Furthermore, the absence of opportunities and the experience of war have led to psychological problems and traumas. On top of this, ongoing violence has resulted in revenge cases between tribes, which can result in blood feuds that last over decades. In these regards, measures for conflict prevention and resolution on the local level are requirements for peace, as are measures to deal with the traumas that families have experienced, and continue to experience, as a result of the war.

Security and Justice

The security situation in Yemen varies from one area to the next, as some regions experience little to no fighting, while others are subjected to regular air bombardment and/or violent conflict on the ground. Security and justice institutions are likewise fragmented and differ regionally in terms of operational ability, with loyalties being distributed between the various groups, including the Huthis, the GPC, the internationally recognized government, militias, tribes, political parties and forces affiliated with the STC. As a result, security and justice are provided by both state and non-state actors, while the rule of law is rarely enforced. Next to insecurity generated by the war itself, the Yemeni population is subjected to increased criminality committed by armed gangs, extremists, members of the armed forces, or prison escapees.

Even as traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are being relied on by both state and non-state actors, security and justice institutions are currently unable to fulfill their responsibility to handle and resolve conflicts and crimes. Local level challenges are the lack of cooperation and coordination between the different groups and institutions (both state and non-state) and between regions. Criminals are not systematically pursued, with security and justice institutions acting arbitrarily. Building the capacities of these institutions (particularly of local police and the courts) and finding solutions to demobilize informal armed groups are thus important requirements for peace.

Actors and Their Contribution to the Peace Requirements

Civil Society

Yemeni civil society has a long history, and its activities ebb and flow parallel to the development of the respective political regime. In the Yemeni context, civil society is understood as the space between the government and political parties on the one hand, and social organizations, such as tribes, and society at large, on the other. It is composed of organizations and charities that are often funded externally, are donation-based or work on a voluntary basis, but usually do not have a religious agenda. Civil society organizations multiplied in 2011 and engaged in the country's transition process.

Civic activism is severely threatened by the current conflict, however, as the space for civil society activism is shrinking throughout the country. Particularly in the Huthi-controlled areas, activists are subject to kidnapping, arrest and other forms of harassment, such as confiscation of funds, blocking of accounts, or refusal to grant permissions to carry out projects. Huthi supervisors further make it difficult for organizations to continue their work in an independent manner. In areas outside of Huthi control, activists feel threatened by fundamentalist groups, as well as militias and newly established security forces such as the Security Belt.

Civil society organizations are important for the country's stabilization. They have filled gaps left by the fragmented state, particularly in the provision of services and in addressing the humanitarian crisis; in fact, the majority of civil society organizations currently active in Yemen have a humanitarian focus. In contrast to tribes and militias, civil society organizations can act as a bridge between society and the state in ways that strengthen both the state and the rule of law. Also, civil society has its fingers on the pulse of the local level, much more so than national (let alone international) observers, and is thus able to grasp and address emerging dynamics that might threaten peace. The contribution of civil society to the peace requirements detailed above will be central. To this end, civil society will require capacity-building as well as access to funding.

Women

Women are among the most vulnerable of groups in the Yemeni society. Social norms define a woman's role to be restricted to the private realm, with household chores and child raising the main responsibilities. The gender gap in political participation, health, education and the labor market is significant: Yemen ranks consistently among the lowest worldwide in the gender equality index.

After children, women are the group most affected by the war. As men, the traditional providers, are losing their jobs and income, fighting on the frontlines or falling into trauma and depression, women are often the sole caretakers of their families. However, female-headed households are struggling to meet basic needs. Not only did the war force women to generate an income and seek employment, but their responsibilities are increasingly outside of their traditional realm (many women are particularly active in the humanitarian sector). While some women perceive this development as empowering, for many the necessity to provide an income on top of their original chores in the household is experienced as a tremendous burden. For many young women, moreover, these developments have meant an end to their education. With poverty, as well as trauma and depression among men, on the rise, alongside more women working outside the home without male protection, gender-based violence in the public and private realm is on the rise, including early marriage.

In the past two years, several studies have addressed the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in peacebuilding. All of the studies concluded that women have a pivotal role to play on the local level: This is particularly due to strong female involvement in humanitarian relief efforts, which is considered by Yemenis as a contribution to peacebuilding as the dramatic poverty is what drives the conflict; and also because women are perceived by men to be less of a threat regarding political issues. Women have thus successfully mediated in several local/tribal conflicts and have managed to cross the political divides for humanitarian purposes (taking care of prisoners of war, for example). They contribute to community cohesion like no other force in Yemeni society, and thus ought to be at the center of measures aimed at peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Media

The Yemeni media landscape has changed significantly in the last ten years. Truly independent media have never really existed in Yemen. Before 2011, television and radio media were controlled by the GPC-run state, although oppositional parties were allowed to run newspapers. With the increased tension within the ruling regime, elites began to finance newspapers which appeared independent, but were in fact affiliated with political parties. In the transitional period following the signing of the GCC Initiative, the number of TV, radio, print and online media exploded. However, due to a lack of independent funding sources and professional standards, independent quality journalism has to date been unable to develop on a relevant scale.

The current conflict has turned Yemeni media into rivaling propaganda machines, which have in turn contributed to the deepening of social fault lines

and the escalation of violence. Freedom of the press has dramatically diminished within Huthi-held territories, where media outlets have been staffed with Huthi supervisors who ensure media report per party line. News outlets that did not conform to Huthi directives were forced to close or re-open elsewhere, while other journalists have been imprisoned by the Huthis and tortured. Most of these media outlets re-started their operations from Marib, where they receive limited government and Saudi support. However, this support is not sufficient to enable the media to develop professional standards. In Aden, the degree of media freedom is higher than in Huthi-held territory. However, radical nationalist and religious groups limit the freedom of expression, with discussion of Southern independence and debate of religious norms as clear red lines.

The media has great potential to contribute substantially to peacebuilding. In order to play such a role, however, Yemeni media institutions require significant support. This support must enable independent media companies to develop, as well as the capacity of individual journalists to report according to professional standards and in an independent manner to be built. Through peace journalism, and its function as a watch-dog, media can contribute to peacebuilding and state building by allowing oversight of the various political processes, while contributing to the political education of the citizenry. This will require ongoing financial support to such media outlets, however, to allow them to function independently from politically-affiliated sources.

Youth

Yemeni youth makes up a significant portion of the population, with two thirds being under 24 years of age. It was mainly young people who initially drove the protests against the Salih regime in 2011, motivated by high levels of youth unemployment and government corruption. Even as education increased, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, in the decades prior to the 'Arab Spring', opportunities for youth did not; thus, many young Yemenis grew increasingly frustrated. Through their political engagement, youth had hoped to gain access to political and economic opportunities. To date, these hopes have not been realized.

The current war is a catastrophic burden for Yemeni youth. The deterioration of the economic situation has made youth activism extremely difficult, and youth themselves increasingly desolate. Yemen's youth find their parents unable to feed them and their siblings, forcing young people to contribute to their family's income and preventing them from completing or pursuing (higher) education. With school and university buildings destroyed in the wake of the conflict and teacher salaries unpaid for more than two years in

large parts of the country, the Yemeni education system is in a very weakened state: Yemen is currently losing the potential of an entire generation, which will impact its future for decades to come. Next to the physical dangers of the war in itself, the lack of work and educational opportunities have led to psychological problems and depression among youth. Additionally, the lack of job opportunities and the bleak hopes for a better future have driven young men into the hands of militias or criminal groups.

Yemeni youth have a strong desire to contribute to development and stabilization efforts. While youth are often regarded as driving the conflict due to their participation in armed groups, they are also trusted civil society actors. In various cities, youth groups continue to contribute to positive developments in the community through security-related activities, assistance to educational facilities to continue operation or the organization of cultural activities. Youth can thus play a central role in activities aimed at peacebuilding and conflict prevention in communities on the local level.

The Private Sector

Next to oil and gas production, which plays the most significant part in the Yemeni economy, the private sector in Yemen is particularly active in the following fields: building and construction, trade, water and electricity (including a recent boom in alternative energies as a result of the war), agriculture and fishing, manufacturing (tobacco, textiles, foodstuffs, cement) and mining. In Yemen, the business community is local, regional and international; some of the country's biggest businesses are run by Yemenis based outside of Yemen who also own other businesses in other parts of the region, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf. These business owners tend to belong to families with allegiances that extend across borders. Previously dominated by Salih's patronage networks, Yemen has seen the rise of new actors in the private sector since 2011, and particularly since the beginning of the war in 2014/15.

Since then, the private sector in Yemen has undergone significant upheavals. Oil and gas production was halted entirely for almost three years – thus significantly reducing government spending capacities – and has only very slowly and tentatively resumed in 2018. Manufacturing industries have been hit by airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition or have had to close down due to other reasons (for example, the inability to gain access to necessary loans or to receive/send money from/to abroad), thus being forced to lay off workers. Other, particularly larger, companies have been able to remain in business, but have faced significant problems in their transactions. Moreover, the war has given rise to a thriving war economy, particularly the smuggling of all types of goods across frontlines.

With its potential to create new employment opportunities for impoverished Yemenis, the private sector can play a pivotal role in the stabilization of Yemen. It has also been active in addressing the humanitarian crisis in the country, contributing to the provision of foodstuffs and medicine as well as to the financing of civil society activities and educational activities.

Conclusion

This report has provided an overview of the current situation in Yemen by looking at social structures, current conflict dynamics, the role and situation of state institutions and external factors. It has moreover detailed peace requirements regarding Yemen's economy, politics, culture and society, as well as security and justice and taken a first glance at the challenges to and capacities of five different actor groups in Yemen to address these needs: civil society, women, youth, the media and the private sector. The short studies to be developed by the Yemeni-international researcher tandems in the course of 2019 will take a more extensive look at these five actor groups and how the war has affected them and their capacities to address Yemen's peace requirements.

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About CARPO

CARPO was founded in 2014 by Germany-based academics trained in the fields of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Political Science and Social Anthropology. Its work is situated at the nexus of research, consultancy and exchange with a focus on implementing projects in close cooperation and partnership with stakeholders in the Orient. Since its establishment, CARPO has placed a special focus on Yemen-related projects. Amongst others, CARPO is currently a partner in the ongoing project 'Rethinking Yemen's Economy', co-implemented with DeepRoot Consulting and the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies. Moreover, it has co-implemented a conference on security sector reform with the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation; a project entitled 'Enhancing Women's Role in Peace and Security in Yemen' with Saferworld and the Yemen Polling Center; and a project entitled 'Academic Approaches to Peacebuilding and State Building in Yemen' with the Institute for Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn and the Gender Development Research & Studies Center (GDRSC) at the University of Sana'a.

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About the Project

This project is entitled 'Research Cooperation on Peacebuilding in Yemen' and is implemented on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, having been commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It seeks to develop the capacities of Yemeni and international researchers and organizations in researching and advising on peacebuilding in Yemen. Within its framework, next to this introductory report on peace requirements in Yemen, five policy briefs, each resulting from a Yemeni-international research partnership, on the role of the following actors in peacebuilding in Yemen will be developed and published: civil society, women, youth, media and the private sector. The project duration is February 2019 to January 2020. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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