

The Political And Humanitarian Crisis In Yemen: Causes And Consequences

by

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Abstract

Yemen's humanitarian and political crisis is among the most complicated and destructive of the twenty-first century. As a result of persistent starvation, airstrikes and missile attacks, and inadequate access to healthcare, thousands of people have been reported dead. The basis for this paper's assessment of Yemen's political and humanitarian crisis, with a focus on identifying its roots and effects, was the crisis's severity and worldwide concern. The paper adopted the desk research method, while realism theory served as the theoretical foundation. The study found that despite multiple attempts to resolve the crisis, Yemen's historical fragmentation, weak institutions and poor governance, the growth of terrorist organisations, the geopolitical interests of both regional and international countries, and the constant missile attacks on civilian infrastructure, farmlands, and healthcare facilities exacerbated the political and humanitarian crisis. As a result, widespread mortality, permanent population displacement, poverty, ongoing water scarcity, food insecurity, etc., became the norm. Therefore, the study concluded that the Yemeni crisis is a terrible junction of humanitarian suffering and political dysfunction, necessitating immediate and multidimensional remedies. Therefore, it recommends that inclusive political discourse between domestic parties be given top priority, demilitarise and safeguard civilian infrastructure, address economic collapse, hold local and international offenders accountable, and promote transitional justice.

Keywords: humanitarian aids, humanitarian crisis, international organisations, political crisis, Yemen.

Introduction

National crises, ranging from civil unrest and political instability to economic failures and humanitarian catastrophes, have dramatically increased around the world in recent decades. Not only have these crises upset the internal balance of the impacted countries, but they have also presented serious risks to regional and international peace. This is evident in the report of the Institute for Economics and Peace (2024) on global peace ranking in the year 2024. They reported that the Global Peace Index (GPI) shows that over 97 countries witnessed severe political crises, which reflects a sharp increase in the rate of global conflicts since 2008. Also, in line with the ranking of this report, while the Middle East and North Africa region was ranked among the most unstable due to protracted conflicts and inadequate governance structures, Yemen stands out as one of

the most devastating case studies of political and humanitarian collapse in the 21st century (The UN Refugee Agency, 2025).

The current crisis that engulfs Yemen is a by-product of the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2011 which consequently spread to the Middle East region, however found a better ground in Yemen due to the nature of governance, the internal cultural divisions within the country and the resentment on the part of the citizens (Coppi, 2018). So to say, the common uprising that forced President Ali Abdullah Saleh to resign and hand over control to his vice-president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, in November 2011 as a result of the Arab Spring degenerated into these current crises that have put the country into disarray and ultimately earned the country the title of “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis country” (*BBC News*, 2025; UN Foundation, 2025). Since the last 14 years, Yemen has been in a state of political turmoil, having both internationally recognised government ruling a part of the country and rebel groups ruling other part of the country, thus, the fragmented nature of the country paved way for external penetrations from neighbouring countries. Consequently, this protracted political crisis according to the UN Refugee Agency (2025) has led to about 4.5 million of its population to be internally displaced, more than 18.2 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and protection services, 10,000 people are already living in famine-like conditions and a staggering 5 million more are acutely food insecure.

Therefore, the appalling nature of the grievous humanitarian crisis that has befallen Yemen (as no day in popular media outlets are there no news of several bombings and drone attacks, mass deaths and mass migration, healthcare centre collapse are not reported), coupled with the fact that most existing research tends to either focus narrowly on the political dynamics or the humanitarian consequences without providing a holistic analysis that captures the cyclical relationship between the two, and also how international intervention, regional rivalries, and governance deficits collectively shape the protracted nature of the crisis have stirred this paper to assess the political and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with particular focus on the causes and consequence. Thus, this paper aims to trace the historical background of Yemen’s political crisis, examine the extent of the humanitarian crisis, identify the underlying causes and consequences of the crises, examine the efforts taken so far to resolve the crises and the roles of external parties in the conflict, and subsequently suggest relevant recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

Political Crisis

The concept of political crisis has long been a central concern in political science, international relations, and governance studies. Political crises represent critical junctures where existing systems of authority and legitimacy are called into question, often leading to breakdowns in state function, public trust, or societal cohesion. Scholars and institutions have approached the definition of political crisis from various theoretical and practical perspectives, each adding distinct dimensions to its understanding.

According to Offe (1976, as cited in Barak & Miodownik, 2021), he defines political crisis as a breakdown in the mechanisms of governance due to the state's inability to reconcile competing interests within society. According to Offe, crises occur when political institutions lose their capacity to mediate social conflict, triggering a legitimacy deficit and functional paralysis in decision-making. Similarly, Svensson (1986, as cited in Brodtkin, 2021) sees a political crisis as a situation where public confidence in political institutions erodes significantly, often leading to mass mobilizations, civil unrest, or regime change. He emphasizes that the perceived illegitimacy of political authority is the core trigger of crisis, making it a subjective as well as structural phenomenon.

The United Nations does not offer a single formal definition of the term but identifies any event based on symptoms such as constitutional breakdown, coup attempts, mass protests, and contested elections as political crisis. In line with this, Brecher and Wilkenfeld (2022) conceptualize political crisis as an event or series of events perceived as threatening basic values, with a high probability of involvement in military hostilities, and a finite time for response

Therefore, to this paper, political crisis is a significant breakdown or disruption in the functioning of a political system, often marked by a loss of legitimacy, institutional paralysis, or conflict among key political actors. It typically involves a situation where existing mechanisms for governance and conflict resolution fail, leading to instability, uncertainty, and challenges to state authority.

Humanitarian Crisis

The term humanitarian crisis blends two terms with conflicting definitions and meanings that are frequently used in disparate contexts. All academic fields struggle to define, comprehend, and even identify humanitarian crises, despite the fact that some have created methods for gathering and evaluating data on (possible) crises (Dijkzeul & Griesinger, 2020). The concept creates a pivotal concern in international relations and political science as it has been defined and interpreted through various lenses depending on the institutional mandate, or practical context.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2025) defines a humanitarian crisis as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people. This definition emphasizes the immediate threat to life and the need for international humanitarian assistance, often triggered by natural disasters, armed conflict, or political instability. Therefore, we can say that a humanitarian crisis is a significant event or series of events that result in widespread suffering and urgent humanitarian needs, typically exceeding the capacity of local authorities or governments to respond effectively. In consonance to this view, Frontières (2016) perceives humanitarian crises as situations where there is a breakdown in services, security, or health infrastructure, resulting in urgent unmet needs.

A more critical definition is the one offered by Deng (2001), he defines humanitarian crisis through the lens of displacement, stating that a humanitarian crisis exists where there are massive displacements of people, caused by conflict or disaster, creating a situation in which the state is unable or unwilling to protect and assist its citizens. Also, Barnett (2005) asserts that humanitarian crisis occurs when there is a fundamental failure of the social contract, that is, where the state can no longer ensure the survival or dignity of its population. These definitions depict that humanitarian crisis is a severe situation where the affected country has lost its balance in grappling with its tremendous effects. However, the severity of humanitarian crises is complex, they affect not only immediate health and safety, but also the long-term stability of communities and countries (Humanitarian Coalition, 2025). Therefore, foreign or external aid is inevitable to assist the affected government in resolving the crisis. However, Terry (2002) in her definition addresses the ethical dilemmas of aid work and the politicization of crises, which often blurs the

line between relief and politics, she describes a humanitarian crisis as a context where human suffering on a mass scale is compounded by political obstruction, where aid is politicized or manipulated, and humanitarian neutrality is compromised.

Therefore, to this paper, humanitarian crisis is a situation where basic human needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and security are acutely unmet due to conflict, natural disaster, or systemic neglect. This crisis typically involves mass displacement, widespread mortality and morbidity, and the collapse of state capacity or will to protect civilians.

Theoretical Framework

Realism Theory

Realism, a prominent theory in international relations, is adopted in this paper because it offers a practical perspective for examining the political situation in Yemen, specifically the interactions between the several conflicting groups. The classical and neorealist versions of realism, which was advanced by academics like Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Thucydides, contend that states act in pursuit of power and self-interest and that the international system is anarchic (Reichwein, 2024). According to the theory, the state is the main actor, power and security are crucial, conflict is inevitable because of human nature or institutional limitations (Lebow, 2024). However, to this paper, the relevance of realism to the Yemeni crisis lies in its focus on power struggles (both internal and external).

Yemen's conflict began as a domestic power contest between the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and the Houthi movement, officially known as Ansar Allah. The Houthis, a Shiite rebel group from northern Yemen, capitalized on political discontent and institutional weaknesses following the Arab Spring and the resignation of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh (*BBC News*, 2025, Salisbury, 2016). Their overthrow of the Hadi-led government in 2015 was driven by a desire to control the state apparatus and to secure their regional autonomy and influence. From a realist perspective, the Houthis acted to maximize their political and military power within a fragile state system where institutional mechanisms were insufficient to mediate conflict.

The Hadi government's reliance on external parties such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a clear reflection of realist behaviour. Facing an existential threat from the Houthis, Hadi's administration sought to align with more powerful regional players to regain and retain control over the state. This alignment led to the formation of a Saudi-led coalition that launched military

operations against the Houthis (International Crisis Group, 2021). Realism explains this move as a strategic alliance aimed at balancing power against a common adversary and restoring favourable conditions for the Hadi government's survival. It also mirrors the realist belief that in an anarchic international system, weaker states often depend on stronger allies to maintain sovereignty and security. Furthermore, the broader regional dimension of the crisis illustrates the relevance of realism. Iran's alleged support for the Houthis is seen by Saudi Arabia as a threat to its regional hegemony (Juneau, (2016). This has transformed the Yemeni conflict into a proxy war where regional powers are contesting influence and dominance, consistent with realism's emphasis on power politics and zero-sum competition among states.

However, realism presents some limitations when applied to the Yemeni crisis. The theory tends to underplay the importance of non-state actors and ideological motivations, both of which are central to understanding the Houthi movement. It also overlooks internal socio-economic grievances, tribal dynamics, and historical marginalization that fuel the conflict. Additionally, realism is limited in addressing humanitarian concerns, civilian suffering, and the role of international institutions, all of which are significant in the Yemeni context. Also, while realism effectively explains the power dynamics and external interventions in Yemen's political crisis, it falls short of capturing the full complexity of the conflict. The theory's emphasis on state-centric power struggles and strategic alliances helps illuminate why the Houthis seized power and why the Hadi government turned to regional powers. Nonetheless, the theory's weaknesses remind us of the importance of integrating other perspectives to fully understand the multifaceted nature of the Yemeni crisis.

Historical Background of the Political and Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

Before the current state in Yemen, which is currently thought to be the least peaceful country in the world, Yemen also called Arabia *Felix* (a home for world's coffee depot) was well-known for its abundant agricultural land, few oil reserve, open and bustling trade and commerce channels, rich cultural heritage, and strong tribal identity (Playfair, 2022). Burrowes and Manfred (2025) asserted that the country was a crossroads of trade and communication, which played a significant role in the ancient world's myrrh and frankincense trade. Politically, Yemen's history is marked by distinct periods and influences, with a past stretching back to ancient city-states and empires, followed by periods of Islamic rule and then division between the Ottoman and British Empires. Precisely, the present Yemeni

before unification was earlier divided into two regions, while the Ottoman controls the North Yemen, the British Empire controls the South Yemen (Dostal, 2021)

Consequently, the area formerly ruled by the Ottomans became an independent Zaydi Shia theocracy, while the rest remained under British rule as the Aden Protectorate. However, in 1990, the two parts of Yemen were unified under the leadership of President Ali Abdullah Saleh (Al-Eriani, 2021; Brehony, 2015). Dostal (2021) points out that although Yemen's unification was initially presented as a political initiative based on the notion of total equality between the north and the south, the north's large population gave it significant advantage over the south. He added that the weak southern representation in political posts resulted in numerous rounds of internal military, economic, and social unrest, creating enduring conflicts between a brittle and increasingly fractured state. More so, in the aspect of governance, the unified nation was fraught with corruption, political patronages, economic hardship, and tribal, religious divisions and external powers continue to influence politics (Coppi, 2018).

In 2011, after series of events that occurred during the popular uprising as a result of Arab spring which spread from Tunisia, led to Ali Abdullah Saleh, the president of Yemen, leaving the position of power. According to the UN Foundation (2025), Yemen's Arab spring began as a protest in the country's capital, Sanaa, centred on corruption and economic growth demands, but the government's harsh response to the demonstration which resulted in the deaths and maltreatment of several innocent citizens led to demands for a complete overhaul of the government. As a result of the severity of the political unrest, the attention of its Gulf neighbours was attracted, coupled with the support of the United States, Saleh was convinced to cede power to his vice president, Abderabbu Mansour al-Hadi, through a transitional arrangement known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative.

However, it could be argued that the crisis in Yemen worsened after Saleh was ousted and Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was named president of a "transitional government". The transition which was meant to bring stability to the country, abruptly failed to adequately address security and corruption. More so, Brehony (2015) points out that although Hadi was viewed as a good substitute by many Saleh's former supporters due to his neutrality on the idea of political fragmentation in Yemen, however, his style of governance, which prioritises the United States and Saudi Arabia backings over that of the domestic support further escalated the Yemeni crisis. As a result, both the Houthis and the Southern Movement, the two significant Yemeni opposition groups, rebelled against the internationally

recognised Hadi government because they were excluded in the power-sharing equation. Consequently, the Houthis sought alliance with Saleh, the former president, and having the external support of Iran took over the capital city of Sana'a by September 2014 and by February 2015, they spread from their traditional seat of power in the North into the central and southern districts of Yemen (Dostale, 2021; Coppi 2018; Adam & Al-Muslimi, 2016).

Therefore, since 2015 till date, the little instability that started as a protest (Arab Spring) to force resignation of the president, has led to civil war and grievous humanitarian crisis in Yemen. As noted in the work of Coppi (2018), while the Hadi government and the Houthis have been at odds militarily, the government, supported by an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia, is also involved in a separate non-international military confrontation with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the South. There are records of conflicts amongst tribal fighters, who either support the Hadi government or the Houthis, depending on where their leaders stand. Similarly, the Houthi rebels and AQAP are at odds with one another. These had led to countless airstrikes and ground conflict from different corners thereby leading to graven humanitarian crisis in Yemen (International Crisis Group, 2017; Adam & Al-Muslimi, 2016).

All these have significantly worsened the situation in the country, as external forces have used the two groups (Hadi-government and the Houthis) as proxies in their struggle to take control of Yemen. In same wise, major international terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-affiliated Ansar al-Sharia have also seen Yemen as a good ground for refuge and arms supply (International Crisis Group, 2017; Schmitt & Al-Batati, 2017) thereby escalating the political and deepening the humanitarian crisis.

Nature of Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen Since 2015

Yemen's humanitarian crisis is among the most serious and intricate crises facing the globe today. It is mainly a man-made calamity brought on by years of war, economic collapse, institutional disintegration, and pervasive poverty. Since the conflict escalated in 2015 and a Saudi-led coalition intervened to reinstate the internationally recognised government that the Houthi movement had overthrown, the nation has been plunged into a protracted crisis that has affected almost every area of daily life.

The struggle between the internationally recognised government and the Houthi rebels, which is being backed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and other militias, lies at the heart of the problem. Roads, hospitals, schools, and water systems have all sustained significant damage as a result of this conflict, which has also resulted in widespread displacement, instability, and a breakdown of public services (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs {OCHA}, 2025). Millions of people have been displaced and many have been killed or maimed, with civilians bearing the brunt of the carnage. The United Nations estimates that over 4.5 million Yemenis are internally displaced, with many of them living in congested camps with little access to healthcare, food, and water (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees {UNHCR}, 2025).

The threat of famine and pervasive food insecurity are another terrible reality of the political crisis. The war has seriously interrupted food supply chains due to port blockades, fuel shortages, and damaged transportation networks; around 90% of Yemen's food is imported (UN Refugee Agency, 2025). In 2023, it was predicted that more than 17 million people were food insecure, and that 3.5 million children were acutely malnourished, including more than 500,000 children who would die if they did not receive immediate medical attention (World Food Programme {WFP}, 2023). However, Yemen's economic collapse and the depreciation of the Yemeni rial have made matters worse by significantly lowering household purchasing power and raising the price of necessities (OCHA, 2025).

Yemen's health sector is also in a state of near-total collapse. More than half of the country's health facilities are either non-functional or only partially operational. The remaining facilities often lack electricity, clean water, essential medicines, and staff, many of whom work without pay. This has left the population highly vulnerable to disease outbreaks. Yemen has experienced the largest cholera outbreak in modern history, with over 2.5 million suspected cases since 2017 (World Health Organisation {WHO}, 2022). In addition, COVID-19, malaria, and diphtheria continue to spread in an environment where access to treatment is severely limited. The crisis also has significant implications for education. Millions of children are out of school due to displacement, the destruction of schools, and the inability of families to afford school supplies. Teachers in many parts of the country have not been paid for years, forcing some to abandon their jobs in search of other income. In 2025, UNICEF reports that an estimated 4.5 million school-aged children in Yemen are out of school. This represents a significant portion of the 10.7 million school-age children in Yemen (OCHA, 2025), putting an entire generation at risk of losing opportunities for development.

Gender-based violence, early marriage, and other types of exploitation have escalated as the conflict and economic collapse continue. In addition to having less access to legal and medical protection, women and girls are more vulnerable. Protection services are overburdened and frequently unable to satisfy the increasing needs of impacted populations, according to humanitarian organisations (UNFPA, 2022). Despite these challenges, humanitarian access is still a major problem: humanitarian vehicles are frequently delayed or blocked, aid workers have reported harassment and violence, and only 50–60% of the necessary humanitarian funding was received in 2023, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which limits the scope and efficacy of relief efforts (OCHA, 2023). Aid organisations also face significant obstacles, such as insecurity, bureaucratic roadblocks, and restrictions imposed by both the Houthis and the internationally recognised government.

The geopolitical ambitions of regional and global countries further complicate the Yemeni scenario. The battle has turned into a proxy fight including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other international players rather than only being a domestic civil war. This has prolonged the misery of common Yemenis and complicated peace talks. The dispute has not been resolved despite sporadic ceasefires and peace negotiations, as no all-encompassing political agreement has been reached. The humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen is primarily a terrible confluence of international neglect, institutional failure, poverty, and conflict. It is typified by a collapsed public infrastructure, food insecurity, sickness, dislocation, and severe human suffering. In the next years, Yemen's suffering is expected to persist or possibly grow in the absence of a political settlement to the conflict and ongoing humanitarian aid.

Underlying Causes of Political and Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

The Yemen crisis which has created the worst humanitarian predicament in the nation's history has been fuelled by several factors. The cause of the crisis is multi-layered; Adeb and Uddagatti (2021) identified two major (internal and external) factors that led to and continue to fuel the crisis. The internal factors focused on the key issues that triggered the conflict which are political, economic and social. The external factors focused on the geopolitical interest and competition for regional sovereign between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The political factors centred on several issues. First is the instability from the unification of the North and South Yemen in 1990. Historically, North Yemen was conservative and had ties to Saudi Arabia while the South was socialist in orientation supported by the Soviet Union; this

ideological difference made the unification problematic and the nation, difficult to govern. However, the ascension of Ali Abdullah Saleh, a former leader of Northern Yemen, into power further complicated the unification, due to the marginalisation of the South Yemenis (Kali, 2021). Second, Saleh's government failed to protect the sovereignty of Yemen and safety of its citizens because he adopted authoritarian rule in order to protect his office. His administration was further marred with corruption and political manipulations. His weak governance created weakened Yemen's institutions including the military which was fragmented leading to a security vacuum exploited by multiple armed militias (Lowings et al., 2019). Third was the Houthi rebellion that heightened the crisis and transformed it into a full-scale Civil War. The Houthi movement (Ansar Allah), a Zaydi Shite minority which emerged in 1990s in Northern Yemen sternly opposed the government of Saleh due to religious and political grievances. The Houthi rebellion fought about 6 Wars against Saleh's government between 2004 and 2010. Although the movement was suppressed, Saleh later in 2014 used the movement against Hadi's government to seize the capital and established a unitary government. It is important to note that the central government could only exercise little influence over the state's territory (Kali, 2021).

From Yemen's economic standpoint, Yemen particularly under Saleh's was among the world least developed nations, ranked 194 out of 228 countries with half of its population poor in line with World Bank's \$1.25 mark per person per day and 70% illiteracy (Adeb & Uddagatti, 2021). Yemen's economy is heavily dependent diminishing oil exports – represented 77% of total export– faced structural weaknesses which made it susceptible to collapse. The oil revenue never translated into economic growth and development and attempts to diversify led to serious shocks from global oil price fluctuations. Saleh was able to leverage on the oil profits to create patronage networks to expand his wealth (Easterly, 2018). Apart from this, there was a persistent and pervasive competition over the nation's limited economic resources by different affiliations of almost 28 million Yemenis. In addition, Yemen faced chronic water shortage which affected the agricultural sector as Lackner (2014) argued that the country's renewable water sources was depleting at an unimpressive rate of 3.5 billion cubic metres per annum as against the estimated supply rate of 2.1 billion cubic metres per year. This has led to spread of waterborne diseases and mortality in children and babies. All these led to the impoverishment of the population further intensifying the crisis. Yemeni rial has depreciated overtime causing inflation in essential goods particularly in government-controlled areas (Alia & Gianluca, 2023).

On the social side of conflict, there are a number of major issues, including intricate tribal and sectarian structures that seem to crystallise the nation, restrict social advancement for the poor and support corruption and patron-client relationships within tribes. Yemen's strong tribal structures especially in the North coupled with its sturdy Sunni (Shafi'i) and Shi'a (Zaydi) sectarian divisions complicated efforts to form a centralised government, influenced the social landscape and terribly prolonged the crisis (Farea & Baron, 2016). Yemen is second poorest nation in the Middle East; the United Nations Development Program estimated that 55% of Yemen's population lives below the poverty line, with 18.4% living in extreme poverty, making it one of the countries with the greatest rates of poverty in the world and unemployment as high as 60% as opportunities are limited (Basaleh, 2023). These made many Yemenis vulnerable and were recruited by armed militia factions and extremist groups as a means of survival. The easy accessibility of weapons also intensified the crisis in Yemen. Yemen has been militarised for a long time with rebel groups such as the Houthis having access to arms particularly from foreign sponsors. The nation is one of the most armed societies in the world with the highest rates of black-market gun ownership which allows extremist factions and militias rivalled the military in terms of arms (Alaraby & Muller, 2020).

The crisis is also externally influenced by geopolitical interest both regional and international. The United States, United Kingdom, France, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Gulf Cooperation Council all have geopolitical interests in Yemen. The United States and the United Arab Emirates place a high priority on counterterrorism, while Saudi Arabia places a high priority on security. A safe Saudi border, a secure Yemeni government, and unrestricted travel to the Bab al-Mandeb are also top US interests. Iran shares same geopolitical interest with the Houthis, as principal opposition to Hadi's Saudi and US-backed administration in Sana'a, and Iran seeks to subvert the region's Saudi and American hegemony (Kleeman, 2019). Saudi Arabia and Iran are loggerheads to expand their own zones of influence in the Middle East, which the Yemen crisis presents itself as opportunity to assume the big brother role further destabilising the country and an already unstable region (DeLozier, 2020).

The Consequences of the Political Crisis on Yemen's Economy: The Severity of the Humanitarian Crisis

Yemen's prolonged political crisis, marked by ongoing conflict and regional tensions, has precipitated a profound economic collapse and an escalating humanitarian disaster. The civil war, which erupted in 2015, has devastated the nation's infrastructure, crippled its economy, and left the majority of its population in dire need of assistance.

First, the crisis has caused a severe contraction in Yemen's economy. The poverty crisis in Yemen is one of the most severe in the world, driven by nearly a decade of war, economic collapse, and humanitarian disaster. The combination of prolonged conflict, political instability, and limited state capacity has devastated livelihoods, eroded social safety nets, and created huge poverty gap. Nasser (2024) claims that between 2015 and 2023, the real GDP per capita decreased by 54%, plunging millions of people into poverty. He emphasized that Yemen's GDP shrank by another 1% in 2024 after shrinking by 2% in 2023. Since oil exports were the government's primary source of income, the international suspension on Yemen's oil export resulted in a 42% decline in fiscal revenues in the first half of the same year. This fiscal crisis led to significant budget cuts that furthered regional economic fragmentation and jeopardised essential public services (World Bank, 2024).

Also, the economic collapse has thrust over 80% of Yemen's population into multidimensional poverty. Food insecurity has reached alarming levels, with over 17 million people facing inadequate access to food (UN Refugee Agency, 2025). The Sana'a Economic Unit (2025a) claims that financial issues have substantially impacted the survival of the citizenry in both government-run and Houthi-controlled environments. Food prices in Houthi-controlled areas are relatively consistent due to price controls and a strictly enforced fixed foreign exchange rate system; however, inhabitants have limited access to regular income. On the other hand, food prices are rising dramatically in government-controlled areas, particularly for staples like rice, beans, wheat flour, and cooking oil. This is clear from the World Bank's 2024 report, which found that over 62% of Yemen's population consumed insufficient amounts of food in 2024—a 15% increase from 2023. Households have been compelled to undertake drastic coping strategies, like cutting back on meal portions and liquidating personal possessions, as a result of rising food prices, currency depreciation, and interrupted supply chains (Sana'a Economic Unit, 2025a). More specifically, farms have been directly impacted by ceaseless shelling and bombing, which has reduced production and destroyed fertile land. The violence has caused damage to

infrastructure, such as storage facilities and irrigation systems, and the effects of climate change, such as droughts and floods, have made matters worse by affecting agricultural and livestock harvests, which has led to a rise in food insecurity.

In addition, the conflict has displaced millions, with many seeking refuge in overcrowded camps lacking basic services. According to Olivia (2025), the western coastal areas, particularly Hodeidah, are nearing catastrophe due to severe malnutrition, with rates reaching 33%. Specifying that half of the children under five and 1.4 million pregnant and lactating women are malnourished. Also, the Sana'a Economic Unit (2025b) noted that the United States' suspension of financial aids from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which deprived the Yemenis access to financial aids, and the stoppage of food distribution project of World Food Programme (WFP) through USAID fund suspension exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. More so, only 45% of healthcare facilities in Yemen are functioning and accessible to the public. The ongoing conflict has destroyed or damaged 247 healthcare facilities, and those still operational lack resources and staff. Shortages of vaccines, medical equipment, and basic drugs are rampant, and many healthcare workers have not received salaries since 2016, leading to staff attrition. Consequently, 14.8 million people lack access to healthcare, and 22 million require humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2025).

Another consequence is the incessant airstrikes and bombardments in Yemen territories. These have devastated Yemen's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water facilities and even farmlands. According to UNICEF (2024), about 10.6 million school-age boys and girls in Yemen have experienced significant effects on their learning, general cognitive and emotional development, and mental health as a result of the conflict, ongoing disruptions to education throughout the nation, and the fragmentation of the nearly collapsed educational system. They remarked that at least one in four schools, 2,916 of them, were destroyed, partially damaged, or used for non-educational reasons over the years, with two-thirds of teachers, or roughly 172,000, have been paid irregularly since 2016 or have left to pursue other sources of income, which further impedes structured learning. In same wise, Yemen's healthcare system has been badly damaged by the conflict, which has resulted in numerous access problems and a sharp rise in avoidable illnesses. Millions of people do not have access to healthcare, and even in cases

where they do, the expense of transportation and prescription drugs can be unaffordable (UNHCR, 2025).

By and large, Yemen's political crisis has precipitated an economic collapse and a severe humanitarian disaster. The conflict has decimated the economy, plunged the majority of the population into poverty, and led to widespread food insecurity and health crises. The destruction of infrastructure and the collapse of public services have left millions without access to basic necessities. Therefore, the severity of this humanitarian crisis and the attention it has created in the global space have earned the country the least peaceful country in the global peace ranking.

Political and Humanitarian Efforts to Resolve Yemen's Political and Humanitarian Crises and Inherent Challenges

Since the outbreak of civil war in 2014, Yemen has suffered from political fragmentation, widespread displacement, famine, and destruction of essential infrastructure. Despite numerous international and regional efforts, both the humanitarian situation and prospects for peace remain tenuous. Therefore, the political and humanitarian efforts to resolve Yemen's political and humanitarian crises will be discussed below.

Efforts to resolve Yemen's crisis have been complex and fraught with challenges, especially following the escalation of conflict in 2015. The United Nations has played a significant role in facilitating negotiations and seeking to mediate between various factions, including the Houthis and the internationally recognized government led by President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi (Hamidaddin, 2021). However, these efforts have often been hindered by ongoing military confrontations and the involvement of external actors.

Firstly, before the outbreak of widespread conflict, the UN facilitated the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in 2013-2014, aimed at addressing Yemen's political, economic, and social challenges (Paffenholz & Ross, 2016). Despite its initial success in bringing diverse voices to the table, the NDC ultimately fell short of creating an inclusive and effective framework for governance, leading to dissatisfaction among various Yemeni groups and the eventual descent into civil war. Consequently, in response to the escalating conflict, the UN has engaged in numerous mediation attempts. The appointment of Hans Grundberg as the special

envoy in 2021 marked a renewed effort to navigate the complex landscape of Yemen's political factions (Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2024). The UN has grappled with the question of whether to treat the conflict as a binary issue between the Houthis and the Hadi government or to broaden negotiations to include other significant stakeholders, such as southern groups, civil society, and tribal leaders. Despite these efforts, major negotiations have often collapsed, as seen in the failed UN-led talks in Kuwait in 2016, where the Houthis ultimately withdrew from discussions (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Also, political negotiations have also intersected with humanitarian efforts, which have faced significant obstacles. Aid agencies have reported numerous difficulties in their operations, citing a lack of engagement with key civilian officials and a fragmented approach among different agencies (Feierstein, 2022). The involvement of senior UN officials in humanitarian negotiations has reportedly complicated relationships with local authorities, and the concession to demands related to the control of aid projects has exacerbated these challenges. Critics argue that this has led to an environment where authorities seek increasing control over humanitarian assistance, further complicating the delivery of aid to those in need (Feierstein, 2022).

In addition to international efforts, various domestic initiatives have emerged to negotiate local cease-fires and address urgent humanitarian needs. These initiatives have often been spearheaded by local actors, including women's groups and tribal leaders, highlighting the importance of grassroots engagement in any political resolution (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The experience of the NDC has underscored the necessity of including a broad cross-section of Yemeni society in negotiations to address the country's structural inequities effectively (Paffenholz & Ross, 2016).

Humanitarian efforts in Yemen are critical in addressing the severe crisis stemming from nearly a decade of conflict, which has resulted in extensive damage to infrastructure, economic collapse, and widespread displacement. As of 2023, an estimated 18.2 million people in Yemen require humanitarian assistance, highlighting the urgency of these efforts (OCHA, 2024). A multitude of organizations is actively engaged in delivering aid to the Yemeni population, including local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies. The Together Foundation for Human Development (TFHD), Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS), and the Yemen International Agency for Development (YIAD) are among numerous local

organizations that have established trust within their communities and often serve as the first responders in remote areas (World Food Program USA, 2024). In 2023, 229 humanitarian actors supported an average of 8.4 million people per month, providing essential services and assistance (OCHA, 2024).

Also, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has played a pivotal role in scaling up food assistance, particularly following immediate funding from countries like the U.S. and Germany. In 2019, WFP increased its outreach from 8 million to 12 million individuals, which helped stave off famine. However, the ongoing civil war in Yemen, compounded by global crises such as the war in Ukraine, has exacerbated food insecurity, pushing more families into dire conditions (United Nations Meetings Coverage Security Council, 2024b). Despite funding shortages affecting some regions, the WFP continues to provide emergency food boxes and nutrition support, focusing on vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children under five. The WFP not only supplies food but also engages communities in repairing roads, agricultural lands, and health facilities (World Food Program, 2024). This dual approach aims to address immediate needs while fostering long-term sustainability and resilience against future crises. Local capacity-building initiatives have emerged as essential components of these programs, which include improving water and sanitation systems, supporting agricultural development, and enhancing local livelihoods.

In addition, in the aspect of effective coordination and logistics, the European Union's support for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) has been instrumental in facilitating access to hard-to-reach populations (International Rescue Committee, 2025). Moreover, cash transfer programs have gained recognition as efficient and dignified methods of delivering aid, allowing beneficiaries to make choices based on their specific needs.

Inherent Challenges to Resolving the Political and Humanitarian Crisis

Despite the ongoing humanitarian efforts, the complex nature of Yemen's crisis presents significant challenges. The interplay of conflict, economic instability, and natural disasters continues to impede the delivery of assistance. In 2025, projections indicate that approximately 19.5 million people will still require humanitarian assistance, with 17.1 million facing crisis levels of food insecurity (International Rescue Committee, 2025). The need for sustained

international support and innovative approaches remains critical to alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people and fostering a path toward recovery and peace.

The ongoing conflict in Yemen presents a multifaceted challenge for peace-making efforts, significantly hampered by the complex interplay of regional and local dynamics. Despite a truce-like situation established in April 2022, intermittent fighting continues to plague various regions, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and undermining the rights of vulnerable populations, particularly children (United Nations Meetings Coverage Security Council, 2024a). Also, Yemen's political landscape is fragmented, with competing authorities and interests hindering the possibility of a unified approach to peace. The collapse of the old power structures has led to the emergence of various factions, including the Houthis, the internationally recognized government, and other regional actors, each with divergent objectives (Oxfam International, 2025). The failure of previous peace processes can be attributed to their exclusionary nature, which often sidelined critical stakeholders and failed to address the root causes of the conflict, such as resource distribution and power-sharing grievances (Messa, 2024).

More so, the power of tribal leaders who have historically played a critical role in governance and conflict resolution has been significantly undermined, particularly in Houthi-controlled areas where there have been systematic efforts to dismantle tribal structures (Oxfam International, 2025). Thus, as tribal leaders lose their authority, traditional mechanisms of mediation and conflict resolution are becoming less effective, making it harder to achieve consensus among warring parties.

Conclusion

The political and humanitarian crisis in Yemen stands as one of the most devastating and complex emergencies of the 21st century. Rooted in a failed political transition, regional rivalries, and the collapse of state institutions, the conflict has produced catastrophic consequences for millions of Yemenis. The breakdown of governance, coupled with foreign interventions and sectarian divides, has perpetuated a cycle of violence and instability. Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by blockade tactics, economic collapse, and targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure, has pushed the population into famine, disease, and mass displacement. Despite several rounds of peace talks and extensive humanitarian efforts, progress remains minimal due to fragmentation among domestic actors and the geopolitical interests of external

powers. The crisis in Yemen highlights the tragic intersection of political dysfunction and humanitarian suffering, calling for urgent and multidimensional solutions.

Recommendations

Therefore, the paper recommends that:

1. A sustainable resolution to Yemen's crisis must be rooted in inclusive political negotiations involving all domestic factions, including marginalized groups such as the Southern Transitional Council, tribal leaders and women's coalitions. The United Nations and regional actors should facilitate a neutral platform that encourages compromise and long-term power-sharing.
2. All parties to the conflict must commit to international humanitarian law, particularly regarding the protection of civilian populations and infrastructure. The establishment of demilitarized zones around ports, hospitals, and schools, monitored by international observers, could reduce civilian casualties and improve humanitarian access.
3. Reviving Yemen's economy is vital for alleviating the humanitarian burden. International financial institutions and donors should support the Central Bank of Yemen, stabilize the currency, and invest in livelihood restoration programs, especially in agriculture and fisheries.
4. For lasting peace, impunity must end. International bodies should document war crimes and human rights violations and support mechanisms for transitional justice, truth-telling, and reconciliation. This will be crucial in rebuilding trust and promoting healing among Yemen's divided communities.

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