

YEMEN CRISIS AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: HISTORICAL AND EMERGENT ISSUES

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Abstract

Foreign power interventions in contemporary global civil wars have been a recent controversial subject of concern among scholars of international conflict and peace studies.. Many have argued that the increasing intensity and persistence of contemporary armed conflicts, especially after World War II is explained on the power politics and economic interests of the 'big powers'. Yemen presents a typical example of a nation where international intervention to internal division has led to a protracted civil war that spanned up to thirty years. It illustrates a case where civil conflict within a nation was not mostly caused and prosecuted by domestic players, but a multi-polar conflict largely executed in proxy by regional, trans-regional and western power blocs, which has resulted in escalated high level casualties and humanitarian crisis. Rather than being a clear-cut fight between two states, the Yemen crisis has structured a new dimension in to itself through the willingness to incorporate various actors. The study uses historical analysis of the war to examine the factors that have contributed in prolonging the crisis It also investigates international community's response to emergent issues of humanitarian crisis, terrorism and regional security. The study adopted qualitative interpretation method of secondary data such as official reports, newspapers and archival materials. The study finds out that the lack of firm stance of the international community to the regional proxy war in Yemen was responsible in prolonging the war and has resulted in the emergent security and humanitarian issues.

Keywords Civil War, intervention, humanitarian, foreign powers, terrorism

Introduction

Over the past six decades, the Middle East has been a troubled region bedeviled by a series of crisis which had attracted concerted global attention. This had often been premised on issues relating to regional politics of belonging and "un-belonging" among the component countries, and most importantly, religious affiliations. Undoubtedly, the history of Middle East is the history of political crisis and efforts at achieving peace and security. Nonetheless, the revolution that swept through Arab nations beginning in 2010 brought a new fillip to the dimensions of the crisis in the region. This has popularly been referred to as 'Arab Spring'. It was largely a revolution from below in which mass violent demonstrations and protests became a model of achieving regime change of perceived dictatorial leaders in the region. These resentments in some cases, succeeded in achieving regime change speedily, like in Egypt. In some others, it degenerated into protracted wars

which not only devastated lives but created an unprecedented humanitarian challenge to the international community. Yemen, one of Arab's poorest countries in Arabian Peninsula, falls within the later categorization.

There is an interconnection in the seemingly diverse conflicts in Yemen—from Southern separatism, the insurgency of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, the popular demonstrations that overthrew the long-serving regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh in the Arab Uprisings of 2011, to the Zaydi-dominated rebellion that swept to power in late 2014. The dimension of the crisis experienced in this country has drawn concerted attention among scholars and commentators on the politics of international intervention in internal affairs of sovereign nations. International responses to the crisis, created religious divides between forces loyal to the previous regime and those with the revolutionary group. The revolutionaries see the Saudi Arabia-led international interventionists as impostors, while the government forces accused sha-ruled Iran of sponsoring the revolutionaries. This lends credence to the peculiarity of the Yemeni conflict.

The level of humanitarian challenges, manifested in forms of staggering number of refugees, displaced persons, relief needs, and reconstruction challenges created by the crisis in this region since 2010 is the worst the international community has faced since World War II. From all indications, the situation will unfortunately get worse considering the bickering and disenchantments in Syria, Afghanistan, Israel, Egypt among others. To state the obvious, the conflict in this region has gone a long way in promoting religious fundamentalism and extremism, which in turn has given birth to several insurgency and militia groups whose demands are mostly utopian and too unrealistic to be met thereby creating social and political tensions in the international space.

Literature on the contemporary Yemen crisis since the Arab spring is relatively scanty. What is mostly available are reports—based on observation of the crisis and pre 2011 historical developments. This suggests a near-absence of scholarly analysis of the crisis particularly the international dimension. This paper therefore explores a historical analysis of the Yemen's crisis with particular attention on the assessment of its causes and the international community's responses of the crisis. It tries to understand the Yemeni crisis as part of a long-standing power rivalry process in which regional and global powers have taken a central role. It argues that the response of the international community to humanitarian challenges arising from the crisis and efforts at resolving the crisis in Yemen which have remained inadequate. This explains the failure of several peace deals brokered by the major powers in the region and the United Nation due to the peculiarity of the Yemen's experience. It is the position of this paper that caution need be applied by the international community to avoid further escalation of crisis in the region.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The crisis in Yemen is an outcome of historical differences and the politics of co-existence between the constituent groups that made up what later became Yemen. Their history dates back to 1918 when North Yemen became independent from the Ottoman Empire. However, it will be most appropriate to locate Yemen's contemporary national history to 1962 when they became a republican government. Meanwhile South Yemen, which had been a colony under British rule since 1838, gained independence in 1967, setting the stage for the beginning of a north-south dichotomy in what Clark (2010b) called "The Two Republics". Admittedly, pre-1962 historical developments provide

insights into the cultural, religious and political backgrounds to the emergence of the two Yemen states, but it is not in the purview of the present study to delve into it. The history of Yemen between 1967 and 1990 thus is the history of internal developments in both North and South Yemen and the history of socio-economic and political developments that necessitated the unification of the two republics in 1990. (Doost et al, 2012:97)

As Clark V. (2010) observes, the death of Imam Ahmed bin Yahya 1962 brought an end to the hitherto repressive theocratic Zaydi Imamate that ruled North Yemen since 1918. The *de facto* successor, Muhammad al-Badr, was overthrown almost immediately by a revolutionary force that established the Yemen Arab Republic. The ensuing armed political struggle between the royalist forces and the republicans became a defining factor that shaped North Yemen's political landscape between 1962 and 1970. The crisis set the stage for the first international community's 'intervention' or better put, 'interference' in Yemen's politics and society. Middle East regional powers—Egypt and Saudi Arabia, saw it as an opportunity to test their supremacy in the region. The former, supported the Yemen Arab Republic while the latter alongside its allies in the region, supported the royalist's forces. In addition, the prevailing cold war politics also sufficed—with Britain and Russia asserting their influences. A combination of factors and interplay of circumstances, such as the Arab-Israeli war, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops in North Yemen and eventual end of the war in 1970. A new country named "Yemen Arab Republic" was born and by 1978, Ali Abdallah Saleh became its president.

On the other side of the divide, South Yemenis borrowed a leaf from the success of the 1962 revolution in North Yemen through intensified resistance of British colonial domination. Clark V. (2010a) noted that the struggle for the control of the oil-rich colony of Adan in South Arabia set Egypt and the combined Arab forces up against British forces between 1963 and 1967. It is interesting to note that two regional 'militant' movements played significantly in the fight against British occupation of what later became South Yemen. They are the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and National Liberation Front (NLF). Understandably, as the pressure mounted up, Britain in 1967 gave up its control of South Arabia to the National Liberation Front, who named it the "Republic of South Yemen."

Historian Aleksandar Mitreski (2015) argued that the road to the unification of the two Yemen states began with the 1967 attainment of independence by South Yemen. Indeed, there were several confrontations from the early 1970s to late 1970s **between them particularly with respect to border disputes. Nonetheless, these were easily resolved by regional powers especially Egypt, who initiated the process of unification of the two republics. After some failed attempts, the unification of North and South Yemen was actualized in 1990 under the auspices of the Republic of Yemen which was bequeathed to the leadership of Ali Abdallah Saleh** the president of the former North Yemen. According to the New York Times "pro-western Yemen and pro-Soviet Yemen merge today May 22, to form a new republic dominating the entrance of the red sea" (NYT, 1990).

It is on the backdrop of political and socio-economic challenges that bedeviled the nascent nation after unification that the escalated crisis in Yemen is premised. posits that 'unlike the old two republics, the united Yemen was largely characterized by tribal, religious and party affiliations. This explains the bickering and political infighting between leaders of the constituent former north and south republics.

Not surprisingly, Ali Salim al-Baid, the Vice President, in August 1993 alleged that the south was being marginalized and withdrew to Aden to run a parallel government and by May 1994 declared the south as the 'Democratic Republic of Yemen'. After series of political deadlock, Yemen descended to a sporadic civil war. Doors (2012:45) asserts that it was the non-recognition of the Democratic Republic of Yemen by the international community and regionally assisted military operations that brought an end of the secession after about two months of fighting. The post-civil war era witnessed series of wanton repressive acts by President Ali Abdallah Saleh on the opposition, resulting in the exile of many Yemenis. It also witnessed the beginning of an authoritarian government in Yemen. Constitutional reforms were introduced which gave Ali Abdallah Saleh wide powers that enabled him have a firmer grip with the latitude in determining the course of the nation.

On the other hand, religious and tribal sentiments featured prominently in the period between the end of the 1994 civil war and the 2011 uprising. This began with the Houthi insurgency—a Shia Zaydi militant anti-government movement. The early 2000s witnessed a number of counter-insurgency battles by government troops against supporters of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the movement. As the death toll rose to an unprecedented figure in August 2007, al-Houthi accepted a ceasefire.

Interestingly, it was within this period that Al-Qaeda—a deadly terrorist organization began its activities in the Arabian Peninsula. In 2002, it attacked a US naval vessel USS Cole in a suicide attack in Aden killing about seventeen US officers. (Phillips 2010:17). The following years witnessed series of bomb attacks on police; officials, diplomatic, foreign business and tourism targets resulting in US evacuation of all non-essential personnel in her embassy in Yemen. By December 2009, the Yemeni government had failed to combat the threats of the terrorist group and called on the international community for support to fight the Yemen based al-Qaeda.

Once again, between the years 2008 to 2010 Yemen was boiling and in spite of several ceasefire agreements, violence always broke out. The worse situation happened in **December 2009** when a Yemen based branch of al-Qaeda claims it was behind a failed attack on US airliner and the government calls on the West for more support to help it combat the al-Qaeda threat. Indeed, **October 2010** marked the beginning of a Global terror alert after packages containing explosives originating in Yemen were intercepted on cargo planes bound for the US and by **September 2011**, a US born al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki was assassinated by US forces.

THE REVOLUTION IN YEMEN

A wave of revolution befell on the Arab countries in the Middle East region in the last months of December, 2010. It was a revolution aimed at achieving regime change and the enthronement of popular government. It started with mass protest in Tunisia, spread to Egypt and by January 2011 began in Yemen which pressured President Saleh to hand over power to an elected government. The Houthis saw the Arab Spring unrest as an opportunity to expand influence and seize greater political control over the territory dominated by the Houthis. Throughout 2011 and 2014, the Houthis were engaged in several clashes with the Yemeni government, despite also participating in internationally supported political talks that would have provided the group with a role in the government and a say in drafting the new constitution. After months of mounting protests, President Saleh was flown to Saudi Arabia, following injuries he sustained in

rocket attack. On his return home in November 2011, President Saleh agreed to hand over power to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi who was later inaugurated as president after uncontested elections that was boycotted by the Houthis in February 2012. September same year, an unsuccessful attack was launched on Yemen's defense minister which followed by the November killing of a Saudi diplomat and his bodyguard. However, what stated as a mere anti-government protest turned out to become a successful ousting of the central government in the capital of Sana'a; as they took control of the capital and President Mansour Hadi resigned with his cabinet, flee the capital to Aden where he declared his government legitimate, while the Houthis assembled a revolution committee to replace him in February **2015**.

The actions of the Houthi/Saleh partnership from 2013 has led the nation into a fracas they have to date not recovered from, as it created an open field for several actors to come forth with their show of strength. Hence in March 2015, Islamic State (IS) carried out its first major attacks in Yemen with two suicide bombings targeting Shia mosques in Sana'a in which 137 people were killed. As Houthi rebels start to advance towards southern Yemen. President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi strongly relies on Saudi support and do not want to negotiate with the Houthi since he expects an outright victory by the Saudi led coalition. Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh on the other seeks the overthrow of the Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi government with segments of the Yemeni army defecting to his side while allying with the Houthis. This "marriage of convenience" is fascinating in that many observers have claimed that Abdullah Saleh wants to install his son as President. Brehony N, (2015) Saleh still retains considerable influence over segments of Yemen's security forces and has mobilized his troops to fight alongside the Houthis against the internationally recognized Government of Yemen and Saudi-led coalition.

The Sabeen square demonstration late 2016, in favour of the Houthi/Saleh alliance was the biggest since the uprising started. On January 29th, 2017; the US Naval Seal in Yemen executed a raid that killed a reported 14 al-Qaeda operatives and 15 civilians and From March 1st through March 8 2017, the US conducted 45 airstrikes against AQAP, a record amount of airstrikes conducted against the group by the US in recent history. The airstrikes were reported to have killed hundreds of Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula militants. On 25 March 2017 a court in the Houthi controlled Sana'a sentenced Hadi and six other government officials to death in absentia for "high treason", which meant "incitement and assistance" to Saudi Arabia and its allies" The sentence was announced by the Houthi-controlled (Saba News Agency). By and large, the history of Yemen to date is a history of violence, conflict and war.

Attempts at understanding the Yemenis crisis would require placing the prevailing situation in the proper context. First, long-held primordial animosity among Zaydi descents (Houthis) whose forefathers had ruled northern Yemen from 1918 until the military coup of 1962 that ousted the Imamate of that time was a defining factor that paved way for the crisis. This no doubt explains why the Houthis were at the forefront of the rebellion. Evidently, their continuous agitations for regime change and protection of tribal interests were mere subterfuge to vent their anger and frustration.

Similarly, the political and social challenges of the 1990 unification played out in shaping the political behavior and social relations among Yemenis. The unification was seen as a 'marriage of inconvenience' between pro-west north and pro-east Marxist ideological

south which created a strong north and south dichotomy in all spheres of Yemen's life. The failure to integrate the two Yemen socially, no doubt, was enough to encourage disunity and conflicts.

To state the obvious, religious divides had been a cog in the wheel of Yemen's progress. The supremacy of the Sunni in the south and the opposing Shiite population in the north has been a basis for the politics of regional relations—especially among the leading powers of the region. It is reminiscence of the religious differences that defined relations between certain countries in the region.

From the economic angle, water scarcity in the mid-2000s dragged the country into famine and consequently resulted in increase in food prices. During this period, Yemen was one of the most water stressed countries in the world. As experts warned Yemen could be the first modern country to run out of usable water. Some estimates suggest this could occur within a decade (Heffez 2013; Whitehead 2015). However, Saleh's government was insensitive to the plights of the citizens which to a large extent frustrated them. The government's actions and inactions to the situation were described as "dancing on the heads of snakes" (Clark 2010). Perhaps, this was the most deeply expressed disenchantments by Yemenis that led to the revolution. Responsible in no small measure for the outbreak of the present Yemeni crisis is the inability of the government to effectively police the society and checkmate any affront on its authority. The Yemeni state has been unable to effectively deliver public goods and much needed infrastructure and this incapacitation was, is and continues to be a tool leveraged upon by belligerents like the Houthis who capitalize on this failure of state to deliver on its promises to secure the average Yemeni's allegiance (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982,).

The presence and activities of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was also a major factor; as they have recruited and trained prospective fighters and killers to a-wait rainy days. There's been a sporadic incident of al-Qaeda extremists and pro-government troops fighting side-by-side against their common Houthi enemy (BBC News 2016c).

On the other hand, series of uprisings in some countries in Middle East and North Africa beginning from December 20¹⁰, in Tunisia and Egypt, had unprecedented impact on Yemen. The Houthis saw it as an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction of Saleh's government. It created an avenue for them to expand influence and seized greater territory, little wonder their continued clash with the Yemeni government.

It is important to state that the above discourse were just parts of the many factors that remotely led Yemen into war. The events that pulled the trigger to the open conflict were quiet spontaneous. First development was *the removal of fuel subsidy* by Hadi's government in July 2014 upon the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund. As would be expected, public demonstration began almost immediately with the Houthi movement leading the campaign. At this point the Houthis had gain strong support beyond its base with its criticisms of the UN transition process. Thus, they organized mass protests demanding not just for lower fuel prices but a change of government. Hadi's supporters and the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated party, al-Islah, held counter rallies which sparked into conflict. *Secondly*, the Houthis captured much of Sana'a—Yemen capital by mid-September 2014. Reneging on a United Nation peace deal brokered that month; they consolidated control of the

capital and continued their southward advance. Hadi's government resigned under pressure the following January, and the Houthis declared a constitutional fiat. Most significantly, the division within the army spelt doom for Yemen. Military units loyal to Saleh aligned themselves with the Houthis, contributing to their battlefield success. Other militias mobilized against the Houthi-Saleh forces, aligning with elements of the military that remained loyal to the government. This made Southern separatists ramped up their calls for secession. *Saudis launched military intervention was a catalyst to the continuity of the war.* After the Houthi reached Aden; Hadi went into exile in Saudi Arabia, which launched a military campaign, primarily fought from the air, to roll back the Houthis and restore the Hadi administration to Sana'a.

AN ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Direct international intervention in the Yemen crisis began in 2014 with the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in Yemen. This began with airstrikes, ground warfare and later a humanitarian crisis intervention in the subsequent years. Allied with Saudi Arabia in this enterprise is the United Arab Emirates who have deployed 1500 over ground troops in Yemen. Yemen's proximity to Saudi Arabia poses a strategic security and economic threats as there is a likelihood that the crisis if not properly managed could spill into its borders and discourage potential pilgrims from undertaking the Hajj obligation of the Islamic faith; a major source of Saudi income. This underscores the ferocity with which the Saudi government is pursuing a swift resolution to the crisis.

Saudi-Arabia and Iran's Intervention—A Question of Legality

The Saudi move was motivated in part by the perception that Iran, whose Shiite Islamic ideology it deeply resents is attempting to alter the power dynamics in the region while seeking to weaken her influence in Yemen and encircle her. The Saudi government it must be noted is seeking to enforce a return to the administrative system which had already failed the people all in a bid to preserve her stranglehold on Yemen. Many have argued that this was a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran; to others, this was a fall-out from a brutal Yemeni inter-sectarian war; to others, it was the attempt by a regional power to impose its dominance over an impoverished neighbor. The Saudi-led air campaign has been the most forcible external intervention in Yemen since the 1960s.

King Salman of Saudi was also instrumental in securing the Gulf Cooperation Council's mandate to help convene the National Dialogue Conference and also the Kingdom has rallied the GCC to embark on operation "Desert Storm", a military campaign seeking to defeat the Houthi regime and reinstall AbdrabbuhHadi as Yemen's President. National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was an aggregation of stakeholders in the country and the conference was brokered largely by the Gulf Cooperation Council; a body of six Sunni Gulf states. The conference attained, after ten months of deliberation in January **2014**, an agreement on which the new constitution will be based and by February, a Presidential panel gave approval for Yemen to become a federation of six regions as part of its political transition. The NDC forum was intended to create a unity government that incorporated Yemen's many disparate groups and tribal elements, including the Houthi rebels. Meanwhile, former President Saleh, instead of supporting his deputy, remained extremely powerful. He reached out to former allies and enemies including the Houthis in an effort to undermine President Hadi (Gardner, 2015).

Iran is touted by many to have been the source of support to the Houthis in that they were responsible to a large extent for the weapons used by the Houthis in their campaign against the government of President Hadi while also providing logistics and training by engaging Lebanese group Hezbollah. The prolonged crisis is viewed by analyst as an extension in the theatre of the ideological war between the two main strands of Islam-Sunni and Shia and the desire of the main arrowheads (countries) representing both sides of the divide who continually seek greater political influence/domination in the region. The former Islamic ideological bent is being spearheaded committed Saudi Arabia while Iran is seeking to puncture Saudi's cultural influence in the region. Iran is seeking to enhance its influence in the region and its sees the Houthis as a low cost option to be deployed as a tool to weaken the influence of Saudi Arabia and the Rouhani government is using Lebanon based militant group Hezbollah too provide weapons and train the Houthi insurgents. The Saudi led military action has strengthened the role of Iran as the Houthis have depended more on the country.

United States and United Nations' Efforts at Peace

Global powers, such as the United States, have relied on troop deployments to help with state-building projects in Iraq and Afghanistan, countries with similar situation, but such option has not been applied to Yemen. The United States have since the previous administration provided intelligence and logistical support while conducting airstrikes against the militant group Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula and both nations are responsible for the sale of weapons used by Saudi Arabia and her allies. It has chosen to work through the Yemeni military by sharing intelligence and providing technical supports US has also ruled out the option of sending soldiers. It is fair thus to argue that by maintaining light footprint in Yemen, US has not demonstrated a firm position in this country.

The United Nations, as the global organization with the mandate of ensuring global peace did take active steps by appointing a special envoy Ismail OuldCheikh Ahmed to try and broker peace between the contending parties. The Security Council on its own part resolved on the 14th of April 2015 to uphold the unity and indivisibility of Yemen while expressing concern at the activities of terrorist groups taking advantage of the lapse to carry out attacks in the country and demanded that the parties should end all hostilities so as the safeguard the safety of civilians by ensuring that they receive the well needed humanitarian assistance (UNSC, 2015). **United Nations became more vociferous in this crisis when condition in Yemen became deteriorated especially with high rate of loss of innocent civilians lives, with** Islamic State group claiming responsibility for a number of attacks, including a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 army recruits; June 2016 in Aden. **This pushed for the** Start of a United Nations sponsored talks between the government on one side and Houthis and former President Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) on the other, which has proven abortive. (UNOCHA 2015c; UNOCHA 2015c).

Months after the much heralded UN Security resolution in March 2016 which ordered the 'rebels' to surrender areas they control to the recognized government of Yemen, the implementation has remained at best a media topic of discussion. (UNSC, 2015). Both the United Nations and United States are foot-dragging because of the religious sensitivity of the crisis. Warburton (1995:20) argues that the protracted nature of the war was due to the failure of the international community to make serious efforts to stop it before the

military insufficiency of both sides became apparent. The United Nations' efforts aimed at ending the conflict have yielded too little a fruit due to its inability to enforce the Security Council resolution 2216 and the unwillingness of main protagonists Saudi Arabia and President Mansour Hadi to negotiate with the aggrieved groups. This incorrigibility is fuelled by the belief of both sides that they have what it takes to win the war outright thereby making them unwilling to make compromise. The problematic structure of the talks makes any hope of an agreement very bleak.

KEY GLOBAL CONCERNS

Humanitarian Crisis

The Yemen crisis has raised some critical issues of international concern. High level humanitarian challenges, refugee crisis and internal displacement arising from the crisis poses a great challenge to the international community. Admittedly, global attention on humanitarian intervention has been focused on the Syrian situation paying less attention on equally severe situation in Yemen, who currently has more people in need of aid than any other country in the world, according to the UNOCHA-Global Humanitarian Overview(UNOCHA 2016a). In not more than three years of intense conflict, an ever-growing trail of destruction, suffering and trauma pounced on Yemenis. In August 2015, Peter Maurer, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in BBC News declared that “Yemen after five months of civil war looks like Syria after five years” (Jacqueline Lopour, 2016:2). According to the latest statistics issued by the European Commission's DG ECHO, the humanitarian situation in Yemen is critical: 21.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – that represents 82 % of the population of Yemen; 14.1 million people need basic health care; 14.1 million people are in need of food aid; 7 million face emergency level food insecurity (famine); 2 million people have been internally displaced because of the conflict. (Kirsten Jongberg, 2016:4). The World Food Programme has classified seven of Yemen's 22 provinces as being at ‘emergency’ level, one step below famine the five-point Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Scale. To this, ten provinces were declared to be at “crisis” level.

In addition, some 3.3 million people have been displaced since March 2015, according to United Nations Commission for Refugee. As at January 2017, more than 2 million remained displaced—with 180,000 of them fled the country. The commission declared that there were also between 1.7 and 2 million refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, who had serious need for humanitarian assistance.

The conflict has also taken a toll on education. BBC recoded that between 2015 and 2017, there were about 2 million out of school children in Yemen. To make the situation worse, more than 1,600 schools are currently unfit for use due to damage, presence of displaced people or occupation by combatants. (BBC, 2017). On the other hand, the restriction on imports of fuel—essential for maintaining water supply, combined with damage of pumps and sewage treatment facilities, also mean that about 14.4 million people in Yemen do not have access to safe drinking water or sanitation, including 8.2 million who are in acute need.

Quite disturbing is the fact that most Aid organizations working in Yemen are struggling to help. According a BBC report, more than seventy humanitarian organizations have been working to help those in need. However, access constraints, damaged infrastructure and unreliable access to fuel, together with a lack of funding, have hampered their

efforts. (BBC News Report Yemen: 28 March 2017). As at March 2017, the UN's appeal for \$2.1b, estimated to cover the cost of assistance for 12 million people in Yemen was only seven per cent funded.

Human Rights

A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Red Al Hussein, in August 2016 laid out a number of serious allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law committed by the actors in Yemen crisis. These included attacks on residential areas and civilian infrastructures; the use of landmines and cluster bombs; snipers and drone attacks against civilians; detentions; targeted killings; the recruitment and use of children in hostilities; and forced evictions and displacements. (UNOHR).

Despite mounting evidence of violations of international human rights—some of which are most like to amount to 'war crimes', by the parties to the conflict, they were yet to be held accountable for these crimes. It was only in September 2019 that a UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen stated that "the parties to the conflict in Yemen are responsible for an array of human rights violation and violations of international humanitarian law".

Growth of Terrorism

Closely related to the above concern is the threat of terrorist activities emanating from Yemeni territory. Former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown was quoted to have described Yemen as 'an incubator and potential safe haven for terrorism that presents a regional and global threat'(Hill 2010: 7). This country has been a subject of concerted international scrutiny concern. Yemen has a long history of involvement with Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Over the years, Yemeni terrorist networks have grown in strength and global reach, and the country's current security challenges are a symptom of much deeper problems. The army has been fighting an intermittent civil war in the north and security services routinely clash with the grassroots protesters. Global worry about Al Qaeda's symbolic revival on the Arabian peninsula now need to combine short-term security objectives with a long-term strategy counter-terrorism measures. The task before the international community is to counter the increased risk of internal conflicts in Yemen spilling over to its borders, and increase the risk of maritime insecurity in the Red sea and Gulf of Aden. Barron (2008: 13) observed that Yemen is strategic in the war on terrorism and has the potential of obtaining economic and military aid from US.

Economic Instability of Middle East

The economic interest of the international community is threatened by the festering of the crisis in Yemen. It is noteworthy to state that the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea which are both situated in and around the Yemeni territory is crucial to world oil supplies and piracy—a possible fallout of the crisis may endanger global economic stability. The Middle East remains the most unstable region in the world with its anarchical "state of nature" depicting the realist perspective of international relations. Sadly, the situation is likely to get worse as in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Worthy of note is the fact that conflict in this region has gone a long way to promote religious fundamentalism and extremism, which in turn has given birth to several insurgency and militia groups whose demands are unrealistic and as a result, they unleash terror to make their voices heard.

It is appropriate for the international community to engage in strategic thinking by forsaking the 'unholy alliance' with Saudi Arabia in its interventionist moves. First,

Saudi Arabia is not in a good position to lead the movement, considering the religious undertone of the crisis. Saudi's air strikes and humanitarian assistance are seen from the purview of wider religious protectionism of Sunni Muslims. They have continued to play blame games—accusing Iran as the backbone of the Shia Houthis. Instead of seeking common grounds for national unity, its actions are one directional in preserving the government of Hadi. The fact that the most Yemenis are currently disenchanted with the bickering between Saudi Arabia and Iran alongside other international involvement shows that this circumstance calls for a political solution based on historical antecedents.

International Actors

One of the greatest challenges arising from the Yemen crisis has been the question of international actors involvement and continued engagement. It shows again the renaissance of 'cold war' politics, in which the super powers have divided interests, and poised to achieve them. The United States, UK and France have been the strong forces behind the Saudi-led coalition for the pro-government of President Hadi. On the other hand, Islamic Republic of Iran, with support from Russia and other eastern countries have given strong supports to the Houthi movement. This result is what has become known as 'middle east cold war'—a proxy war of the super powers. The level of arms trade and exports to this region has serious effects on the war, with sporadic influences on similar conflict zones in Nigeria, Pakistan and Morocco. The UN Group of Eminent Experts in Yemen stated that several world powers, including the US, the UK, and France, may be complicit in war crimes in Yemen through their continued arms trade and intelligence supports given to the Saudi-led coalition.

Given the above dimension of Yemen's crisis, it has become imperative for the international community, spear-headed by the United Nations, to intervene in this 'interventionists power politics and war profiteering in Yemen. For instance, despite congressional moves to stop US arms export to the region, Trumps government has used its veto to extend their enterprise in Yemen. The increasing international actors participation is one of the emergent issues in Yemen's crisis that calls for concerted attention.

The Way Forward

What then explains the apparent failure of the plans by external powers to bring peace to Yemen? What is the way forward? The following recommendations will go a long way in securing a general ceasefire and sustainable peace in Yemen and the region in general.:

- a. The belligerents are advised to abide by the laws governing war in nations and refrain from media campaigns that portrays them as pawns in the hands of other states with a commitment to negotiate a ceasefire.
- b. The contending parties should open high-level consultations aimed at de-escalating tensions.
- c. The Yemeni government, the Houthis and Saleh's GPC are urged to participate as a matter of urgency in the next round of UN brokered talks.
- d. The Saudi led coalition is encouraged to support the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 2216 with the compromises needed to revive the Yemeni political process.
- e. The permanent members of the UN Security Council should checkmate the flow of weapons systems and ammunitions to the warring parties while demanding

the adherence to the laws of war. All these will indirectly culminate in a ceasefire.

- f. The UN Security Council members are advised to provide an environment free of rancor that can help fast track negotiation between both parties to prevent a stalemated negotiation.
- g. The United Nations Special Envoy should stimulate the negotiating mechanism by integrating regional security concerns into the negotiating process so that the concerned countries will understand that “instability in one, is instability in all”. There is also the need to include a strategy for economic reconstruction into the negotiations. This will in no small way ensure a harmonious negotiation by the warring parties in the country as its resuscitation of the economy is a matter that concerns them all.
- h. There is a need to expand the negotiations to include additional Yemeni stakeholders among which are the Sunni Islamic party Islah, Salafi groups and the Southern Resistance, so as to promote a long-lasting ceasefire and should be followed by the inclusion of civil society organizations, women’s organization, political parties. The support of these groups will go a long way to preserve the peace.
- i. The United Nations Special Envoy should as a matter of urgency prioritize these three political challenges which are; an agreement on a broadly acceptable executive leadership and a more inclusive government until elections, discovering a mechanism for resolving the future status of Southern Yemen and of other regions seeking greater devolution of powers, and accountability and national reconciliation.
- j. Ansarullah (Houthis) are charged to de-escalate the conflict and build confidence by releasing political prisoners, allowing unhindered humanitarian and commercial access to civilians in Taiz and other devastated areas under its control so as to demonstrate the capacity for its goodwill ahead of UN talks.
- k. Former President Saleh ought to work with Saudi Arabia, her allies and Yemeni stakeholders to agree his departure from Yemen for a considerable period of time so as to engineer a psychological ‘delinking’ from the past and chart a new course for the future.
- l. The Yemeni government needs to support compromise by refraining from the persistent call for a military ‘liberation’ of Sanaa and other cities and thereby facilitate unhindered humanitarian and commercial access to civilians in every part of Yemen including Houthi controlled areas while recognizing publicly the need for political reconciliation in the country.
- m. Yemeni parties and other organizations left out of the ongoing negotiating process are enjoined to lobby for inclusion in the process and accept the invitations into it without preconditions while selecting representatives for the consultations and they are to prepare proposals for elements of a political settlement especially on sensitive issues such as state structure, national power sharing, militia disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
- n. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should communicate specific security requirements and political concerns especially as it regards her border with

- Yemen and should participate in making proposals if requested for reconstruction of Yemen and its integration into the Gulf Cooperation Council.
- o. The Islamic Republic of Iran should approach the Yemeni crisis as a high-value opportunity to reduce tensions with Saudi Arabia by ending divisive rhetoric that raises apprehension about Iranian intention in the region. The Iranian government needs to pressurize the Houthis to constructively participate in UN negotiations and with Saudi Arabia on how the conflict might be resolved. The Iranians should without further delay end the supply of military weapons to the Houthis. (Hilterman and Alley(2016)

CONCLUSION

While we agree that poverty and economic crisis that confront Yemenis may be linked to intolerance and inability to adjust sufficiently to prevailing political circumstance, it is difficult to establish a relationship between the economic challenges and international community's actions and inactions. We argue that foresight and prudence in understanding the historical and political environment of Yemen is more critical in effective management and resolution of the crisis. In addition, the view that the Middle East affairs should be handled by the powers in the region is not practicable and largely unacceptable since religious and power calculations do not allow for an impartial response that will engender sustainable peace. As such, expectations and responsibilities are on the shoulders of relevant international institutions—especially the United Nations to enforce its authority in the achievement of security and peace in Yemen and the Middle East in general. To buttress this, the fate of Yemen as a sovereign state, and the survival of Yemenis should be of utmost concern to the world.

It is true that; the triggers to this violence came during the second half of 2014, when citizens grew massively discontented with the political instability of Yemen's transitional government, but it is also true; that other factors were responsible for unresolved conflict. As AleksandarMitreski puts it in his "Civil War in Yemen: A Complex Conflict with Multiple Futures", Yemen's conflict is saturated with different groups, and each have unique interests. Antagonism amongst them thus has shaped its political sphere. As Machiavelli puts it, in politics we must act as if 'all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers' (Jack Donnelly, 2005:30). In contrast to the view of Machiavelli, what "if" opportunities for a vent delays, then the wickedness as projected by all men might as well result to the end of the world. Since all men veritably cannot project the act of wickedness, the non-partisans are vulnerable and will always suffer the effect of warfare the most.

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