

Student SR

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A Better World

After being brought up through years of malnutrition, you must do all you can to support your family in this time of crisis. Even if that means fighting on the front lines as a young child, or risking your own life for your country. That country is Yemen. First, in the world of *The Hunger Games Trilogy* by Suzanne Collins, there is room for innovation; unlike in Yemen, where families are limited in their creativity. Second, in Panem there is a stable system and rule of law, whereas activity in Yemen relies solely on the ideas of the fighters. Finally, the mentality and emotional systems of support in both worlds vary immensely. Overall, the totalitarian Hunger Games society would be a better place to live in comparison to Yemen, in terms of innovation, law, and support.

To begin, the world of *The Hunger Games* is a place that was practically built for innovation and prosperity. Their entire system has been crafted such that this is the case, with different “districts” specializing in discrete industries, all inter-reliant (Collins 382). However, Yemen lacks important psychological needs that are key to gathering wealth. This is demonstrated by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, showing that psychological needs (including food, water, and clothing), are the base for any kind of employment or prosperity. Geographer, historian, and author, Jared Diamond, presents in his documentary titled “*Guns, Germs, and Steel*,” the idea that resources are key to development and innovation. Furthering this note, speaker Atiaf Alwazir presents in her autobiographical TED Talk, that 80% of the Yemeni

population relies on aid. That amounts to approximately 24.8 million people, all of whose lives are dependent on an inconsistent delivery system of food, transported into their country from abroad (“Yemen Population (2022)”). This directly targets innovation, as Yemen is currently recorded as the poorest Arab country, with a GDP per capita of only 1.94 thousand (“The Richest and Poorest Arab Countries in 2021”).

Meanwhile, those in Yemen who actually have decent food stability and access to the internet, are the target of cyberhacking. As the Washington Institute finds, “Despite the fact that just 27 percent of Yemenis have internet connection, it is frequently a target of military operations by both parties to the conflict.” Through internet blackouts, Yemenis have increasingly lost access to online stores, news, social media, education, and most importantly, live-saving remittances (Al-Sakkaf and Alexander). Members of the opposition may argue that *The Hunger Games*’ districts themselves don’t receive the rewards of what their industries produce (Collins 282). Nevertheless, citizens in the districts are able to encourage innovation with the work they do, and receive Capitol-provided incentives like the tesserae system, in-turn. Here, it is true that the people in the society of *The Hunger Games* live much more comfortable lives than those living in Yemen, and hence, are able to better support innovation, while maintaining a strong government.

Life in Panem balances everyday activities with a strict rule-of-law. As Suzanne Collins writes in *The Hunger Games*’ prequel, *The Ballad of the Songbirds and Snakes*, “Without the control to enforce the contract, chaos [would] reign,” (664). This quote from a character known as “President Snow” at a young age, automatically presents the mindset with which Panem is being controlled; totalitarianism. Totalitarianism is defined by Britannica as a “form of government that theoretically permits no individual freedom and that seeks to subordinate all

aspects of individual life to the authority of the state.” While such a place may sound uninviting, it is comparatively better than Yemen’s system. In Yemen, the localities are against the continuation of the current seven year war that is taking place, as they are suffering immensely from malnutrition and lack of adequate healthcare (VICE News). Meanwhile, those that are fighting for Yemen’s independence “will not give way until all Houthis are gone,” with children the age of 11 stepping into conflict, active war zones, and unchecked mine fields, just to get home each day (VICE News).

As empirics have shown, Yemen’s government has practically collapsed, with corruption filling every corner, and the prime minister’s family desperate to solve multiple issues at once... and it has not been effective. Like mentioned earlier, most of the Yemeni population cannot maintain a consistent flow of psychological needs, whereas Panem has organized systems of giving, receiving, and work. Though it is true that Panem’s totalitarian government commits human rights violations, they do not do so as consistently as the Houthi rebels are starving and torturing Yemen’s subjects (Al-Batati). As the Arab News records, 1,635 cases of intentional mental and physical abuse have been recorded to take place in Yemen, with a vast number of the cases being women. While the Hunger Games promote at least some stability and rule-of-law, Yemen is full of chaos. Comparatively, the series is very clear regarding protagonists and antagonists.

One of the biggest differences between the Hunger Games’ districts, and Yemen, is the mentality that flows through the people living there. In District 12 specifically, people are willing to support their loved ones with everything they can. This is highlighted specifically in the book *Catching Fire*, where Peeta and Katniss support each other emotionally, despite their different backgrounds and beliefs (Collins 65). On the other hand, Yemeni parents often have to face life

or death queries regarding the support of their family, with no scope for people being able to rely on, or even trust one another. One specific instance would be if a parent had to choose between cholera medication for their sick child, or food for the whole family (*The Other Side of Yemen's War*). Others may recognize and acknowledge the strength that Yemenis have built up over the years, while having to make these decisions (*The Other Side of Yemen's War*). However, one cannot live long-term in an environment where such decisions must be made, and being able to rely on family and friends to be there for you can help development quicken, all-the-while boosting efficiency (Dickenson). Even if all else fails, in the Hunger Games, you can rely on your friends and family to support you throughout times of struggle.

All in all, innovation, stability, and support are, together, key to a successful society—all three are found in Collins' world of *The Hunger Games*, thus making it a much more supporting place to live, than in Yemen. In Panem, innovation is prospering with 12 different industries being supported at once. Furthermore, there's someone in charge, managing the society and important decisions to be made. Last but not least, District 12 of the Hunger Games demonstrates the neighborly support that is exercised through the citizens. In a different world, you have lost your father at a young age, and the difficult task of heading the family has rested on your shoulders. With support from fellow citizens, and the ability to work for a wage, your life is comparatively much easier than it could have been.

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