

"A Forward-Looking Analytical Paper"

PEACE ENGINEERING IN YEMEN

A Critical Review of
Historical Reconciliation
Experiences and Lessons
for Constructing a
Sustainable National
Reconciliation
Framework

This paper was prepared as part of the Support Peace in Yemen through Accountability, Reconciliation, and Knowledge exchange (SPARK) project, implemented by the Abductees' Mothers Association and SAM for Rights and Liberties, in partnership with DTI.

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Abductees' Mothers
Association

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ABDUCTEES' MOTHERS ASSOCIATION (AMA)

A women-led human rights organization established in April 2016, composed of female human rights defenders, as well as mothers and wives of detainees. The Association works to monitor and document cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, reporting them to relevant authorities. It aims to build a human rights memory that preserves the victims' rights to accountability and redress in the post-war phase. Furthermore, it strives to amplify the voices of victims in national and international forums and maintains continuous communication with decision-makers and local mediators to secure the release of detainees and provide psychosocial support to survivors and their families.



SAM
Rights & Liberties

SAM FOR RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

An independent, non-profit Yemeni human rights organization that commenced its activities in January 2016 and obtained its operating license in December 2017. The organization seeks to monitor and document human rights violations in Yemen and works to halt these abuses through advocacy in partnership with local and international organizations. It aims to foster human rights awareness through community-based development and works toward holding human rights violators in Yemen accountable in cooperation with international mechanisms and human rights bodies.



Justice4Yemen Pact
ميثاق العدالة لليمن

YEMEN JUSTICE CHARTER

A coalition of human rights organizations and civil society actors united to promote and protect human rights in Yemen. The coalition's mission is to advocate for the rights of the Yemeni people, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. The coalition is committed to addressing the systemic human rights violations Yemen has endured through years of conflict and violence. This Charter works to empower the Yemeni people to claim their rights, increase awareness regarding violations, and advocate for justice and accountability at local, national, and international levels. Guided by the principles of human dignity, equality, justice, and non-discrimination, the coalition believes that through collaboration, its members can end impunity, provide essential support and reparations to victims, and contribute to a more peaceful, just, and prosperous future for Yemen.



The Transitional Justice Ambassadors Forum is an independent national platform aimed at promoting justice and accountability in Yemen, and empowering victims in conflict-affected areas to actively participate in the transitional justice process. The Forum brings together victims, human rights activists, community organizations, experts, and decision-makers. It works to support advocacy efforts, capacity building, and community reconciliation. Through its programs, the Forum seeks to strengthen human rights, ensure an end to impunity, and promote comprehensive and sustainable peace in Yemen.



A non-profit organization committed to the principle of "Doing Development Differently." The Institute implements complex global development programs in conflict-affected, fragile, and closed environments. It funds pioneering thought-leadership initiatives that catalyze innovation and improve lives through evidence-based programming. The Institute works in partnership with communities and leaders to build more resilient, just, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies, ensuring their long-term sustainability.

SUPPORT PEACE IN YEMEN THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY, RECONCILIATION, AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE (SPARK)

This paper was authored and published as part of the Support Peace in Yemen through Accountability, Reconciliation, and Knowledge exchange (SPARK) program. SPARK is an academic and applied framework designed to transition the concepts of Transitional Justice from theoretical discourse into community-based practice.

The project is built on strengthening local awareness and capacity to activate mechanisms for restorative justice, accountability, and reparations (redress). Its ultimate goal is to achieve a sustainable peace rooted in truth, equity, and inclusive participation. It emphasizes that justice is not merely a legal track, but a socio-cultural process that contributes to repairing the national fabric, restoring public trust, and reconstructing collective memory through acknowledgment, apology, accountability, and reconciliation.

The Justice for Yemen Pact (J4Y) The SPARK program includes the Justice for Yemen Pact (J4Y), a coalition of ten local organizations dedicated to promoting transitional justice concepts in Yemen. The coalition works by raising awareness, implementing diverse training and advocacy activities, and activating the role of local communities and political actors in supporting reconciliation and restorative justice pathways. This is intended to empower these stakeholders to participate effectively in the broader transitional justice process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This foresight-oriented analytical paper presents a deep strategic vision under the title “Peace Engineering in Yemen.” It undertakes a systematic deconstruction of Yemen’s current landscape through the lens of the complex historical process that shaped both the state and society. The study is grounded in a central premise – Yemen represents a unique case of a state afflicted by chronic instability, where tribal and regional conflicts have become deeply entangled with intense regional and international power struggles. The paper argues that the core of the problem lies in the structural fragility of previous reconciliation attempts, whether integrative or federal in form, which repeatedly collapsed due to their reliance on elite bargaining and their systematic neglect of the political and economic roots of the conflict. To bridge the gap between political texts and the realities on the ground, the study adopts a composite methodology that integrates historical and systemic analysis, drawing on field data from focused discussion sessions with experts and key actors to propose a national model for sustainable reconciliation capable of preventing recurrent collapse.

In its historical anatomy section, the paper traces what it terms the “genome of collapse” through critical junctures, beginning with the 1970 reconciliation in North Yemen. While that settlement succeeded in halting the bloodshed of the civil war, it committed a fatal engineering error by laying foundations of a soft state, integrating traditional power brokers into state institutions while leaving them effectively above the law. In parallel, South Yemen witnessed the absence of national reconciliation in favor of “logical” revolutionary decisiveness. This ignited internal conflicts within the Socialist Party and culminated in the catastrophe of January 13, 1986 when the party fractured into the Tughma faction (Al-Dhalea and Lahj) and the Zomra faction (Abyan and Shabwa). This split was not merely ideological, between radical and pragmatic currents, but it was also fueled by regional loyalties that the party failed to dissolve, leading to the displacement of thousands of Zomra fighters to the North. These fighters later became a time bomb exploited in the 1994 war. The paper further demonstrates that the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by a persistent pattern of fleeing forward, whereby wars between the two Yemens (1972 and 1979) ended in tactical unity agreements designed to mask internal crises and evade development imperatives, amid proxy conflicts waged by the National Front with backing from both the Soviet and Western blocs in the context of the Cold War.

The paper then analyzes the post-unification phase, noting that the integrative 1990 unity agreement rapidly devolved into a battleground for score-settling, culminating in the 1994 war. This entrenched the logic of the “unity of the victor,” (a unity imposed by force of arms that reflects the dominance of the militarily victorious side and its monopoly over power and wealth, through which the defeated party is politically and economically excluded and marginalized. Such a model undermines the foundations of voluntary partnership and destroys the peaceful social contract), and planted the seeds of southern grievances through political and economic exclusion. During the first decade of the new millennium, Yemen entered a phase marked by the erosion of the center and the rise of the peripheries, as the regime fought six wars in Sa’dah (2004–2010) against the Houthi movement. The paper characterizes these wars as futile based on their use as tactical tools for regional blackmail and internal power balancing. Simultaneously, the regime failed to extinguish the insurgency at an early stage due to the systemic failure of the soft state, which had lost its monopoly over violence. At the time, Houthi motivations centered on seeking political and sectarian recognition in the face of excessive centralization – an issue that the 2008 Doha Agreement failed to address in any fundamental way. Simultaneously, the peaceful Southern Movement emerged in 2007 and was met with repression rather than political accommodation, thereby entrenching separatist tendencies.

In dissecting the causes behind the collapse of reconciliation efforts, the paper identifies a triangle of death composed of structural factors, geopolitical interventions, and the political economy of war. Structurally, excessive centralization, peripheral marginalization, and the absence of institutional enforcement mechanisms rendered political agreements little more than “good intentions” that evaporated at the implementation stage. Politically, reliance on elite bargaining and the granting of judicial immunities (as exemplified by the 2011 Gulf Initiative) entrenched a culture of impunity and transformed violence into a politically profitable strategy. Economically, war evolved into a lucrative occupation for predatory networks benefiting from illicit taxation and currency arbitrage, making peace a direct threat to their financial interests. The division of the monetary system and the existence of two central banks further emerged as a technical obstacle undermining any attempt to unify the budget or the government. Militarily, the integration of armed groups into fragile structures without altering their loyalties effectively trapped the state from within, as revealed by the failures of the 2014 Peace and National Partnership Agreement and the 2019 Riyadh Agreement.

In examining external causes, the paper highlights Yemen’s transformation into a theater of proxy wars with national decision-making becoming organically tethered to external actors. The timing of war and peace was made contingent upon international factors, such as nuclear negotiations or regional security dynamics. This external intervention has deep historical roots dating back to the 1960s, when Yemen became a laboratory for international rivalries that weakened national sovereignty and entrenched a strategy of conflict management rather than conflict resolution. The cumulative consequences of these failures have been catastrophic: the fragmentation of Yemen into cantons ruled by de facto authorities; macro-economic collapse driving poverty rates to nearly 80 percent; and the deterioration of Yemen’s social fabric through sectarian mobilization, regional mobilization, and the politicization of education, producing a society afflicted by collective psychological trauma.

Based on this diagnosis, this paper presents 18 strategic lessons to serve as a compass for engineering a sustainable solution. It stresses the necessity of addressing root causes rather than resorting to superficial fixes and the centrality of comprehensive transitional justice aimed at reparation rather than revenge. It asserts that a federal state alongside a depoliticized economy and unifying monetary policy (both prerequisites for rebuilding trust) represent the only viable option for managing Yemen's diversity. The study calls for generating political will through coordinated domestic and international pressure and for ensuring the state's monopoly over arms through rigorous security engineering that disarms armed groups and unifies military doctrine. It also underscores the importance of cultural security, achieved by purging educational curricula of hate speech and institutionalizing civil partnerships as guarantors and watchdogs overseeing the implementation of agreements.

In conclusion, the paper presents precise operational recommendations addressed to all stakeholders. It urges political forces to adopt reconciliatory transitional justice as an existential choice and to dismantle their entanglement with the war economy. It calls on state institutions to digitize administrative procedures to enhance transparency and to apply integrity-based vetting standards to prevent the recycling of corrupt actors. It further encourages civil society and the private sector to lead community recovery efforts and to invest in "peace dividends" by creating economic alternatives for youth. As for international actors and coalition states, the paper recommends shifting from crisis management to institutional empowerment of the Yemeni state and establishing a large trust fund for reconstruction while respecting national ownership of the solution. The paper's final message is clear: peace in Yemen requires tools fundamentally different from those employed over the past six decades, tools that elevate justice over immunity, institutions over spoils, and that lay foundations for a new social contract capable of ensuring lasting stability.



INTRODUCTION:

The contemporary Yemeni landscape cannot be understood in isolation from the complex historical process through which the modern Yemeni state and society were formed. Yemen is a unique case study in the Middle East: a state that has endured decades of chronic instability, with localized tribal and regional conflicts deeply intertwined with acute regional and international power struggles. Since the September and October revolutions of the 1960s, Yemen has not merely served as a battlefield but also as a laboratory for divergent political experiments and repeated reconciliation attempts, ranging from integrative arrangements and federal projects to full political unification. The defining characteristic of these moments, however, has been their structural fragility and rapid collapse.

Historically, Yemen has experienced recurrent cycles of violence, beginning with the North Yemeni civil war (1962–1970), which concluded with national reconciliation that reintegrated rival forces without addressing the roots of the conflict; followed by the bloody conflicts in the South (the events of 1986); and culminating in the achievement of Yemeni unification in 1990, which quickly devolved into a political crisis ending in the summer war of 1994. These cycles did not end here. They continued through the six Sa'dah wars (2004–2010), gave way to the Arab Spring in 2011, and ultimately descended into large-scale armed conflict from September 2014 onward, followed by the military intervention of the Arab Coalition in March 2015. Today, after a decade of war, Yemen remains trapped in a compounded condition best described as a state of sustained “no war, no peace.” Despite a relative halt in major military operations under fragile ceasefires, the conflict has assumed more dangerous structural forms, manifesting in institutional fragmentation, economic disintegration, and the tearing apart of the social fabric. What was once a struggle over political power has evolved into an existential conflict threatening the very existence of the state. Yemen has effectively fractured into cantons, governed by multiple de facto authorities and sustained by entrenched war economies, rendering traditional political settlement tools inadequate for either comprehending or dismantling this complexity.

The central question of this paper revolves around the dilemma of sustainability versus repetitive collapse in Yemen's peacebuilding experiences. Why do reconciliation agreements in Yemen consistently fail to translate into lasting stability, despite intensive regional and international sponsorship and the existence of political texts that appear at the time to be comprehensive and ideal (such as the 1994 Covenant and Accord Document or the outcomes of the 2013 National Dialogue Conference)?

The research problem lies in the profound gap between the political text of the agreements and the engineered reality on the ground. The study hypothesizes that previous approaches suffered from fundamental flaws: reliance on elite bargaining, centered on power- and resource-sharing (quota-based arrangements) among conflict parties and tribal and political leaders, alongside the systematic marginalization of the political, economic, and social roots of the conflict. This approach produced a form of fragile peace that temporarily served elite interests while leaving the drivers of war dormant beneath the surface. Moreover, the political conflict economy has emerged as a decisive variable largely neglected in most peace initiatives. As the war evolved, networks of economic interests arose that benefited from prolonged disorder, (e.g., illicit taxation, currency arbitrage, and black markets), transforming war into a profitable sector and peace into a threat to these networks. The monetary and banking split (i.e., the existence of two currencies and two monetary policies) constitutes an

additional technical challenge that undermines any possibility of unifying the government or the national budget. Political agreements, such as the Stockholm Agreement or the Riyadh Agreement, failed to address this issue seriously, reducing them to little more than ink on paper.

Regarding the scope and limitations of the study, this paper covers a temporal span extending from 1970, the year of the first major national reconciliation in the North, to the present moment in early 2025, with a forward-looking perspective on the near future. Geographically, the study encompasses the entirety of Yemeni territory within its recognized political boundaries. It maintains a particular analytical focus on historical flashpoints and centers of political and economic gravity (i.e., Sana'a, Aden, Sa'dah, Taiz, and resource-rich areas). Substantively, the paper operates at the intersection of political science, political economy, sociology, and international law, concentrating its analysis on the dynamics of peace agreement failures and the construction of sustainable models. Its limitations lie in its deliberate focus to provide a strategic, engineering framework for decision-makers and mediators, rather than one that delves into the day-to-day tactical minutiae of negotiations.

The contemporary relevance and exceptional significance of this paper stem from its deliberate break with the traditional approaches that have dominated Yemen policy for decades, namely, crisis management through elite bargaining. Its added value lies in moving beyond history as a static narrative and instead interrogating it to deconstruct Yemen's specific genome of collapse, offering a precise diagnosis of the structural pathologies that obstruct stability. The study transcends abstract theorization by introducing a new conceptual framework, "peace engineering," as an alternative to patchwork policies – shifting the solution space from closed diplomatic rooms to the broader institutional, economic, and societal arena. It also demonstrates analytical courage by penetrating the political economy of war, exposing the transformation of war into a profit-generating sector and proposing mechanisms to dismantle this parasitic economy. Ultimately, the paper seeks to present a national model that intelligently balances the administrative decentralization necessary to accommodate diversity with the unifying national identity required to preserve the state, through a reconciliation framework grounded in transitional justice, informed by past lessons, and designed to avoid the twin traps of excessive centralization and full fragmentation.

The primary goal of this study is to develop a national model for sustainable reconciliation based on robust foundations engineered to prevent repeated collapse. To achieve this, the paper first undertakes a critical dissection of Yemen’s historical reconciliation experiences to identify lethal error patterns and to understand the mechanisms that transformed past ceasefires into mere intermissions between wars. Second, it seeks to diagnose Yemen’s immunity to peace by analyzing the deep structural factors that obstruct stability and explaining how war became an economic function in Yemen. Third, the paper aims to distill lessons learned and convert past failures into an engineering manual to guide future negotiations. Finally, it endeavors to design an operational roadmap that integrates equitable transitional justice, broad societal partnership, and structural reforms into a single package, offering a practical alternative that moves Yemen from a zero-sum conflict to the realm of democratic and institutional collaboration.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the paper follows a logically progressive narrative beginning with roots and culminating in outcomes. It opens by establishing the methodological and conceptual framework, clarifying analytical tools, and the meanings of “peace engineering” and the “soft state.” Then, it proceeds with a historical anatomy section that traces the chronology of collapse across major Yemeni reconciliation moments from the 1970s through the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements, offering a critical reading beyond the texts of the agreements. This is followed by a diagnostic section that probes deeply into the triangle of death which has undermined every peace agreement: structural factors, the political economy of war, and geopolitical and ideological drivers. The paper then dedicates a section to examining the catastrophic political, economic, social, and military consequences of the absence of an engineered solution, before extracting lessons as new rules for future engagement. In its final two sections, the paper presents the national model for sustainable reconciliation as a detailed operational plan, concluding with a set of strategic and procedural recommendations precisely tailored to local and international actors, collectively forming a comprehensive roadmap out of Yemen’s long, dark tunnel.

METHODOLOGY:

To ensure analytical rigor and the practical applicability of the proposed national model, the study adopts a composite methodological approach that integrates in-depth theoretical analysis with participatory field research. This inquiry is not confined to diagnosing Yemen's painful past. Rather, it is transformed into an applied engineering exercise aimed at designing an actionable roadmap. At the macro level, the study integrates four complementary methodologies: (1) a historical-analytical approach to trace the "genome" of conflict and reconciliation trajectories over decades and deconstruct recurring elite behavior patterns; (2) a descriptive-analytical approach to densely map the current political, economic, and social realities and identify dynamics of fragmentation; (3) a comparative analysis to extract adaptable lessons from international experiences; and (4) a systemic approach of peace engineering that treats the crisis as a complex system, enabling the design of simultaneous and interlinked solutions.

The research process is anchored in three core methodological principles: (1) structural deconstruction to uncover deep roots rather than surface symptoms; (2) research participation, through the inclusion of local actors, victims, and experts to ensure solutions emerge from lived realities rather solutions that are imposed upon such realities; and (3) engineering foresight, which links problem analysis to the design of an operational roadmap addressing structural imbalances. Together, these principles resulted in a methodology that provides a robust analysis and forward-looking application.

Primary field data constituted the backbone of the study. Four in-depth focus group and discussion sessions were designed and conducted across diverse and strategically significant geographic spaces (Taiz, Ma'rib, and a virtual expert forum abroad), involving more than 60 participants, 40 percent of whom were women. Participants were carefully selected to ensure gender diversity, political pluralism (representatives of various parties), and professional diversity (including academics, legal experts, activists, and victims). These sessions aimed to capture divergent local perspectives on the historical anatomy of the conflict, interrogate collective memory regarding past reconciliation experiences, focus on the technical and rights-based dimensions of transitional justice, and draw on international comparative expertise. Lessons from global experiences (such as Chile and Rwanda) were contextualized and adapted to the Yemeni context, ensuring inclusive representation in shaping the national reconciliation model.

The paper also builds on a comprehensive and critical review of secondary data, including political, historical, and legal literature on Yemen and peacebuilding, to bridge a key research gap: the scarcity of studies offering applied solutions rather than purely descriptive analyses. The review covered three primary source layers. First, it examined core national reference documents, dissecting the texts of historical agreements, from the 1970 reconciliation and the 1994 Covenant and Accord to the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements. In doing so, the study did not simply summarize the provisions. Rather, it uncovered their engineering blind spots, particularly the absence of enforcement mechanisms and guarantees, thereby explaining the repetitive pattern of collapse.

Second, the study drew on authoritative international and United Nations (UN) reports, including reports of the UN Security Council Panel of Experts and World Bank assessments of Yemen's economy. The study utilized these to document shifts in the political economy of conflict and to record violations necessitating transitional justice, lending the analysis empirical credibility through robust quantitative and qualitative data. Third, the review engaged with comparative peacebuilding and transitional justice literature, drawing lessons from international cases such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Chile, to identify successful models of reparations and societal reintegration. Unlike previous studies, this research does not treat the literature as a static archive; rather, it re-interrogates it to connect political, economic, and social variables, moving beyond fragmented, single-dimension readings to offer a holistic model that integrates these knowledge streams into a unified national roadmap.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This paper grounds its analytical architecture in a composite theoretical approach that seeks to move beyond the limitations of traditional liberal peace theories, which have dominated international interventions in Yemen and historically emphasized elite bargaining and conflict management through power-sharing arrangements. Instead, the study adopts a critical theoretical framework that draws on systems theory to establish what it terms “peace engineering.” Within this framework, the Yemeni conflict is not treated as a contingent political event, but rather as a complex, interconnected system in which historical, political, economic, and social inputs interact to produce recurring violent outcomes. From this perspective, the repeated collapse of reconciliation efforts is not the result of isolated misjudgments, but rather a form of systemic failure stemming from structural flaws in the institutional and power-design architecture of the state.

In addition, the paper employs political economy of war theory as a central analytical lens for understanding the persistence of conflict. This theory posits that war in Yemen has shifted from a struggle over grievances to a struggle over spoils, as parasitic networks of interest that profit from prolonged disorder have emerged. As a result, conventional political settlement tools are ineffective, because they fail to address the economic incentives driving key actors. The study further draws on historical institutionalism, particularly the concept of path dependence, to explain how decisions made at critical junctures – such as the 1970 reconciliation – created self-reinforcing trajectories that culminated in today’s fragility. The paper argues that breaking this path requires an engineering intervention capable of redesigning the system rather than merely adjusting its surface-level features. This theoretical synthesis enables a holistic explanation of the phenomenon of recurrent reconciliation collapse and supports the formulation of structural rather than cosmetic solutions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The concept of “peace engineering” constitutes the cornerstone of this study’s conceptual framework. It is an operational term that deliberately transcends the conventional notions of “peacebuilding” or “conflict resolution.” Within the context of this paper, peace engineering is defined as a deliberate, systematic process of designing and planning the architecture of the state and society, based on dismantling political and economic structural landmines and reconstructing institutions according to engineering principles to ensure durability, much as physical structures are designed to resist collapse. Central to this framework is the auxiliary concept of the “genome of collapse,” used to describe the recurring patterns and inherited structural traits that migrate from one agreement to another, reproducing conflict through the same mechanisms even as political actors change..

The study also relies heavily on the concept of the “soft state,” as articulated by Gunnar Myrdal, to characterize the Yemeni condition. The “soft state” refers to a structure wherein institutions and laws exist formally but lack enforcement capacity and remain subordinate to traditional power structures such as tribal authority and armed groups. This produces a persistent gap between text and reality. The concept of transitional justice occupies a central position within this framework, redefined not as a punitive or post-conflict legal mechanism, but as a foundational and functional prerequisite for state-building. Transitional justice is presented as the only viable mechanism capable of dismantling the war economy and breaking the cycle of impunity. These concepts converge with the study’s articulation of sustainable peace as the ultimate objective, defined as peace endowed with self-immunity against collapse and protected by an interlocking web of institutional, societal, and economic guarantees, rather than a temporary negative ceasefire.



ANALYZING YEMENI RECONCILIATION EXPERIENCES: A CHRONOLOGY OF COLLAPSE AND CRISIS RECYCLIN.

Modern Yemeni political history offers a paradigmatic view for studying the phenomenon of peace failure, as political elites repeatedly reproduce the same conflicts using different tools, while reconciliation agreements are transformed from genuine resolution opportunities into temporary pauses of reorganization for the next round of war. By dissecting the most significant moments of conflict and settlement, it becomes possible to identify the structural causes that have rendered peace in Yemen illusory through a chronological tracing of political transformations.

The foundational era of the 1960s–1970s was marked by the troubled birth of the republic in the North and independence in the South, alongside the emergence of fragile governance systems reliant on tribal balancing and party repression rather than institutional consolidation. In the North, following the September 26 Revolution of 1962, the country descended into an eight-year civil war between republicans and royalists, fueled by regional interventions from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The war did not conclude with a decisive military victory, but rather with a regional political settlement known as the Jeddah Conference Reconciliation of 1970. At its core, the agreement constituted a pragmatic bargain: recognition of the republican system and the formal end of monarchy in exchange for incorporating royalist-aligned tribal forces into state institutions (such as the National Council, the military, and the government). While the agreement succeeded in halting bloodshed, it committed a fatal engineering error. Instead of constructing a state with respect for the rule of law and a monopoly over enforcement, it institutionalized the soft state by integrating tribal sheikhs and power brokers into state structures while allowing them to retain autonomous influence, private prisons, and armed authority. As a result, the tribe became stronger than the state, obstructing the emergence of modern institutions and planting seeds of future state fragility.

In the South, national reconciliation was absent in favor of revolutionary decisiveness. Internal conflicts culminated in the catastrophe of January 13, 1986, when violent clashes erupted between factions of the Yemeni Socialist Party in what became known as the “Tughma–Zomra” conflict. The Tughma faction, rooted in Al-Dhalea and Lahj, was led by figures such as Ali Antar, Abdul Fattah Ismail, and Ali Salem al-Beidh. The Zomra faction, based in Abyan and Shabwa, was aligned with then-President Ali Nasser Mohammed. The party’s fragmentation resulted from the convergence of ideological disputes between a radical Marxist-Leninist current and a more pragmatic, regionally open current, compounded by entrenched regionalism that the party failed to dissolve institutionally. The absence of democratic mechanisms for managing internal disagreement transformed competition over party leadership into an existential struggle for power. The defeat and displacement of the Zomra faction, thousands of whose fighters fled north, created a tinderbox, later exploited during the 1994 war. This experience offers a critical historical lesson: exclusion in one part of the country inevitably destabilizes the other.

During the 1970s–1980s, Yemen witnessed two inter-state wars between the North and South (1972 and 1979), as well as proxy conflicts waged through the National Front in central regions. These confrontations functioned as proxy wars between the Soviet-backed Marxist regime in the South and the Saudi- and Western-backed regime in the North, with the South employing the National Front as a military instrument to destabilize the North and impose ideological agendas within the Cold War context. These wars were driven less by national objectives than by ruling elites' attempts to export internal crises and compensate for their failure to achieve political legitimacy or economic development. Armed conflict served as a tool for internal mobilization and institutional camouflage. Here emerges the Yemeni reconciliation paradox, a persistent flight forward, whereby each devastating war ended with an agreement to accelerate integrative unification, as in the Cairo Agreement of 1972 and the Kuwait Statement of 1979. Rather than reflecting political maturity, these agreements functioned as tactical escapes from domestic crises. Instead of addressing structural economic and political failures in Sana'a and Aden, both regimes rushed toward a romanticized unity project without preparing the institutional, economic, or social foundations, turning unity into a battlefield for deferred conflicts rather than a development project.

In May 1990, unification was achieved through an immediate integrative model. Yet profound divergences in political and economic doctrine quickly surfaced, transforming the transitional period into a contest of assassinations and military positioning rather than institutional integration. In an attempt to avert collapse, the Covenant and Accord Document was signed in Amman in 1994, arguably the most sophisticated political text produced by Yemeni forces, containing an advanced vision of administrative and fiscal decentralization. Despite its quality, the document failed, because it was – in essence – a secession document written in the language of unity. Signed in Jordan while armies mobilized on the ground, it lacked trust, enforcement mechanisms, and a credible international guarantor, rendering it ineffective. The ensuing 1994 summer war culminated in the military victory of the Saleh–Islamist–Zomra alliance over the Socialist Party, entrenching the logic of unity by force and unity of the victor. Tens of thousands of southern civil servants and military personnel were dismissed, properties were looted, and economic exclusion became systemic, planting the deep-rooted southern grievances that later evolved into demands for secession and effectively destroyed the social contract of voluntary unity.

Between 2000 and 2011, Yemen entered a phase of central erosion and peripheral assertion, marked by armed rebellion in the north and peaceful protest in the south. The regime fought six futile wars against the Houthi movement in Sa'dah (2004–2010), culminating in the Doha Agreement of 2008, mediated by Qatar. These wars were futile, not because of military incapacity but because they functioned as tactical tools for elite power balancing and regional leverage (particularly vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia) rather than as efforts toward decisive resolution. The regime's failure to extinguish the insurgency stemmed from systemic failure and the flawed design of the soft state, which lacked enforcement capacity and a monopoly over violence amid entrenched tribal and sectarian loyalties within the military. Repressive security solutions and loyalty-buying practices transformed war into a profit-generating sector, depriving the regime of any incentive or capacity to end the conflict. Houthi motivations centered on seeking political and sectarian recognition in opposition to excessive centralization, mobilizing a distinct faith-based identity that reclassified society and legitimized force imposed by non-state actors. The Doha Agreement collapsed, because it failed to address the ideological or developmental roots of the Sa'dah issue, serving instead as a tactical pause for both sides. Simultaneously, the Southern Peaceful Movement emerged in 2007 as a rights-based protest by retired military personnel. The regime responded with repression and neglect, transforming the movement into a political force demanding secession. This response exposed the regime's inability to absorb change and its overreliance on security solutions, entrenching separatist tendencies.

With the advent of the Yemeni Spring and Yemen's systemic collapse between 2011–2015, the Gulf Initiative of 2011 functioned as a lifeline for the regime, orchestrating a transition of power that granted Ali Abdullah Saleh immunity in exchange for resignation. Critically, the initiative constituted an elite settlement that eliminated transitional justice, recycling the same regime under new leadership and marginalizing rising actors, such as the Houthis and the Southern Movement. In turn, this pushed these groups to seek legitimacy through force. The National Dialogue Conference (2013–2014) was theoretically unprecedented, yet practically detached from reality. While participants debated the future state structure in conference halls, the Houthis captured cities through force. The gap between dialogue and battlefield proved fatal. The Peace and National Partnership Agreement, signed on September 21, 2014, the night Sana'a fell, marked the most dangerous turning point and effectively certified the death of the state. Its security annex legalized armed groups under the label of "popular committees," enabling the internal capture of institutions and demonstrating that coerced partnership does not build states.

From 2015 onward, Yemen's conflict became fully international with the intervention of the Arab Coalition. Geneva and Kuwait talks failed due to rigid adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which demanded Houthi disarmament and withdrawal – conditions perceived as political suicide by the Houthi movement, which controlled territory on the ground. The Stockholm Agreement (2018) focused narrowly on halting the Hodeida offensive to avert humanitarian catastrophe. Critically, it represented a model of fragmented engineering: freezing one front enabled escalation elsewhere, while deliberate ambiguity over port revenues entrenched financial division, managing rather than resolving conflict. The Riyadh Agreement (2019) sought to unify the internationally recognized government and the Southern Transitional Council as the anti-Houthi front. While it succeeded formally in forming a power-sharing government, it failed substantively in military and security integration, leaving Aden under multiple armed authorities and institutionalizing a state with two heads and two armies.

ANALYZING THE CAUSES OF THE COLLAPSE OF RECONCILIATION AGREEMENTS (1970–2019): DISSECTING THE COMPLEX ANATOMY OF FAILURE:

When the trajectory of Yemeni reconciliation efforts from 1970 to the present is subjected to rigorous critical analysis, it becomes evident that the collapse of these agreements was not a series of incidental mishaps nor merely the result of individual ill intentions. Rather, their collapse represents the inevitable outcome of a deeply intertwined system of structural, political, and economic dysfunctions. These factors interact to produce what may be described as a peace-resistant immune system, i.e., one that instinctively rejects any settlement once it threatens the interests of dominant networks. This section provides a detailed deconstruction of these causes, with particular attention to the gaps exposed by Yemen's historical experience.

FIRST:
STRUCTURAL AND
INSTITUTIONAL CAUSES:
THE DEEP ROOTS OF
STATE FRAGILITY

The first core dilemma lies in the very nature of the architecture of the Yemeni state, which evolved over decades through fragile compromises to produce a hybrid and fundamentally unsustainable political structure.

1. Failure to address root causes and reliance on patchwork solutions: Reconciliation initiatives largely focused on power-sharing among political, tribal, and partisan elites as a means of temporary stabilization, while neglecting the structural reforms essential to state-building. These included addressing historical grievances, correcting the form of the state, and ensuring justice in resource distribution and citizenship. As a result, the drivers of conflict remained latent, ready to erupt at any moment.
2. The construction of a soft state: Following the 1970 reconciliation, the republican system in North Yemen was built on a flawed equation, integrating tribal sheikhs and traditional power centers into state institutions while leaving them effectively above the law. This hybrid arrangement crippled the state's ability to monopolize enforcement or enforce the rule of law. Formal institutions, such as the military and the judiciary, became hollow shells, while real power resided in informal networks loyal to the tribe or leader rather than the constitution. Consequently, peace agreements that addressed formal institutions collapsed, because they targeted façades while ignoring the true centers of power operating behind the scenes.
3. The fragility of the rentier state: Historically, the Yemeni state relied on oil rents and foreign aid to purchase loyalty rather than building a productive economy and a tax system that binds citizens to the state ("no taxation without representation"). This rentier structure transformed conflict into an existential struggle over resources rather than programs: whoever controlled the "tap" controlled the state. Institutions were marginalized, and reconciliation processes were stripped of any meaningful developmental substance.

4. Excessive centralization and the marginalization of the periphery: Despite Yemen's geographic, sectarian, and cultural diversity, successive regimes imposed a rigidly centralized model, most visible after the 1994 war. The concentration of power and wealth in Sana'a, marginalized regions such as the South, Sa'dah, and Tihama, reducing them to dependent peripheries. Reconciliation efforts failed because they sought to fix the center or replace its occupants rather than redistributing power geographically in a just manner. This kept regional grievances alive and turned the struggle for the presidency in Sana'a into a zero-sum conflict.
5. Absence of institutional guarantees and enforcement mechanisms: Yemen has historically lacked neutral, credible guarantor institutions. With the politicization of the judiciary and the military, no trusted domestic third party existed to monitor or enforce agreements, such as the Document of Pledge and Accord or the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. This institutional vacuum rendered even the most carefully drafted agreements practically meaningless, as no deterrent mechanisms existed to punish spoilers. Agreements thus degenerated into expressions of goodwill that evaporated at the first test.
6. Ruralization of cities and militarization of the tribe: Instead of rural areas being urbanized, the reverse occurred. Tribal norms and customary law came to dominate public life in cities and institutions. Agreements collapsed because they treated the state as a modern entity, when, in reality, the state was closer to a tribal confederation in formal attire, where law was merely a negotiable viewpoint subject to the balance of tribal force.
7. The crisis of dual legitimacy and the absence of a social contract: Yemen has long suffered from chronic tension between revolutionary legitimacy (claimed by actors such as the Houthis or revolutionary movements) and constitutional/electoral legitimacy. Past reconciliations failed because they attempted to reconcile competing legitimacies without forging a new social contract defining who the Yemeni citizen is and what constitutes a shared national identity. The state thus remained an administrative shell devoid of a unifying national spirit.

SECOND:
INTERNAL POLITICAL
CAUSES: THE SPOILS
MENTALITY AND ELITE
BARGAINING

Yemen's political culture among elites has exhibited characteristics that directly contributed to the failure of every peace attempt and the perpetual recycling of crises.

1. The elite-bargaining approach: Peace engineering in Yemen, from the Haradh Conference (1965) to the Riyadh Agreement (2019), focused almost exclusively on appeasing top leaders through quota-based power sharing and ministerial distributions. This approach rested on the flawed assumption that silencing leaders guarantees stability. The systematic exclusion of grassroots constituencies and local communities rendered agreements elitist and detached, causing them to collapse once elites disagreed over spoils, as they lacked a protective social base.
2. Absence of transitional justice and the culture of impunity: Granting judicial immunity to the former president and his regime under the 2011 Gulf Initiative constitutes one of the gravest strategic errors in Yemen's reconciliation history. It entrenched the belief that violence is both politically safe and profitable. Instead of truth-telling and reparations, war criminals were recycled as political leaders, perpetuating cycles of political and social vengeance. This hollowed out reconciliation of its moral and legal content and emboldened new actors, such as the Houthis, to commit abuses with foreknowledge that accountability would be absent.
3. Elite failure in managing diversity: Political elites failed to devise a governance formula, federal or decentralized, capable of accommodating Yemen's sectarian and regional diversity. Clinging to a "sacralized centralism," elites in Sana'a resisted National Dialogue outcomes, particularly the federal regions proposal, as it threatened their entrenched interests. This resistance accelerated the coup and the descent into war.
4. Personalization of power and erosion of institutional politics: Political parties and institutions devolved into vehicles serving individuals or families rather than societal interests. This institutional hollowing meant reconciliation agreements were signed between persons, not institutions. Once these individuals exited the scene, through assassination or removal, the agreements collapsed instantly, as they lacked binding force over their constituencies.

5. The zero-sum mindset: Yemeni actors operate under a deeply entrenched belief that the survival of the other equates to self-negation. Such absolutist positions render the painful compromises essential to peace politically impossible and reduce agreements to tactical pauses before an imagined decisive showdown.
6. Systematic political exclusion (“winner-takes-all” politics): Previous wars (1994, the Sa’dah wars) entrenched an exclusionary political culture in which victors seek not merely military defeat but the political, functional, and historical erasure of their adversaries, as seen in the purge of southern cadres after 1994 and current Houthi practices. Peace thus becomes an existential risk, as loss implies political annihilation.

THIRD:
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL CAUSES: THE
HIDDEN ENGINES OF
(IN)STABILITY

This dimension is arguably the most dangerous and neglected in political settlement literature, as war has evolved from a power struggle into an integrated economic system.

1. Severe developmental disparities: Stark inequalities in development and service provision, between urban and rural areas, and especially between North and South, have deepened grievances across regions and social strata.
2. The political economy of war: Prolonged conflict has produced a new class of war profiteers on all sides, fuel traders, arms brokers, checkpoint commanders, currency speculators. Estimates suggest the war economy generates billions annually outside formal channels. For these entrenched networks, peace means financial suffocation and legal accountability; hence, they actively sabotage rapprochement, leveraging financial and military influence to manufacture crises whenever resolution looms.
3. Dual financial and monetary crisis: Unilateral measures, relocating the central bank, banning currency circulation, printing money without coverage, created a deeply fragmented reality beyond politics. The existence of two currencies, two exchange rates, and two central banks with conflicting policies poses a technical landmine beneath any unity government. No previous agreement resolved this dilemma, leaving institutional reunification structurally impossible.

4. **Poverty as a recruitment engine:** With service collapse, salary suspensions, and poverty rates nearing 80 percent, battlefronts became the only viable labor market for youth. Warring parties exploit economic desperation for recruitment, ensuring a steady flow of fighters at minimal cost. Peace that fails to deliver immediate economic dividends, salaries and services, cannot compete with the war economy.
5. **Collapse of the middle class (the safety valve):** War and disastrous economic policies crushed the middle class, teachers, academics, professionals, historically the backbone of peaceful change and reconciliation. Society polarized into an overwhelming poor majority dependent on aid or recruitment, facilitating the commodification of loyalties.
6. **Accumulation of historical grievances:** A long record of abuses, war crimes, and corruption, left unaddressed by genuine transitional justice or reparations, continues to undermine trust and obstruct sustainable reconciliation.
7. **Politicization of humanitarian and service provision:** Humanitarian files, salaries, road openings, airports, have been weaponized as bargaining chips rather than neutralized. Popular suffering became fuel for negotiations, eroding public faith in reconciliation processes that fail to secure basic livelihoods.

FOURTH: SECURITY AND MILITARY CAUSES- THE DILEMMA OF ARMS AND DOCTRINE

1. Loss of the state's monopoly on force and the rise of parallel armies: Yemen has become an open arms market. More critically, armed groups have developed capabilities rivaling regular armies. Agreements such as the Peace and Partnership Agreement (2014) and the Riyadh Agreement (2019) collapsed because they pursued political integration before military dismantlement, or merged forces without altering loyalties. Conflict was thus transplanted into state institutions, turning ministries into armed fiefdoms. Most agreements lacked credible disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) mechanisms, resulting in a military that was merely an aggregation of rival factions in uniform.
2. Loyalty-based rather than national military doctrine: The Yemeni military fragmented along tribal, sectarian, regional, and external patronage lines. The absence of a unified national military doctrine renders integration unworkable and transforms any future army into a ticking time bomb.
3. The rampant proliferation of weapons: Yemen has become one of the most heavily armed societies in the world. The widespread availability of medium and heavy weapons drastically lowers the cost of rebellion and erodes the state's coercive authority.

FIFTH:
IDEOLOGICAL AND
IDENTITY-BASED
CAUSES:

The conflict is no longer purely political; identity dimensions have intensified its ferocity and intractability.

1. Rise of competing sub-identities and narratives: The erosion of a unifying national identity and the degradation of education fueled the rise of sub-identities. The Houthi “faith-based identity,” which reorders society along sectarian and genealogical lines, the Southern identity as an autonomous national cause, and other regional identities now dominate. These identities seek recognition or separation rather than partnership within a single state, complicating mediation efforts that treat Yemen as a homogeneous political unit.
2. Booby-trapping the future: sectarianizing education: Systematic alteration of curricula and the dismantling of national identity in favor of narrow sectarian or regional identities have produced a generation saturated with hatred, superiority, and victimhood narratives. Reconciliation thus becomes a battle over consciousness, not merely signatures, as mines have been planted in minds as much as in terrain.
3. Sectarian mobilization and erosion of collective consciousness: Decades of war propaganda and ideological mobilization created deep social and psychological fractures. The transformation of education and public space produced a new generation indoctrinated with exclusionary combat doctrines, constituting a long-term mine that no elite agreement can easily defuse.

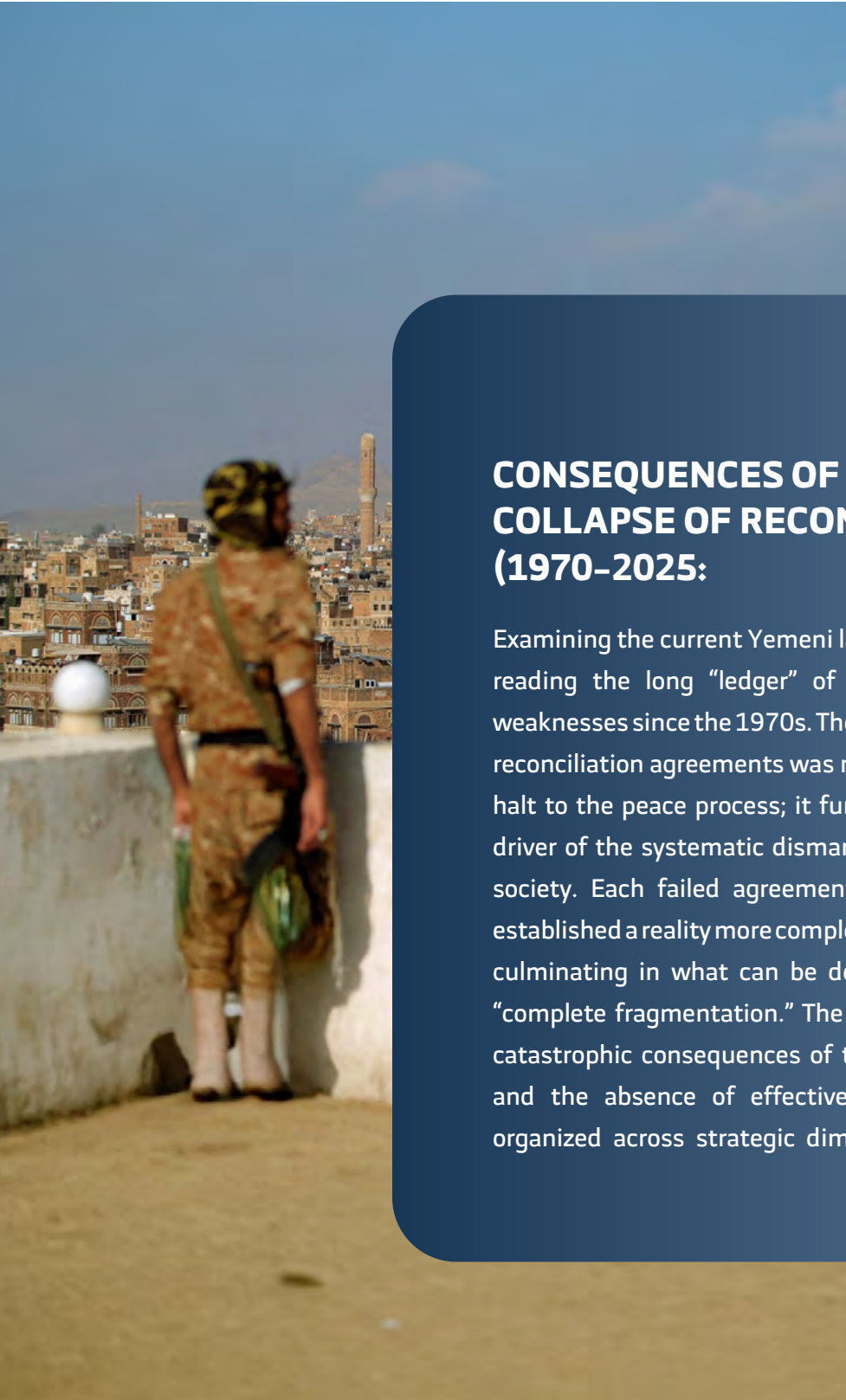
SIXTH: EXTERNAL (GEOPOLITICAL) CAUSES:

External intervention has shifted from a facilitating factor to a decisive architect of conflict trajectories.

1. Proxy war and conflicting agendas: Yemen has become an arena for regional and international score-settling, rendering national decision-making fully hostage to external actors. This dynamic has deep historical roots: since the September and October revolutions, Yemen has served as a laboratory for externally polarized experiments, from the 1962–1970 civil war fueled by Egyptian and Saudi intervention to Cold War proxy conflicts during partition. Since 2015, full internationalization and coalition intervention entrenched this dependency, transforming external actors into primary conflict architects. War and peace timelines are now linked to nuclear or security files in distant capitals, reducing Yemeni negotiators to spectators. Yemen has become a “mailbox” for regional messages, while international strategy prioritizes conflict management and maritime security over genuine resolution, paralyzing sovereignty.
2. The strategy of managing, not resolving, conflict: International behavior indicates a preference for containment over resolution, protecting shipping lanes and borders rather than addressing root causes. This is evident in the Stockholm Agreement’s focus on Hodeida while neglecting other fronts. Such selectivity prolongs war and entrenches a destructive no-war/no-peace equilibrium.
3. International decision paralysis (the trap of Resolution 2216): Clinging to early-war resolutions such as UNSC Resolution 2216, which demand Houthi surrender despite radically altered power balances, created a reality gap that obstructs political settlement. International references became constraints rather than solutions.
4. Multiplicity of tracks and mediations: Overlapping UN, Omani, and Saudi mediation tracks fragmented efforts and weakened the legal authority of international decisions. Recent bilateral talks, though significant, risk marginalizing other national forces and producing arrangements that secure regional borders while delivering Yemen’s interior to a single actor, laying the groundwork for a more violent future cycle..

Synthetic Conclusion

The collapse of reconciliation in Yemen is the product of the interaction of a “triangle of death”: corrupt, rent-seeking political elites (internal factor), a war economy that finances perpetual violence (economic factor), and external intervention that treats Yemen as a regional message board (external factor). Any future approach that fails to confront all three sides simultaneously, through peace engineering that dismantles elite-resource linkages, neutralizes the war economy, and restores national decision-making, will merely add another entry to Yemen’s long archive of failed agreements.



CONSEQUENCES OF THE COLLAPSE OF RECONCILIATIONS (1970–2025):

Examining the current Yemeni landscape is essentially reading the long “ledger” of accumulated political weaknesses since the 1970s. The collapse of successive reconciliation agreements was not merely a temporary halt to the peace process; it functioned as a dynamic driver of the systematic dismantling of the state and society. Each failed agreement left deep scars and established a reality more complex than its predecessor, culminating in what can be described as a state of “complete fragmentation.” The following outlines the catastrophic consequences of the protracted conflict and the absence of effective structural solutions, organized across strategic dimensions:

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES:

1. Erosion of national sovereignty and external dependency: The most severe political outcome of the failure of internal reconciliations has been the complete “internationalization” of the Yemeni file. With the local elite unable to reach consensus, as witnessed after the collapse of the 1994 Document of Pledge and Accord and the failure of the 2014 Peace and Partnership Agreement, the center of sovereign decision-making shifted from Sana’a to regional and international capitals. Local actors transformed from “national partners” into “agents” of external agendas, making the restoration of national sovereignty and the formulation of an internal solution contingent upon disentangling a complex web of international interests before local ones.
2. Fragmentation of the political geography (“cantons”): The collapse of the central state in 2014 and the failure of reconstruction efforts (e.g., the 2019 Riyadh Agreement) effectively transformed Yemen into a “confederation of warlords.” Multiple authorities now exist: The Houthis (Ansar Allah) in the north and center, the Southern Transitional Council in Aden and surrounding areas (which later collapsed in January 2026), the internationally recognized government in Ma’rib, Hadramout, and Taiz, and semi-independent local authorities in the western coast and Al-Mahrah. This reality undermines both the notion of a “unitary state” and even a “federal state,” establishing an undeclared yet deeply entrenched division of the country.
3. Legitimacy and institutional crisis: The conflict has eroded constitutional and legal legitimacy. The House of Representatives is divided and paralyzed; the presidency operates from exile or through a multi-allegiance presidential council; authorities in Sana’a derive legitimacy from “revolution” and “control” rather than the constitution. This constitutional vacuum renders any future political transition legally precarious.
4. Representation crisis and weakened legitimacy: Civil and political representation has been undermined; constitutional legitimacy has eroded, and de facto authorities lack both legal and popular legitimacy. The Yemeni citizen is effectively a “political orphan,” with no legitimate representative to negotiate on their behalf or safeguard their rights in international forums.
5. Decline of political parties and erosion of pluralism: Prolonged conflict and failed reconciliations transformed civil political parties from “drivers of the national project” into “clientelist entities” aligned with internal or external actors. Parties lost

their initiative, serving primarily to legitimize de facto authorities, leaving a political vacuum filled by pre-national structures such as tribes, sects, and regional groups.

6. Institutionalization of political quota over citizenship: One of the most damaging structural distortions of past reconciliations has been the replacement of merit with loyalty and political quotas. Public institutions shifted from serving citizens to acting as spoils shared among parties and armed groups to secure loyalty.
7. Erosion of citizenship: This approach marginalized independent national expertise and fostered a belief among citizens that access to rights and services depends on political affiliation rather than legal citizenship, undermining equal opportunity and entrenching a system of narrow loyalties.
8. Militarization of sovereign decision-making and the death of diplomacy: Political decision-making is no longer the product of constitutional institutions but is hostage to armed actors. Military actors dictate policy, while politicians merely justify military actions, reducing diplomacy to a procedural façade. Consequently, Yemen has become an “open arena” for international conflict, with decisive decisions made abroad, often disregarding national interest.

II. MILITARY AND SECURITY CONSEQUENCES

1. Collapse of state monopoly on force: Historically, the Yemeni state, despite weaknesses, controlled the bulk of heavy weaponry. Today, armed groups have broken this monopoly, making the restoration of state authority impossible without complex “military engineering” for disarmament, a challenge unmet by any previous agreements.
2. Emergence of “hybrid armies”: The integration of armed groups into military and security structures without dismantling their factional ideologies has created internally “booby-trapped” institutions. Combatants wear state uniforms while pursuing factional agendas, turning the military into a battleground rather than a stability tool.
3. Weapons proliferation and regional threat: Yemen has become an open arms market, facilitating the resurgence of extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda. The ongoing war has transformed Yemeni territory into a threat to regional security and international

maritime navigation, prompting multinational military alliances to secure strategic waterways and adding layers of complexity to sovereignty and peace.

4. Exponential growth of crises: Fragile agreements did not resolve security crises but “buried” them, only for them to resurface more violently. Previously administrative grievances evolved into large-scale armed conflicts, increasing the cost of security solutions.
5. Militarization of childhood (“future landmines”): Beyond traditional recruitment, children are systematically indoctrinated in camps and summer programs, glorifying death and instilling hatred of the other, posing long-term cultural challenges to disarmament.
6. Maritime insecurity and internationalization of waterways: The absence of a unified state transformed Yemen’s coasts from economic assets into global security threats. Attacks on international shipping and militarization of islands have drawn major powers’ fleets into Yemeni waters, imposing long-term constraints on maritime sovereignty that may persist decades beyond the war.

III. SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

1. Erosion of trust between citizens and political elites: Decades of undermined agreements and empty promises have created an unprecedented “trust gap” between the Yemeni public and political leadership.
2. Collective despair: Citizens view closed-door negotiations with skepticism, seeing them as mere “performances” for redistributing political and financial influence without addressing humanitarian concerns.
3. Social alienation: Frustration has led large segments of youth and civil society to disengage from peaceful political action, leaving a vacuum filled by radicalization or migration, undermining the social support essential for political stability.
4. Unparalleled humanitarian catastrophe: According to UN and World Bank reports, the ongoing war since 2014 has displaced over 4.5 million people internally (70% women), created severe food insecurity affecting approximately 19 million Yemenis, and left more than 50% of healthcare facilities non-functional, facilitating the return of previously eradicated diseases such as cholera and polio.

5. Feminization of suffering and gender-role transformations: Women have shouldered the economic burden after losing male breadwinners, yet they have been exposed to unprecedented violations (kidnapping, detention, public shaming), fracturing traditional family structures and increasing rates of domestic violence and divorce.
6. Forced demographic engineering (“ruralization” of cities): Mass displacement, both internal and external, has radically altered the population map. Smaller cities became “mega-camps” (e.g., Ma’rib), while major cities lost much of their elites (Sana’a, Aden). This displacement reshapes cultural identities, undermining urban values in favor of militarized rural norms and intensifying sectarian and regional segregation.
7. Erosion of identity and education: The collapse of the education system and halted teacher salaries led to millions of school dropouts, creating a “war generation” accustomed to violence and competing sub-national identities rather than a unified national identity.
8. Fragmentation of social fabric (sectarianism and regionalism): Unlike prior conflicts (e.g., 1994), which remained elite-driven, the current war penetrates deep into society. Sectarian polarization (Zaidi/Shafi’i) has reached unprecedented levels, fueled by modified curricula and incendiary media. Regional hatred (North/South) has also escalated as a response to political grievances, creating long-lasting social fissures.
9. Collective psychological trauma: The war has caused deep, untreated psychological damage, including widespread anxiety, depression, and PTSD among children, women, and returning fighters. Yemeni society has become a “traumatized society,” reflected in increased crime, social violence, and aggressive behavior, posing major challenges to future reconciliation and recovery programs.

IV. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

1. **The economic dimension represents a “black hole” that has swallowed the state’s and citizens’ resources as a result of weak political solutions:** Investment isolation and erosion of the productive base: Yemen is, by all measures, a “high-risk” country. Repeated collapses of agreements, from the 1994 Document of Pledge and Accord to the 2014 Peace and Partnership Agreement and beyond, have cemented the perception among investors that the country’s future is unpredictable.

- Suspension of strategic projects: Instability has frozen mega-projects capable of transforming Yemen's economy, such as the liquefied natural gas project (operating at minimal capacity or halted), the stalled development of the Aden Free Zone (intended as an international economic hub), and the cessation of new oil exploration.
 - Flight of domestic capital: Even more critical than the absence of foreign investment is the outflow of Yemeni capital. Estimates indicate that billions of dollars have left Yemen for neighboring countries, Turkey, and Egypt, fueling their economies instead of being invested domestically.
2. Entrenchment of the "shadow economy" and parasitic interest networks: With every failed peace process, the state receded in favor of parallel non-state entities, creating a parasitic economy thriving on the ruins of formal institutions.
- Legitimization of the black market: The black market shifted from a temporary phenomenon to an "organized economic sector," managed by influential actors benefiting from the ongoing conflict, laundering money through real estate and imports.
 - Toll-based and checkpoint economies: Illegal taxation at checkpoints and dual customs points has replaced formal taxation, increasing the cost of living and bankrupting hundreds of small and medium enterprises unable to bear the dual levies.
3. Macro-economic collapse (inflation and currency erosion): Yemen's economy relies on imports for over 90% of its food and medical supplies. The failure of reconciliation has removed the "governmental guarantee" and foreign currency reserves.
- Cycle of inflation and poverty: Currency collapse has obliterated citizens' purchasing power, raising poverty levels to between 71% and 80%, particularly affecting youth and women.
 - Absence of sustainable external support: Donor countries and financial institutions consistently link major economic and development aid to the presence of a "unified government and comprehensive peace." Without reconciliation, Yemen remains confined to "emergency humanitarian aid," depriving it of developmental funding necessary to build the economy.

4. **Structural infrastructure destruction and opportunity costs:** The cost of conflict is measured not only by what is destroyed but also by the time and money wasted on reconstruction instead of expansion.
- Skyrocketing reconstruction costs: Estimated at over \$25 billion at a minimum, making Yemen unattractive for domestic or foreign investment for years to come.
 - Resource drain on repairs: Scarce resources are diverted to restore destroyed services rather than expand infrastructure to meet population growth, creating an expanding “service gap.”
 - Militarization of infrastructure: Ports and airports, vital economic arteries, have frequently been turned into military targets or zones of influence, raising shipping and insurance costs to astronomical levels passed on to consumers.
5. **Erosion of human capital and labor market distortions:** The most enduring economic damage affects the Yemeni workforce.
- Brain drain: Yemen has experienced the largest exodus of medical, engineering, and academic professionals in its history. Replacing them will take decades.
 - Militarization of society: Due to poverty and salary suspension, thousands of youths abandoned education or crafts to join the fronts as the only source of livelihood, transforming “bearing arms” into an economic activity at the expense of production and agriculture.
6. **Institutional fragmentation and currency wars:** The collapse of reconciliation and failed Stockholm and Riyadh agreements not only caused political division but undermined the state’s financial sovereignty via the split of the central bank (between Sana’a and Aden). This division created catastrophic conflicts between two divergent monetary policies: one side enforcing a “fixed rate” on an illiquid and artificially strong currency (Houthis), and the other implementing managed float with a new currency suffering inflation and devaluation (government). The result is a “currency war” and two financial systems within one state, creating inter-provincial financial barriers, exorbitant transfer fees sometimes reaching 100%, economic isolation, paralyzed domestic trade, spiraling service costs, and failure to pay over one million public sector salaries since 2016, further deepening the humanitarian crisis.

7. **Economic contraction and widespread poverty:** World Bank estimates indicate Yemen's economy contracted by over 50% during the war years. The halt in oil and gas exports (accounting for 70% of the state budget) drained revenues, raising poverty rates to 71–80% and virtually eroding the middle class, dividing the country between a tiny wealthy minority and a vast majority living in extreme poverty.
8. **Destruction of the middle class and bureaucracy:** Salary cuts and currency collapse devastated the middle class (state employees, teachers, doctors), stripping the state of its institutional memory and human capital. Many migrated or took marginal jobs, resulting in the irrecoverable erosion of human capital.
9. **Boom of the “toxic economy”:** With regulatory absence and economic despair, drug and contraband trade flourished as a rapid source of revenue to finance the war. Yemen shifted from a transit zone to a consumer market, creating catastrophic economic, security, and health consequences that threaten to trap an entire generation in addiction.
10. **Internal customs border wars (fragmentation of commerce):** Yemen is no longer a single market; internal customs checkpoints impose dual tariffs, increasing transport and insurance costs, making movement of goods from Aden to Sana'a more expensive than importing them from China, destroying the advantages of a unified national market.

The economic consequences of the collapse of Yemeni reconciliations are no longer “side effects” of conflict but have become structural realities. The state has eroded in favor of quasi-states, the army fragmented under armed groups, the formal economy collapsed for the black market, and the socially cohesive society fragmented under lethal identities. This complex reality confirms the study's hypothesis that patchwork solutions no longer work, and urgent, comprehensive “engineering” interventions are needed to rebuild the social and economic contract from the ground up rather than merely patch a decayed political system.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM YEMENI RECONCILIATION (1970-2019) FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE: FROM “CRISIS MANAGEMENT” TO “ENGINEERING THE SOLUTION”

A historical reading of Yemen’s conflict, with its heavy legacy of agreements signed in ink barely dry before being washed in blood, highlights a clear fact: The Yemeni crisis is not unsolvable, but it is resistant to traditional tools of resolution. Repeated failure is not fate but the natural result of applying the same inputs and expecting different outcomes. Based on the preceding historical and structural analysis, eighteen strategic lessons emerge as a “compass” for any future peace engineering that seeks sustainability:

**NECESSITY OF
RADICAL SOLUTIONS
AND THE END
OF PATCHWORK
APPROACHES:**

Necessity of radical solutions and the end of patchwork approaches: Agreements from 1970–2019 proved that “pain management” through temporary fixes or buying time does not end war; it incubates it. Sustainable peace requires confronting the deep roots of conflict rather than trimming its visible branches.

**PRIORITY OF
TRANSITIONAL
JUSTICE AND
LOCALIZATION OF
MECHANISMS:**

Priority of transitional justice and localization of mechanisms: Absence of transitional justice and blanket political immunity has historically accumulated grievances, fostering impunity. Sustainable peace requires comprehensive transitional justice, combining formal legal mechanisms with localized, customary processes for truth, reparations, and institutional reform.

**ENGAGING LOCAL
COMMUNITIES
AND SECURING
OWNERSHIP:**

Engaging local communities and securing ownership: Top-down solutions failed in Geneva and Kuwait; local communities, including tribal leaders, women, youth, and civil society, must actively participate, transforming reconciliation into a social contract endorsed by local governance structures.

**NATIONAL
OWNERSHIP
OF SOLUTIONS
AND REJECTION
OF IMPORTED
TEMPLATES:**

National ownership of solutions and rejection of imported templates: While international and regional support is valuable, Yemenis must lead the process. Imported solutions have proven unrealistic; sustainable agreements require Yemeni-designed frameworks respecting social, tribal, and regional specificities.

FEDERALISM AS THE EXISTENTIAL OPTION:

Federalism as the existential option: Centralized state failure to manage Yemen's complex diversity makes federalism a necessity, granting regions and governorates autonomy while preserving national sovereignty.

CONCRETE CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES BEFORE SLOGANS:

Concrete confidence-building measures before slogans: Trust gaps must be addressed through tangible actions, opening roads, restoring services, releasing prisoners, unifying salary payments, before addressing final-status issues.

ECONOMY AS A DRIVER OF PEACE AND NEED FOR NEUTRALIZATION:

Economy as a driver of peace and need for neutralization: Political and economic tracks cannot be separated; unifying the central bank and ensuring public sector salaries from sovereign revenues are prerequisites for trust and sustainable peace.

CREATING POLITICAL WILL THROUGH DUAL PRESSURE:

Creating political will through dual pressure: Political will must be cultivated through simultaneous internal (civil society, unions, tribes, private sector) and external (smart sanctions, aid conditionality) pressure, ensuring leaders see war costs exceeding peace costs.

STATE MONOPOLY ON ARMS AND ENDING MILITARY DUPLICATION:

State monopoly on arms and ending military duplication: Integrating armed groups without disbanding factional loyalties "booby-traps" the state. Peace requires strict disarmament and unified professional military institutions.

**NATIONAL MEMORY
AND DOCUMENTATION
AS RESISTANCE TO
FORGETTING**

National memory and documentation as resistance to forgetting: Systematic documentation of violations is essential for deterrence and historical truth, beginning immediately rather than waiting for “final peace.”

**CULTURAL AND
EDUCATIONAL
SECURITY**

Cultural and educational security: Neutralizing curricula, religious institutions, and media from partisan and sectarian agendas is essential to prevent the indoctrination of future generations.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
SOCIAL RECOVERY AS
NATIONAL SECURITY:**

Psychological and social recovery as national security: Sustainable reconciliation must include psychosocial support for women, children, and former fighters to break cycles of trauma and violence.

**INSTITUTIONALIZING
CIVIL PARTNERSHIP
AS GUARANTOR**

Institutionalizing civil partnership as guarantor: Civil society must hold legal monitoring powers and active roles within committees, not merely symbolic pressure.

**ENGINEERING
IMPLEMENTATION
MECHANISMS AND
STRICT GUARANTEES**

Engineering implementation mechanisms and strict guarantees: Agreements require precise matrices, clear timelines, simultaneous political-security sequencing, and enforceable sanctions.

AVOIDING THE “IMMUNITY TRAP” AND ACTIVATING ACCOUNTABILITY

Avoiding the “immunity trap” and activating accountability: Blanket immunity fosters cycles of violence. Peace requires graduated accountability, from political exclusion to criminal prosecution.

REJECTING VICTOR’S JUSTICE IN FAVOR OF CONSENSUAL JUSTICE:

Rejecting victor’s justice in favor of consensual justice: Sustainable peace must be based on consensual, non-retributive frameworks ensuring no party feels existentially threatened.

CONCURRENT TRACKS AND EARLY RECOVERY

Concurrent tracks and early recovery: Justice, memory, and reparations should begin during conflict, not be postponed, to reduce accumulated grievances and prepare the ground for political agreement.

NEUTRAL NATIONAL MEDIATOR AND CREATION OF A THIRD FORCE

Neutral national mediator and creation of a third force: Yemen lacks a reliable local “third party.” Establishing a neutral council of technocrats, tribal leaders, and civil society, with domestic and international legitimacy, is critical to guarantee agreements and exercise ethical and social authority for conflict resolution.

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AS THE “SOLE ENGINEERING” OF SUSTAINABLE PEACE

A deep examination of Yemen’s reconciliation history reveals a central truth: the persistence of failure was not merely a political stumbling block but an inevitable consequence of the absence of transitional justice as both a philosophy and a methodology. Previous approaches remained trapped in the logic of political deals that sacrificed justice for an illusory stability. A comprehensive reading of the lessons learned confirms that peace cannot be achieved through top-down settlements that divide power among elites. Instead, it requires comprehensive transitional justice encompassing truth-telling, reparations, institutional reform, and societal reconciliation. All derived lessons, economic, security-related, and social, converge on the core principles of transitional justice, highlighting the national imperative to move from a cycle of impunity to a foundation centered on the rights of victims.

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEACE ENGINEERING IN YEMEN:

Based on the critical analysis of historical reconciliation experiences (1970–2019) and guided by the proposed national model for sustainable reconciliation, the following set of precise procedural and engineering recommendations aims to transition from “crisis management” and “pain mitigation” to “solution engineering” and “sustainable recovery,” with an absolute focus on transitional justice and dismantling the war economy.

1. DECISION-MAKERS, POLITICAL ACTORS, AND CONFLICT STAKEHOLDERS:

Political leaders, armed groups, and authorities exercising de facto control bear the primary ethical and historical responsibility to halt the bleeding. The following recommendations aim to shift them from a “spoils mentality” to a “state-building mindset”:

- **Adopt a reconciliatory transitional justice doctrine as an existential, not tactical, choice:** Political actors must abandon fear of transitional justice as a “tool of revenge” and strategically embrace it as a mechanism for safe passage toward the future. Leaders should commit through a binding national charter of honor to transparent engagement in truth-telling and recognition, in exchange for fairness and reparations. Political immunity, as seen in 2011, is no longer acceptable locally or internationally. The alternative to consensual justice is international criminal prosecution, which does not lapse with time.
- **Decouple political decision-making from the war economy:** The paper demonstrates that war has become a profit-generating function. Political leaders must take courageous steps to remove political cover from parasitic networks, black market traders, fuel brokers, and checkpoint collectives, that finance factions. Profiting from conflict within party and group structures should be criminalized, and transparent financial oversight mechanisms should be accepted. Failure to dismantle this parallel economy risks consuming the leaders themselves, reducing them to mere fronts for money and arms mafias.
- **Transition from power-sharing to structural partnership within federalism:** Recurrent experiences of portfolio-sharing (as in the Riyadh Agreement) have proven ineffective. The strategic recommendation is to embrace federalism not as political concession but as the only engineering solution to manage diversity. Stakeholders, especially from the North and South, should engage in technical dialogue to define clear boundaries of authority between the center and regions, ensuring equitable distribution of power and wealth. Decentralization is the sole guarantee for preserving Yemen’s geographical unity while managing administrative diversity.

- **Commit to a strict national DDR program (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration):** A state cannot function with multiple armies. Military and political leaders should seriously engage with technical military committees to integrate armed formations into a single professional national army or reintegrate them into productive civilian employment. The illusion of retaining “special forces” as a survival guarantee must end; Yemen’s history shows that uncontrolled weaponry rebounds on its owner. The only safeguard is a rule-of-law state with a monopoly on legitimate force.
- **Ideological review and halting identity-based mobilization:** Political and religious actors, particularly those with sectarian or regional projects, must immediately cease “sabotaging the future” through curricula and media discourse. Strict regulatory directives should freeze incitement and initiate intellectual reviews restoring a unifying national identity and equal citizenship. Continuation of social and psychological isolation risks producing a generation of uncontrollable extremists.

2. DECISION-MAKERS IN CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE INSTITUTIONS:

Institutional reform must go beyond personnel change to transform operational methods and overcome the legacy of a “fragile state”:

- **Unify monetary and banking policy as a top priority before comprehensive political settlement:** Based on the analysis of the financial split disaster, technocrats and central bank administrations (in Aden and Sana’a) must collaborate technically, independently of political conflict, to unify the currency and exchange rate. Immediate economic truce engineering should neutralize the central bank and ensure regular civil service salaries from sovereign resource revenues. Maintaining “two financial systems” in one state makes economic recovery and investment attraction a fantasy.
- **Implement functional vetting for leadership appointments:** Future state institutions (civil service, judiciary, army) should adopt strict legal mechanisms to prevent anyone proven complicit in grave human rights violations or embezzlement from holding leadership positions. This regulated administrative exclusion is not revenge but essential to restore public trust and ensure integrity and efficiency of the new administrative apparatus.

- **Institutionalize national memory and create a violations database:** Relevant ministries (Human Rights, Justice, Culture) should immediately establish a National Memory Archive. All violations, destruction, and victim testimonies must be systematically documented. This institutional memory will be the primary reference for transitional justice bodies and truth commissions, preventing future attempts to obscure facts or rewrite history, and officially recognizing the suffering of citizens.
- **Adopt positive developmental discrimination policies for affected and marginalized regions:** Planning and finance ministries should redesign the budget to prioritize collective reparations. Higher allocations for infrastructure and services should target systematically destroyed areas (e.g., Taiz, Sa'dah, Aden) and historically marginalized regions (e.g., Tihama). Development here is a political statement reinforcing national integration and ending regional grievances.
- **Digitize institutions to enhance transparency and combat corruption:** To combat the "deep state" and administrative corruption, rapid adoption of e-governance for financial transactions, procurement, and civil service (biometric verification) is recommended. Technology is the most effective tool to reduce human interference, ensure resources reach rightful beneficiaries, and lay the foundation for a modern state capable of managing reconstruction funds transparently.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA (GUARANTOR AND MONITOR):

Civil society is not merely a “witness” but a partner and guarantor in the peace engineering model:.

- **Form a Civil Alliance for Peace Monitoring (“Shadow Monitoring”):** Rights and civil organizations should move beyond documenting violations to monitoring implementation of agreements. A broad coalition should produce regular “shadow reports” assessing parties’ compliance (disarmament, prisoner release, revenue transfers). This alliance will serve as the “third eye” exposing obstructers to domestic and international actors beyond political propaganda.
- **Lead cultural security and counter hate speech:** Media professionals and intellectuals bear responsibility for defusing ideological landmines. A strict media charter should criminalize sectarian and regional incitement. Cultural, artistic, and media content should promote coexistence and highlight recovery stories rather than conflict narratives. Media must shift from a war platform to a psychological preparation tool for reconciliation.
- **Localize and simplify transitional justice concepts for society:** Transitional justice may be perceived as elitist. Civil society must “translate” these concepts into accessible language, educate victims about truth and reparations, and organize community hearings that simulate truth commissions. This grassroots awareness will generate the public pressure necessary to prevent political evasion of justice obligations.
- **Focus on psychological recovery and community healing programs:** With a “grieving society,” organizations should direct significant efforts toward mental health programs for women, children, and former fighters. A traumatized society cannot sustain peace; addressing psychological wounds is a direct investment in national security, preventing cycles of societal and familial violence.
- **Empower women as peacebuilders, not just victims:** Move beyond stereotypical victim roles, ensuring women receive negotiation quotas and representation in local peace committees. Support networks of female mediators who can bridge tribal barriers and resolve local conflicts, ensuring their voices guide reconstruction and reparations priorities..

4. PRIVATE SECTOR (FINANCIER AND PARTNER IN STABILITY):

National capital is the biggest war victim and must become the primary peace beneficiary and contributor:.

- **Invest in the “Peace Dividend”:** The private sector should not wait for full stability but invest proactively in relatively calm areas, especially labor-intensive sectors (agriculture, fisheries, construction). These investments provide economic alternatives for youth, accelerating stability and gradually creating a safe business environment.
- **Contribute to a national fund for reparations and reconstruction:** As part of social and national responsibility, major businesses and corporations should finance transitional justice initiatives through direct donations or small profit allocations. This reinforces private sector legitimacy as a national partner and accelerates victim compensation, positively affecting market purchasing power.
- **Reject financial extortion and combat the shadow economy:** Chambers of commerce and industrial unions should form strong coalitions refusing illegal levies and dual taxes feeding warlords. The sector’s economic leverage should push for unified tax and customs systems and collective refusal to fund armed groups. Succumbing to extortion prolongs the war that consumes their capital.
- **Sponsor vocational training for demobilized fighters:** The private sector is a natural incubator for absorbing thousands of youth exiting armed factions. Training and qualification programs (funded by companies or donors) can transform them from “armed actors” into skilled labor contributing to reconstruction, emptying the human reservoir of war.
- **Advocate for monetary stability:** The private sector must have a strong, credible voice in demanding economic neutralization and currency unification. Policy papers and practical initiatives should demonstrate the catastrophic cost of financial division and secure sector representation in negotiating economic committees to ensure realistic solutions..

YEMENI SOCIETY:

The people are the true stakeholders and the latent force capable of enforcing peace, if they organize and unite..

- **Activate “positive tribal norms” to serve civil peace:** In Yemen, the tribe functions as a social protection institution. Tribal leaders and elders are urged to revive ancestral practices of displacement prevention, reconciliation, and protection of livelihoods to stop bloodshed and safeguard public property. The tribe must reclaim its role as a safety valve, refusing to allow its areas to become proxy battlefields and rejecting social cover for saboteurs or bandits, regardless of their affiliations.
- **Establish local community peace committees in districts and neighborhoods:** Citizens in every village or neighborhood should organize into elected, neutral committees tasked with resolving minor conflicts before they escalate, ensuring fair distribution of aid and services, and negotiating with local authorities and armed actors to protect essential services (schools, health centers, water) from conflict. This “decentralization of peace-making” is the solid foundation for any national stability.
- **Reject child recruitment and protect schools:** Communities must enforce a strict social veto against sending children to frontlines or ideologically driven summer camps. Families and local communities are the first line of defense. Awareness campaigns should highlight that a child’s education is an investment in the family’s future, while sending them to war is a generational crime. Schools must be protected and treated as sacred zones, prohibited from military or indoctrination use.
- **Renounce hatred and regional/sectarian discrimination:** Reconciliation begins in homes and streets. Every Yemeni citizen bears an ethical responsibility to resist incitement that tears the social fabric. Brotherhood and solidarity should be promoted, while rejecting regional (North/South) or sectarian (Zaydi/Shafi’i) divisions, recognizing that all are victims of a war driven by vested interests and that coexistence is the Yemenis’ inevitable fate.

- Exercise peaceful pressure to demand rights and services: Citizens should not resign themselves to the realities of war. Continuous civil and peaceful mobilization (strikes, sit-ins, advocacy campaigns) should demand salary payments, open roads, and the provision of essential services. This popular pressure reminds conflict actors that a vigilant public is watching and holding them accountable, preventing them from complacently remaining in a state of “neither war nor peace.”

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS (SPONSORS AND GUARANTORS):

External actors have been part of the problem and must now play a central role in engineering the solution..

- **Unify the international position and abandon the “conflict management” strategy:** The international community, especially the P5 and the UN Security Council, must cease dealing with Yemen through fragmented, crisis-management approaches (e.g., separate agreements for Hodeida and the South). The recommendation is to adopt a single comprehensive approach that supports a final political solution addressing the roots of the crisis and applies unified pressure on regional actors to halt negative interventions and proxy wars that have subordinated Yemeni decision-making to external powers.
- **Shift the Arab Coalition’s engagement from crisis management to institutional empowerment:** Based on the study’s findings that external dependency was a key pillar of past reconciliation failures, the Arab Coalition, being the most influential regional actor, should undertake a strategic shift: move from “managing crises through allies” to empowering the sovereign state institutionally. This entails unconditional support for unifying the military and security apparatus under a single national doctrine, while ending sponsorship of parallel formations that perpetuate fragmentation and weaken the state’s monopoly on force. The coalition should also lead regional efforts to fund a large international trust fund for reconstruction and reparations, in line with its historical responsibility for Yemen’s stability. Success depends on true pressure to neutralize humanitarian and economic files, such as salaries and roads, separating them entirely from political bargaining to ensure tangible “peace dividends” that restore citizens’ trust in agreements. Full respect for national ownership of the solution is essential, preventing Yemen from becoming a stage for geopolitical score-settling that jeopardizes future generations.

- **Support the establishment of an international reconstruction and reparations fund:** Yemen cannot recover alone. Donor countries and Gulf states should establish a large, sustainable financial fund, managed in Yemeni-international partnership with strict governance standards (to prevent corruption), dedicated to financing transitional justice (compensation) and rebuilding infrastructure. This support must be conditional on measurable progress in peace and institutional reform.
- **Support criminal accountability mechanisms as a deterrent, not negotiable:** The international community must send a firm message that “the era of impunity is over.” Support should be provided for expert committees and international investigative mechanisms, with serious warnings of ICC involvement and smart sanctions against individuals (not the population) obstructing peace or committing war crimes. International justice is the stick compelling warlords to respect the logic of peace.
- **Respect Yemeni sovereignty and national ownership of the solution:** Regional and international sponsors must transition from “guardianship” to “facilitation.” Yemeni dialogue should be supported without imposing ready-made solutions or external agendas, respecting Yemenis’ choices regarding state form and governance. Sustainable solutions grow from Yemeni soil, not parachuted in through diplomacy.
- **Pressure to neutralize humanitarian and economic files:** Maximum pressure must be applied to separate humanitarian (roads, airports, ports) and economic (salaries, central bank) issues from political and military tracks. Starving the population and using their suffering as a bargaining tool must be internationally criminalized and met with immediate sanctions, ensuring life’s essential channels remain independent of political conflict.

CONCLUSION

After a forward-looking analytical journey into the depths of Yemen's wounds, examining the "genome of collapse" that has marked reconciliation efforts for over half a century, this study arrives at a clear conclusion: the continuation of Yemen's crisis is neither inevitable nor a perpetual curse, but rather a natural outcome of structural flaws in state architecture and conflict management. The study demonstrates that traditional approaches, based on elite deals, crisis deferral, loyalty buying, and overlooking justice, have exhausted their utility, producing nothing but increasingly violent cycles and deeper fragmentation.

This paper has addressed the central question: "Why does peace in Yemen always fail and collapse?" The analysis identifies a precise "triangle of death" composed of: corrupt political elites, the war economy, and negative external interventions. Beyond diagnosis, the study makes a distinctive scientific and practical contribution by moving to the design of a solution, introducing the concept of "peace engineering" as an alternative to political improvisation. This approach treats peace not as a ceremonial signature but as a complex institutional, legal, economic, and social construction, placing transitional justice at its core, not as a rights luxury, but as a preemptive and existential condition for state recovery.

The added value of these findings lies in their realism and boldness. The analysis does not ignore the war economy, which generates billions and turns the continuation of conflict into a commercial interest, nor does it overlook the historical grievances of the South, Sa'dah, and Tihama. Strategically, the proposed model offers a practical "catalogue" for decision-makers, linking institutional restoration, victim redress, and transition toward a federal state in a single integrated framework that cannot be fragmented. It is a call to re-found the Yemeni social contract on the principles of citizenship and partnership, rather than domination and predation.

In a nutshell, the path to a stable and prosperous Yemen is now clearly outlined, albeit fraught with challenges. It requires courage to acknowledge past mistakes, the will to break cycles of revenge, and vision to build a state inclusive of all its citizens. The message for every Yemeni and observer is clear: "Peace in Yemen is not impossible, but it requires tools different from those used in the past sixty years." Tools that elevate justice over impunity, prioritize the people's interests over elite gains, and build institutions rather than divide spoils. This is the imperative choice and the only viable path to survival.



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