Writing Sample for Edit

​​Sustainable Development in Crisis: Yemen

Yemen: a country that’s been embroiled in a three-dimensional chess game that weaves emerging rivalries into a multi-layered power struggle that makes its conflict more intractable (International Crisis Group, 2021, p. 13). What was once a bustling state on the southern border of the Gulf, is now suffering one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. It’s economy is shattered, institutions illegitimate, and its people indignant.

Poverty has become the natural state Yemenis live in. Socioeconomic conditions have been deteriorating vastly ever since the start of the violent conflict in 2014. Trade disruptions and fuel supply shortages have limited humanitarian activity (World Bank). The abounding divisions Yemenis face between geographical, political, and religious divisions are stalling sustainable development in Yemen.

The Yemeni society is stuck between a tug of war between the stalled peace process and the continuation of violent conflict. Negotiated ceasefires prove to be unattainable and unsustainable at the least as Yemen’s current civil war has its origins in unresolved “historical grievances” that pertain to the power struggle between the north and the south, economic marginalization, and political disenfranchisement (Egel et al., 2021, p. 3). Protracted negotiations have caused the Yemeni people to become poorer with extremely small opportunities for political participation as the humanitarian crisis worsens. Yemen suffers from a poverty rate of an increased 75 percent with countless cases of cholera and the spread of diseases. The blockade has only worsened the situation which has obstructed the flow of vital supplies of food and medicine (Robinson, 2022). The worsening conditions can be attributed to the growing friction among regional actors including the UAE, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Despite the growing international interest in reaching a political settlement that would put an end to the war, one of the biggest challenges is the absence of a common ground of peaceful settlement between the two main parties in the war, the Houthis and the government of President Hadi. The intransigence of the parties to this conflict and their refusal to make sacrifices to achieve peace has resulted in a Yemeni population that is weak, fragmented and has a minimal chance for meaningful political participation (Egel et al, 2021, p. 37). There are uneven costs to the Yemeni conflict which cause many from outside the country to benefit from Yemen’s new status quo.

Regardless of the provocation and exacerbation of the pain of the Yemenis by regional actors, Yemenis need to play a a prominent and collective role in the reconstructed sustainable peace process. Economic improvements and developments first depend on a politically secure landscape with the cessation of hostilities and reconciliation through peacebuilding. The framework of building an enduring peace in Yemen needs a phased approach focusing on the immediate needs of the Yemenis while working to address the political and economic inequities assures the prospect of peace. The phased approach channels and doubles down on reconciliation efforts that are led by the UN that work to preserve the “sovereignty and geographic integrity” (Egel et al, 2021, p. 34).

The broken-down government of Yemen presents a new opportunity for Yemenis to craft a new more robust and inclusive political system that aims to expand opportunities for meaningful participation. Yemen has a rich history of informal mediation which proves a useful starting point to build effective governance. Yemen’s economic institutions must be rebuilt to ensure that basic needs and services are provided to their citizens while setting the foundation for long-term stability. The transformation of a new economic system in Yemen opens new channels of prosperity that were not politically feasible in the past where the new transformation requires a focus on managing Yemen’s hydrocarbon and water resources (Egel et al, 2021, p. 37). The restructuring of the economy leads to the nebulous phase of post-conflict elections and the transfer of power from the transitional government to the legitimate government. The new government should critically follow the efforts begun in the earlier periods and should be focusing on building healthy democratic institutions.

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