ADDRESSING SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION IN YEMEN

By:

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CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز صنعاء للدراسات الاستراتيجية

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Cover photo: Following airstrikes the night before a man surveys the damage on July 2015 ,21. Missiles struck a cluster of homes near Qataba, Yemen, killing at least four people and injuring dozens // Photo Credit: Alex Potter

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After nearly five years of conflict, Yemen is more fragmented than at any time in recent history. The war has exacerbated long-standing grievances and created new fractures in Yemen's social fabric. While the origins of the conflict lie in a political struggle for power, fighting has awakened a sectarian narrative, revived calls for secession in the south, and generally eroded Yemen's social cohesion. These fissures are a legacy of the war and they threaten to destabilize the country long after a political peace settlement is achieved.

While the current depth of division in Yemen is unparalleled, the tensions manifesting in the war can be traced to historic frustrations that were never resolved. In Yemen's north, the formation of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in 1962 ended centuries of rule by Zaidi imams. Zaidis, a large minority who follow a distinctly Yemeni brand of Shia Islam, had enjoyed political and military supremacy in the imamate monarchy. The Zaidis' loss of power due to the birth of the republic ultimately helped bring about the formation of the Believing Youth group in the 1990s, which sought to revive the community's status and from which the Houthi movement would emerge.

Houthi forces fought six wars against the state over six years from 2004, and in 2011 the Houthi movement joined the popular uprising that forced Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. Houthi authorities later allied with Saleh to push out his successor, President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi, seizing control of the capital, Sana'a, in 2014 in a military coup. Houthi authorities replaced government and military officials with Hashemite Zaidi cadres who were largely appointed for their sectarian identity rather than their expertise and merit. The Houthi expansion from their northern stronghold of Sa'ada to southern cities, home to Yemen's Shafei Sunni community, ignited a sectarian narrative in the conflict. Warring parties used sectarian rhetoric to recruit fighters and mobilize support while political leaders from both sides used divisive sectarian language to describe their political rivals.

Houthi forces' drive south rekindled old resentments among southerners over their perceived political disenfranchisement by the north and the plundering of southern resources by northern elites. Discontent over the division of power and wealth had surfaced soon after the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) merged with the northern YAR in 1990. Northern forces brutally defeated a push for southern independence in a civil war in 1994, and for some southerners, the arrival of Houthi forces in 2015 held resonances of this conflict. The war has strengthened the movement for independence in the south with the emergence of new secessionist groups like the Southern Transitional Council (STC).

The conflict has transformed Yemeni society. The proliferation of checkpoints across the country has restricted freedom of movement and fragmented the territorial integrity of the nation. Fighting has rolled back nascent progress on women's political and social participation, while the economic collapse brought on by the war has torn at the social fabric. More than 3 million Yemenis have been internally displaced and many Yemenis returned to their hometowns, often bringing an extra strain on communities whose resources were already scarce. The state is weak or absent in many parts of the country, and some Yemenis have turned to tribal structures to fill the vacuum.

The National Dialogue Conference (NDC), launched in 2013 to guide the political transition after the uprising, tried to tackle Yemenis' social and political grievances. The constitution drafted after the NDC offers a framework that can be built on in the post-conflict political process, while its failures also present useful lessons.

The most urgent priority in Yemen is an end to the war, but the deep divisions that are a legacy of the conflict must be understood and confronted if any peace is to endure. This paper identifies aspects of the fragmentation of Yemeni society that require urgent attention and further study, and that must be addressed in any post-conflict transition.

The following principles are offered to guide the process of addressing Yemen's fragmentation:

- It is unlikely that the previous centralization of political power will be tenable in post-conflict Yemen, but all regions could be integrated into a national entity under a federal system. However, the distribution of power, wealth and resources under a federal system is a controversial issue and this must be resolved through dialogue.

- A national identity must be promoted through education and media campaigns that celebrate Yemen's religious, social and political diversity. Education must be accessible in all areas of Yemen.

- New policies must be developed to guarantee citizens' right to free movement and to criminalize the practice or incitement of discrimination on the basis of gender, sect or religion.

- All government and military positions must be appointed on the basis of merit and not sect, tribe or any other affiliation.

- Violations of rights that occurred during the conflict should be addressed through mechanisms for compensation and reparations outlined in the draft Law on Transitional Justice and National Reconciliation of 2013.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Yemen began as a political struggle for power. Nearly five years in, multiple new fault lines have emerged. Political rivalry has brought about sectarian divisions and the conflict has revitalized the movement for independence in the south. Marginalization, exclusion and poverty have created new fractures in the social fabric. The result is a country that has never before been so fragmented. If these fissures are not resolved, they threaten to destabilize Yemen long after a political peace agreement is reached.

This paper begins by examining the historic roots of the current tensions in Yemen. It traces the origins of the Houthi movement in the fluctuating fortunes of the Zaidi community, who practice a uniquely Yemeni branch of Shia Islam. By examining Zaidi perceptions of marginalization in the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the shifting dynamics of their relations with the Shafei Sunni community, this paper offers insight into how political and territorial struggles fused with a sectarian narrative in the ongoing conflict.

The paper also looks at the recent revival of secessionist movements in the south in the context of southern discontent that predates the unification of Yemen in 1990. It tracks how the arrival of Houthi military forces from the north rekindled old resentments among southerners over their political domination by northern elites. This paper also looks at the resurgent role of tribes in the absence of a functioning state, and touches on how economic collapse has eroded traditional interdependence mechanisms, and how recent gains in women's social and political inclusion have receded. While a comprehensive exploration of the fragmentation wrought by the conflict is beyond the scope of this paper, the multiple ways the war has transformed Yemeni society are highlighted and new fractures are surveyed. It concludes by presenting principles to guide the post-conflict political process to address Yemen's deep divisions.

Contemporary Roots and Recent Rise of the Sectarian Dynamic

The birth of the YAR in 1962 ended a thousand years of theocratic rule in northern Yemen by a dynasty of imams from the Zaidi Shia sect. A large minority at around a third of the population, Zaidis resided mostly in the northern governorates of Sana'a, Amran, Dhamar and Sa'ada and in the desert along the Saudi border. During the imamate monarchy, top military and political posts had been held by northern Hashemite Zaidis, while Shafei Sunni Yemenis were broadly excluded from positions of power. Tribes in the arid northern highlands would raid the more fertile agricultural areas to the south, where

Shafei communities lived.[1] After the last imam's overthrow in 1962, royalists fought Yemen's republicans to restore the imamate monarchy in an eight-year civil war that they ultimately lost.

Zaidi fortunes deteriorated in the new republic. Facing a range of perceived threats, including the growing influence of Salafi and Wahhabi institutions from Saudi Arabia, Zaidi elites formed the Believing Youth movement in 1995 to revive the community's status.[2] The movement was initially tolerated by Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's president from 1977 to 2011, for whom sectarian rivalry offered a useful political tool to counter the rise of Salafis. Saleh's tolerance dissipated with the growing popularity of Hussein al-Houthi, whose Ansar Allah organization – commonly known as the Houthi movement – emerged from the Believing Youth. Al-Houthi's vocal criticisms of Saleh's rule led to armed confrontations in the Zaidi heartland of Sa'ada.[3] He was killed by Yemeni Armed Forces in 2004 in Sa'ada and replaced by his brother Abdulmalik al-Houthi, who led the movement in five more wars against government forces over the next six years.

The Houthi movement joined hundreds of thousands of protesters in the popular uprising to overthrow Saleh in February 2011. They also participated in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), part of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative that included the transition of power from Saleh to his deputy, Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi. At the same time, Houthi forces were pushing south in a military campaign to branch out from their Sa'ada stronghold. By September 2014, Houthi forces had seized Sana'a in an alliance with Saleh. In January 2015, Houthi authorities formed the Supreme Revolution Committee (SRC) to govern Yemen, and placed President Hadi under house arrest until he fled to the southern city of Aden. When Houthi forces attacked Hadi's palace in Aden using the Yemeni Air Force in March 2015, the Saudi-led coalition launched its military intervention with the intent to force Houthi-Saleh troops into retreat and to restore the Hadi government to power.

Sectarian Narrative Ignites

When Houthi forces took over Sana'a, the Houthi movement replaced senior members of the military and government bureaucracy with their Zaidi cadres. Dozens of official positions were gifted to Hashemite figures, most of whom lacked qualifications for their new posts beyond their sectarian identity. Hashemite elites had made up northern Yemen's ruling class in the centuries before the republic. Their modern-day appointments were in line with Abdulmalek al-Houthi's 2012 Zaidi Document, which declared that power and governance were reserved for the descendants of Prophet Mohamed.[4] The appointments were also the actions of a movement that had long felt marginalized by the underdevelopment of state services in their areas, and that had endured six brutal wars against the state.

1) "Beyond the Business as Usual Approach: Combating Corruption in Yemen," The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, November 2018, http://sanaacenter.org/files/Rethinking_Yemens_Economy_No4_En.pdf. Accessed February 11, 2019.
2) Adam Baron and Farea Al-Muslimi, "The politics driving Yemen's rising sectarianism," Sana'a Center for Atrategic Studies, May 30, 2016, http://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/40. Accessed January 8, 2019.
3) Baron and Al-Muslimi, "Rising sectarianism."
4) Baron and Al-Muslimi, "Rising sectarianism."

As Houthi forces, who hailed mostly from the Zaidi northern highlands, pushed southwards to the governorates of al-Bayda, Taiz and Marib, home to largely Shafei Sunni populations, a sectarian narrative to the conflict emerged. Some of the Houthi movement's political rivals used sectarian rhetoric to recruit and mobilize fighters and support to push back against the expansion and repression by Houthi forces. In Amran, tribal leaders such as Hussein al-Ahmar had, as early as 2013, characterized themselves as "lions of the Sunnis" in their battles against the Houthi forces.[5]

Political leaders have also employed divisive sectarian rhetoric. President Hadi has described the Houthis as "Twelver Shiites", a reference to the denomination of Shia Islam dominant in Iran, and referred to the Houthis as an extension of the Iranian revolution.[6] The Houthi movement has also used sectarian language against its political opponents, using derogatory terms like takfiri to describe Sunni Islamists.[7] In September 2015, Houthi forces called their supporters to jihad in Taiz and Aden, framing the fight as a holy war, rather than a political battle.[8]

Sectarianism Blends with Southern Separatism

For some southerners, the arrival of Houthi-Saleh forces in 2015 rekindled memories of the 1994 civil war when Saleh's northern forces defeated southern groups seeking secession. Southern grievances had surfaced not long after the unification of the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and the YAR in 1990.[9] Despite shared cultural and social bonds, tensions over the allocation of power and resources led to civil war in 1994. Following that war, northern leaders and their loyalists exerted control over local government and resources in the south.[10] Saleh's security forces violently repressed protests in 2007 by the Southern Movement, which has called for independence in the south since 2009.

This regional rivalry has become intertwined with the sectarian narrative that has evolved during ongoing conflict. The sectarian differences between the predominantly Zaidi Houthi forces from the north and the southern secessionists, who are mostly Shafei Sunnis, have become fused with each side's political ambitions, even though the roots of southern grievances are political, not sectarian. At times, even secular leaders in the south have framed their fight in sectarian terms.[11] The Houthi invasion revived long-held resentment that southern wealth and resources flowed northwards to tribal and military elites while southerners were politically marginalized by the dominant north.

5) Baron and Al-Muslimi, "Rising sectarianism."
6) Yasser Alyasre, "The first speech of President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi from Aden on March 21," YouTube Video, 20:22, March 21, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ9PDlftIJc. Accessed February 28, 2019.
7) Farea al-Muslimi, "How Sunni-Shia Sectarianism is Poisoning Yemen," Carnegie Middle East Center, December 29, 2015, https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/62375. Accessed February 11, 2019.
8) Al-Muslimi, "Poisoning Yemen."
9) Sana'a Center, "Combating Corruption," 11.
10) Sana'a Center, "Combating Corruption," 11.
11) Baron and Al-Muslimi, "Rising sectarianism."

This has revitalized calls for southern independence from the north. In May 2017, the Emirati-backed Southern Transitional Council was formed with the goal of restoring independence to the country's south. It garnered support among the local population and, by proxy, has helped to grow the influence of the United Arab Emirates in the south.

In a sign of escalating anti-northern sentiments, northern Yemenis living and working in the southern governorates of Lahj and Aden were forcibly expelled back to the north by southern forces affiliated with President Hadi. The displacement of northerners suggested an effort to homogenize the south.

The conflict has led to the territorial fragmentation of Yemen beyond the division of north and south. Armed groups and militias have set up hundreds of checkpoints across the country, severely limiting freedom of movement. The checkpoints are sites of arrest, detention, extortion and harassment and curtail Yemenis' ability to travel, especially outside their own governorates. For instance, on a trip over land in 2018 from Yemeni government-held Saiyon and Houthi-held Sana'a – a distance of roughly 500 kilometers – Sana'a Center researchers counted 127 checkpoints manned by numerous different armed groups.

In parts of the south, the STC is more powerful than the government, and at times operates in opposition to the Yemeni armed forces. In January 2018, the STC launched an attack on Yemeni government forces in Aden, the temporary seat of the government, because Hadi had not conceded to demands to dismiss his prime minister.[12] In another incident demonstrating the weakness of Hadi's authority, the governorates of Marib and Hadramawt – both loyal to the Yemeni government – refused to implement a presidential decree ordering the liberalization of fuel in March 2018. A week after Hadi issued the decree, the governors said they would not allow the deregulation of fuel imports in their governorates.[13]

Tribes Regain Influence in the Absence of a Functioning State

The political instability since 2011 has led some Yemenis to turn back to their tribes or other pre-state identities. The largest tribal confederations, the Hashid and the Bakil, are based in the north, and between them they are estimated to represent more than 500,000 members.[14] Each confederation consists of multiple subsidiary tribes. Smaller tribal units exist in the south, where tribal structures are weaker, with the exception of Shabwa and Wadi Hadramawt, where tribes remain powerful. In the PDRY – which formed in 1967

12) Eyad Ahmed and Osamah al-Rawhani, "The Need to Build State Legitimacy in Yemen," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, September 2018, http://sanaacenter.org/files/Building_State_Legitimacy_in_Yemen_en.pdf. Accessed January 29, 2019.

13) "Yemen at the UN – March 2018 review", Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, April 7, 2018, http://sanaacenter.org/publications/yemen-at-the-un/5563#In-Yemeni-Government-Controlled-Areas. Accessed February 12, 2019.

14) J. E. Peterson, "Yemen: Tribes, the State and the Unravelling." In *Tribes and States in a Changing Middle East*, edited by Uzi Rabi, Oxford University Press, 2016.

following independence from the United Kingdom – the socialist regime's opposition to tribalism on ideological grounds begot efforts to undermine the social structure of tribes.[15] This pursuit involved both coercion and policies aimed at social reengineering. Many tribal leaders emigrated, while low status groups were given education, which led to professional and administrative jobs, as well as land, raising their status to that of tribespeople. Women also enjoyed new social and economic opportunities.[16] By the time the PDRY merged with the YAR, the social structure in the south was less tribal.[17]

The social role of tribes in the north had declined during the republic as Saleh's patronage network bankrolled favored sheikhs in exchange for their loyalty to the state. Some tribal leaders became far wealthier than their tribesmen and left their ancestral homes for the capital.[18] Once co-opted by Saleh, many sheikhs became involved in nepotism and corruption, which weakened traditional tribal values that revolved around equality. Due to the influence enjoyed by tribal leaders, this spread to other members of their tribes. Meanwhile, forces of urbanization and modernization also weakened the role of the tribe, as Yemenis migrated from their tribal homelands to more diverse urban areas where they relied on state institutions and new social networks rather than their tribes. Socio-economic changes resulting from mass labor migration to Saudi Arabia also diminished the role of tribes. Migrants, often young men, returned with wealth and newfound status, changing the social hierarchy and reducing tribal dependence.[19]

The prevailing perception that tribes are solely a source of conflict and national instability neglects to recognize the positive role that tribes have played in the nation's unity.[20] Where the state is absent and rule of law is weak, tribes and tribal customs provide a social order and an alternative justice system based on consensus-building that is faster and more accessible than formal courts.[21] Historically, tribes in Yemen have also played an important role in preventing and resolving disputes, maintaining order and promoting peace and reconciliation at the local and national levels. For centuries, tribal law has mediated inter-tribal conflicts, preventing escalations of violence, and more recently tribal mediation and arbitration have resolved conflicts between tribes and the government, often over land and resources.[22] For example, a committee of tribal sheikhs from several governorates intervened and used mediation to prevent the escalation of violence between members of the al-Ahmar tribe and government forces in al-Hasabah in Sana'a in May 2011.[23]

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15) Lackner, Helen. "'Understanding the Yemeni crisis : the transformation of tribal roles in recent decades," University of Durham, Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2016, http://dro.dur.ac.uk/19545/1/19545.pdf?DDD35. Accessed February 12, 2019.

16) Lackner, "Transformation," 9.

17) Lackner, "Transformation," 9.

18) Nadwa Al-Dawsari, "Tribal Governance and Stability in Yemen," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2012, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/yemen_tribal_governance.pdf. Accessed February 12, 2019.

19) Lackner, "Transformation," 7.

20) Al-Dawsari, "Tribal," 4.

21) Al-Dawsari, "Tribal," 8.

22) Al-Dawsari, "Tribal," 1.

23) Al-Dawsari, "Tribal," 6.

Neither the Houthi's SRC, the de facto authority in Sana'a, nor the internationally recognized Yemeni government has been able to provide basic services to the Yemeni people. President Hadi's already weak authority has diminished; his government is challenged by other actors and local authorities even in areas supposedly under its control. Tribal structures have re-emerged to fill the vacuum left by the absence of functioning state institutions in many areas. This is most notable in Marib governorate where local tribes have allied with the governor to essentially create a microstate. Tribes have taken on security responsibilities, while tribal customary law has taken the place of civil law. Tribal leaders have assumed a greater role in ensuring the social welfare of their tribesmen, in the absence of government central assistance. This provision of social services then allows the tribal leaders greater leverage to assert authority over their fellow tribal members.

Other Forms of Societal Fragmentation Due to Conflict

The war's entrenchment of exclusion and poverty has caused a breakdown of numerous social structures. While a full exploration of these fractures is beyond the scope of this paper, the following are other emerging trends that must be addressed in the post-conflict political process.

Economic Collapse Erodes Traditional Interdependence

Poverty was rampant in Yemen before the war; nearly half the population lived below the poverty line in 2014.[24] The escalation of the conflict has driven an economic collapse, with the economy contracting by around 50 percent cumulatively since March 2015.[25] The salaries of Yemen's civil servants have been mostly unpaid for more than two years, employment opportunities are scarce and the value of the Yemeni rial has plummeted.

Traditionally, Yemenis would pool resources with family, friends and community in times of scarcity. The intensity and duration of the conflict-associated economic collapse has, however, overwhelmed this social safety net in most areas.[26] As this traditional mechanism of interdependence has been made increasingly irrelevant, its ability to foster social cohesion has also evaporated. In addition, the conflict has created more than 3 million internally displaced people, many of whom have returned from cities to their hometowns and villages. Their return has created an extra burden for host communities whose resources were already scarce.

24) World Bank. "Yemen, Rep," World Development Indicators. https://data.worldbank.org/country/yemen-rep. Accessed February 12, 2019.

25) "Yemen's Economic Outlook – October 2018," World Bank, October 3, 2018, http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/547461538076992798/mpo-am18-yemen-yem-9-14-kc-new.pdf. Accessed February 12, 2019.

26) In February 2019 the United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that: "22.2 million people in Yemen need some kind of humanitarian or protection assistance, an estimated 17.8 million are food insecure; 8.4 million people are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation;" "About OCHA Yemen," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed February 28, 2019, https://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen.

Recent Gains in Women's Right Recede

Yemen has ranked last in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap for over a decade[27] but there were signs of nascent progress in women's political and social participation before the war. The conflict has reversed this progress. Women were active participants in protests during the 2011 uprising and accounted for more than a quarter of the participants in the NDC, prompting a promising reevaluation of women's political roles.[28] During the conflict, the number of women in public positions and decision-making forums has dwindled. While the NDC recognized the right of women to equal opportunities in all spheres, all warring parties have failed to ensure women's political participation.

The war has affected access to education for all Yemeni children, but particularly for girls. Up to 1,600 schools have been destroyed in the war, and some 2 million children who should be in school are not attending classes.[29] The collapse of basic services like public education and water means that girls are more likely to be performing tasks like fetching water than going to school.[30] Where educational opportunities are limited, priority is given for boys to attend school. The conflict has also led to a rise in child marriages in Yemen. Parents have married off their daughters because they could not afford to care for them, or in the hope that they would be protected by their husband's family. In some cases, families needed the dowry payments due to the conflict-driven economic collapse.[31]

Some women have entered the labor market during the conflict and become the primary breadwinners for their families. While this suggests a greater openness to women working, the change in traditional gender roles has driven resentment. The fighting has also left women more vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation.[32]

27) "The Global Gender Gap Report 2018." World Economic Forum, December 17, 2018, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf. Accessed February 12, 2019.

28) Nadia al-Sakkaf, "Yemen's Women and the Quest for Change," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, October 2012, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09434.pdf. Accessed February 12, 2019.

29) "Falling Through the Cracks: The Children of Yemen," UNICEF, March 2017, http://files.unicef.org/yemen/Yemen2Years-children_falling_through_the_cracks.pdf. Accessed February 12, 2019.

30) Brigette Rohwerder, "Conflict and gender dynamics in Yemen," K4D Helpdesk Report, Institute of Development Studies, March 3, 2017, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/ds2/stream/?#/documents/3546250/page/9. Accessed January 8, 2019.

31) Rohwerder, "Gender," 6.

32) Rohwerder, "Gender," 8.

LOOKING AHEAD

The deep cleavages wrought by the war threaten the future stability of Yemen; healing these fissures will require critical attention during the post-conflict transition. The geographic fragmentation of Yemen during the conflict means that integrating all regions into a national entity will be a challenge. Some regions – particularly in the south – will resist rule by Sana'a, which is referred to as "the holy center" by those who object to the dominance of the capital and its tribal elites over Yemen's power and wealth. The former level of centralization will not be tenable in post-conflict Yemen.

The distribution of power, wealth and territories within a federal system is a controversial issue, though one that must be resolved through dialogue in order to avoid further conflict. The NDC created a new federal map for Yemen and stipulated that the management of natural resources like oil and gas would be the responsibility of the authorities of the producing state, in partnership with regional and federal authorities. While this would reduce Sana'a's power and expand political participation, the demographic distribution of Yemen must also be considered. The population of the oil-rich governorates of Marib, al-Jawf, Shabwa and Hadramawt constitute only 11.5 percent of the national population.[33] Most Yemenis live in areas without oil wealth. If the federal government is to meet the needs of the whole population, it must retain sufficient power over the allocation of resources. Through dialogue, a federal map should be created that reconciles the demands for decentralization with the need for a government that is able to provide services to all parts of Yemen.

In post-conflict Yemen, strong and effective state institutions should be built in all governorates. The state must provide basic services and security to earn citizens' confidence in the government. This would help reduce Yemenis' reliance on tribal networks and counter the political influence of tribal elites, whose tendency would be to pursue tribal interests over those of the nation as a whole. The state should also ensure access to at least basic services in remote parts of Yemen, where the scarcity of such often creates tribal dependence for survival and can fuel social conflict.

The reconstituted state should embody social justice and inclusive democracy as core national values. This would promote a national Yemeni identity that celebrates and incorporates the country's sectarian, tribal and regional diversity as part of its social fabric and national character. All groups should be included and represented in the reconstitution of Yemen to ensure the state's legitimacy, while respect for minority rights must also be upheld to prevent fear of persecution being used as political coercion. This inclusion must be, however, conditioned on the various groups disarming and fully adopting political, rather than military, means of resolving disputes. Within this state, public sector appointments should be made on the basis of merit, rather than sectarian, tribal or other affiliations unrelated to the responsibilities of the position.

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33) Central Statistics Office, *Statistical Yearbook 2004*, Yemen, 2004; Central Statistics Office, *Statistical Yearbook 2009*, Yemen, 2009.

The withdrawal of foreign patronage would diminish the clout of non-state groups across the country, while an effective, representative government that allocates resources fairly could also diminish the allure of such groups.

The NDC negotiations, which took place from March 2013 until January 2014, attempted to address Yemen's social and political grievances, including those of the Houthis and southerners. While the transition process after the 2011 uprising failed to resolve these divisions, the policies the NDC developed offer a framework that can be built on in a post-conflict settlement. Their shortcomings also offer useful lessons.

The NDC resulted in a final agreement that included draft legislation on transitional justice. Its clauses were to form the basis of mechanisms for national reconciliation, to address the grievances and redress the violations of past wars. In an effort to address sectarianism, the NDC guaranteed religious freedom in Yemen and the right to practice religious rites. It also prohibited the imposition of religious practice by force and proposed state neutrality in religious affairs. It sought to limit tribal political influence; the NDC's working group on good governance recommended abolishing the Tribal Affairs Authority, which it said infringed on the sovereignty of the state.[34] The NDC also affirmed the socio-economic equality of women, setting goals for greater inclusion.

Given the above, the following are principles to consider during the post-conflict state-building process to promote lasting peace and stability:

- A democratic federal system must recognize Yemen's social and religious diversity and political pluralism and acknowledge the new political landscape.

- Dialogue on controversial issues raised in the NDC, including the distribution of wealth and power, must be resumed without external pressure or influence, in accordance with the specific needs of the Yemeni context.

- A national identity should be promoted through an education policy that shapes and reflects national values and encourages the acceptance of Yemen's diverse groups.

- Development projects, state services and in particular education must be accessible in all parts of Yemen, including remote and rural areas.

- Policies and security arrangements should be developed to guarantee freedom of movement in all regions of Yemen and to criminalize discrimination on the basis of gender, sect or belief.

- Public sector positions must be appointed on the basis of merit, and should be allocated to citizens from all parts of the Yemen.

- All militias should be disarmed and fighters must return to civilian life.

- Rights violations suffered during the conflict should be addressed through mechanisms outlined in the draft Law on Transitional Justice and National Reconciliation to prevent reprisals and provide compensation and reparations to victims.

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34) "Final report for the Second Semester of the Working Groups." Working Group on Good Governance, National Dialogue Conference, 2013, http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=106. Accessed February 12, 2019.

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