



Yemen's Question: From the Struggle for Freedom to the Struggle for Survival

Ahmed A. Al Zandani*

Abstract

When Yemenis demonstrated almost 5 years ago, shouting “The People Want the Fall of the Regime,” they did not know how complex the situation is, and how regional and international powers will determine their future. As one of the objectives of the revolution, Yemenis deemed that by removing President Salih from power, the revolution would guarantee their freedom. But the politics of the Arab World and the Middle East proved otherwise. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire almost a century ago, the Arab World has been subjected to the hegemony of the great powers. Thus, the real obstacle for democratic transition within the Middle Eastern countries comes from outside rather than domestic threats. The objective of this study is to demonstrate that revolutionary leader's reliance on foreign powers to change the political system and to achieve the revolutionary objectives was counterproductive in which constituted a huge obstacle in achieving those objectives, paving the way to civil war in Yemen, turning the struggle for freedom to struggle for survival.

Keywords: *Yemen, National Dialogue Conference, Civil Conflict., Houthi, Separatist, Liberals.*

*Dr., Sakarya University, Middle East Institute, aaahaz@gmail.com



Yemen'in Sorunu: Özgürlük Mücadelesinden, Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesine

Ahmed A. Al Zandani*

Özet

Bundan yaklaşık beş yıl önce “halk yönetimin düşmesini istiyor” sloganı ile sokaklara akın eden Yemenliler, kendi geçmişlerinin, hali hazırdaki durumlarının ve geleceklerinin bölgesel ve küresel güçler tarafından nasıl bir karmaşık durum ile kontrol altına alındıklarının bilincine hiçbir şekilde sahip değillerdi. Yemenliler gösteriler anında yolsuzluğa batmış başkanları Salih'i devirdiklerinde aslında Yemen'deki devrimin mutlu son ile neticeleneceğini düşünmüşlerdi. Fakat küresel siyasetin gerçeği ve özellikle de Ortadoğu'nun Arap dünyası hikayeyi farklı şekilde anlatacaktır. Arap dünyası yaklaşık bir asır önce Osmanlı halifeliğinin yıkılmasından sonra hegemon güçlerin kontrolünde olmuşlardır. Bundan dolayı bu ülkelerin herhangi birinde gerçekleşek olan barışçıl demokratik geçiş süreci ulusal tehlikeyi ikinci sıraya iterek uluslararası düzeyde bir tehlike olarak değerlendirilmektedir. İşte bundan dolayı da bu çalışma devrim öncülerinin yolsuzluğa bulaşmış liderlerinin devrilmesi konusunda kendi halkından daha çok dış güçlere güvenmelerinin hata olduğunu gösterecektir. Doğrusu Yemenlileri özgürlükleri için verdikleri mücadeleden kendi yaşamlarını sürdürmelerinin uğraşına neden olan bir sivil savaşın içine sürüklediğinin gerçeğini ortaya çıkaracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yemen, Ulusal Diyalog Konferansı, Sivil Çatışma, Husiler, Ayrılıkçı, Liberaller*

Introduction

*Dr. Sakarya Üniversitesi, Ortadoğu Enstitüsü, aaahaz@gmail.com

This article describes, analyzes and explains the reasons behind the Yemeni severe crisis, which is one of the key crises in the Middle East. In 2011, mass demonstrations were erupted throughout the country. The Yemeni people were demonstrating for liberty, as the country was ruled by a corrupt regime since its establishment in May 22, 1990.¹ However, nowadays, the country is on the brink of collapse. Yemen is facing huge challenges. The main law of the land, the Yemeni constitution, would be replaced against the free will of its people, its territorial unity would be divided, and its social fabric is being torn apart by civil war. Moreover, this miserable situation turns Yemen to be an area of a proxy war theater for regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran. It suffices to say, that there are real fears of a possible Russian violent interference here as they did in Syria. All this causes severe impact on Yemeni people. Tens of thousands were killed and injured, hundreds of thousands were displaced, and millions of Yemenis are suffering from sharp shortage in supplies of water, food, energy and medicine. All this poses a main question. Why the Yemeni people's struggle for liberty turned to be struggle for mere survival?

In order to give an answer to the above-asked question, we need to give a concise background of the Yemeni revolution that broke out in February, 2011 within the so called the Arab Spring. As this study focuses on the external interference in the Yemeni affairs, what led to the abortion of the revolution and the eruption of a civil war, it is important to start with a framework of analysis that explains the nature of the international order and the role played by the great powers in the international arena. In fact, the foreign policy of the great powers toward the crises of the small powers in the world needs to be understood within the framework of the international order. Besides, the framework of analysis has to show the position of the small states and their milieus. In this context, we can explain the Yemeni politics and the policies of its political power groups. This may give an objective answer to the main question of this paper: Why the Yemeni people

1 As a result of the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate after WW I in 1918, Yemen, which was an Ottoman province, was separated into two countries. One of which had been established in the North which later (after 1962) became known as the Yemen Arab Republic. The other one had been established in the South which (after 1963) became known as the People's Democratic of Yemen. The two countries were reunited in May 22, 1990 to establish The Republic of Yemen. For more information see الجزء الأول في دراسة قيمة عن اليمن وتاريخه قدمه عبد الولي الشميري , ملحمة الوحدة اليمنية : ألف ساعة حرب , (صنعاء , ٥٩٩١م) , ص ٥٣ .

struggle for liberty turned to be struggle for mere survival?

A Framework of Analysis

This study tries to analyze Yemeni Politics after 2011 revolution. We need to understand the policies of the Yemeni political powers in the transnational period, since 2011. The policies are of two types: domestic and foreign. Rosenau believes that domestic and foreign affairs have always formed a seamless web and there is a need to treat them as such.² In fact, foreign policy has been termed a “boundary activity” implying that those making policy straddle two environments: an internal or domestic environment and external or global environment. In this context, the foreign policy approach would be suitable to analyze the Yemeni crisis.

There are several approaches to explain variations in foreign policies.³ There is, however, a consensus among scholars of foreign policy behavior that structuralism best fits the milieu of the Middle Eastern states. Structuralism sees international relations as a struggle for economic dominance. It analyzes international relations in terms of core - periphery relations. International relations are, therefore, concerned with exploitation, imperialism and underdevelopment, and the main outcome is one of the continued exploitation of the poor periphery by the rich core. The collapse of communism in 1990s made capitalism the global model, thereby increasing the importance of the core-periphery cleavage as the dominant one in international relations.⁴ Structuralists argue that the

2 James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontiers: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 4.

3 It is frequently claimed that foreign policy may be explained through several approaches. For example, the psychologistic approach views foreign policy as a function of the impulses and idiosyncrasies of a single leader whose personal attitude is the only criterion that determines his decisions in times of peace and war. The great powers approach views foreign policy as a function of East-West conflict. And the reductionist or model-builders approach argues that the behavior of all states follows a rational actor model of decision-making; that all states seek to enhance their power, and that all are motivated by security factors. See Bahgat Koraney and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991) 8.

4 For more details about Structuralism see Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Books, 1998) 520.

world capitalist system is decisive. For them, it is a hierarchy in which the economic dependency of late-developing states such as those of the Middle East sharply constrains their sovereignty.⁵ According to L. Carl Brown, the Middle East is a penetrated system, one subject to an exceptional level of external interference and control; however, by virtue of its cultural distinctiveness, the Middle East is stubbornly resistant to subordination.⁶

One cannot ignore also the external influence over the Third World countries of which the Middle Eastern countries are part. The countries of the Third World are part and parcel of a world system; they are greatly affected by international stratification and inequality. Hence, external constraints and global structures affect its foreign policy-making process as well as its international behaviour. An important aspect of the foreign policy determinants in Third World countries is the economic status of an actor's position in the global stratification system. In this context, inequality becomes a core focus, for developing countries exist in a world social order characterized by inequality between states at the levels of socioeconomic development, military capability, political stability and prestige. This results in the penetration of developing countries' decision-making processes from the outside, with external actors participating authoritatively in the allocation of resources and the determination of national goals. Accordingly, the governments of the Third World countries now have to implement policies that are in line with the decisions and rules of some key international institutions, the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁷

After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States of America (U.S.) was left to lead the post-cold war world system. Although the U.S. is facing a growing competition from major powers in the international level and the regional level, it is still considered to be the most influential actor in international politics. In Barry Buzan's words, the U.S.

5 Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002) 2.

6 Ibid.

7 Martin Khor, *Globalization and the South: Some Critical Issues* (Malaysia: Third World Network, 2000) 4-6.

is centrally located in the international order.⁸ The U.S. influences several international organizations including the UN, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.⁹ The U.S. has tremendous power in the international order due to its unparalleled military might and its ability to force its influence and leadership over others. This provides it with considerable benefits (economically, politically, and militarily). Furthermore, in order to maintain this position, the U.S. assigns itself to be a status quo power within the post-Cold War global system that must protect and conserve it.

In fact, the U.S. fights for the triumph of its values which Francis Fukuyama called the “liberal idea” with its salient features: liberal democracy and market capitalism. The new technology of connectedness that carries liberal ideas and practices through the multitude of new global networks can be summed up in the ubiquitous term “globalization”.¹⁰ Thomas Barnett calls the areas where “globalization” has been thwarted the “Non-Integrated Gap”. The Middle East lies in Barnett’s “non-integrated gap”. Barnett hypothesizes that U.S. is most likely to intervene in areas like the Middle East where globalization has been thwarted.¹¹ However, the values of the Arab states, including that of Yemen, which is led by Islamists, reject the global system based on the U.S. values and policies.¹²

Consequently, in its relations with states that have not accepted the global system from which the U.S. derives many benefits, the U.S. must be an agent for change in order to defend the global system and expand it.¹³ On

8 Barry Buzan, “Implications for the Study of International Relations”, in *Global Response to Terrorism: September 11, Afghanistan and Beyond*, edited by Mary Buckley and Rick Fawn (New York: Routledge, 2003), 307.

9 See, for example, Andrew Harvey, Ian Sullivan, and Ralph Gorves, “A Clash of Systems: An Analytical Framework to Demystify the Radical Islamist Threat”, *Parameters*, vol. 35, no. 3, Autumn 2005, 74.

10 Murden, 1-3.

11 Thomas Barnett, “the Pentagon’s New Map”, *Esquire*, (March 2003), via <http://www.thomaspmbarnett.com/>.

12 Simon W. Murden, *Islam, the Middle East, and the New Global Hegemony* (London: Lynne Renner, 2002), 16.

13 Andrew Harvey, Ian Sullivan, and Ralph Gorves, “A Clash of Systems: An Analytical Framework to Demystify the Radical Islamist Threat”, *Parameters*, vol. 35, no. 3,

this basis, the U.S. would act to impede the Arab states led by the Islamists and pushing them into internal political processes. The main goal of the political processes is to impose the values of the global system. However, this process is risky as the targeted countries would face different types of conflicts because the milieu of Arab politics is an Islamic milieu. The role of Islam is influential, the Islamic values remain alive, politics is shaped within Islamic milieu, and the tensions created by the meeting of the global and the local are particularly stark.¹⁴ This cause instability and conflict. In fact, this is exactly what causes and leads to civil war in Yemen.

A Background

In January 2011, after a popular uprising in Tunisia that forced President Ben Ali to leave power and inspired similar protests in Egypt that forced President Mubarak to leave the power too. Similarly thousands of protesters gathered in Sana'a and several other Yemeni cities calling President Salih to step down. The protesters chanted pro-democracy slogans and condemned poverty and official corruption. Unlike the Egyptian and Tunisian protests, which seemed to have little centralized leadership, protests in Yemen appeared to have been organized and directed by a coalition of Yemeni opposition groups, Al Mushtarak. In response to the demonstrations, Salih made several concessions, including a reduction in income taxes and an increase in the salaries for government employees. In February, he promised not to stand for reelection when his current term was to end in 2013, and he vowed that his son would not succeed him in office. The move failed to calm down protesters, who have no trust in Salih anymore.

Rejecting Salih's concessions, protesters held daily rallies, often clashing with the loyalists of Salih who attacked them with stones, sticks, and occasionally firearms. On February, thousands of Yemeni university students and recent graduates staged a sit-in on the main street near the campus of Sana'a University, vowing not to leave until Salih stepped down. Salih resisted the calls for his ouster, saying that his early departure would cause chaos in the country.

Autumn 2005, 75.

14 Murden, 16.

Clashes between protesters and police continued in March and led to several more deaths. On March 10, Salih tried again to absorb the public anger by vowing to draft a new constitution that would strengthen the parliament and the judiciary. He said that the draft constitution would be put to a referendum by the end of the year, 2011. The opposition immediately rejected the initiative and insisted on Salih's immediate departure.

The increasingly violent tactics used by security forces against protesters eroded support for Salih within the Yemeni government, weakening his hold on power. On March 18, Salih loyalists dressed in civilian clothes, opened fire on protesters in Sana'a, killing at least 45 people.¹⁵ The Yemenis reaction was beyond expectations; protestations started everywhere in the country. Maj. Gen. Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, commander of the army's 1st Armoured Division, announced his support for the revolution and vowed to use his troops to protect the protesters. The defection of Ahmar, considered to be the most powerful military officer in Yemen, was quickly followed by similar announcements from several other senior leaders. Religious, army, and tribal leaders declared their support to the revolution.¹⁶ Moreover, ministers, diplomats and many officials resigned. Salih felt that he has lost the battle. Accordingly, he managed to meet pro-revolutionary leaders to find a safe way to leave the country.¹⁷

15 For more information see Human Rights Watch Report , *Unpunished Massacre Yemen's Failed Response to the "Friday of Dignity" Killings*, FEBRUARY 12, 2013 at, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/12/unpunished-massacre/yemens-failed-response-friday-dignity-killings#page>

16 See Aljazeera Report, *Top army commanders defect in Yemen Troops and tanks deployed in Sanaa to protect anti-government protesters as senior military officials back uprising*, Mar 21, 2011, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/03/2011320180579476.html>

17 For more information see "Yemen Uprising of 2011–12, *Encyclopædia Britannica*", at <http://www.britannica.com/event/Yemen-Uprising-of-2011-2012>

The Critical Mistake

During the meeting between Salih and the pro-revolutionists leaders an agreement of power handover was written and signed by the two parties. Yet, during Salih's meeting with the pro-revolutionary leaders the American ambassador was summoned to be a witness of the agreement.¹⁸ The attendance of the US ambassador reflected the hegemonic role of the US and the realization on the part of the Yemeni political elites of their disability to take decisions without a green light from the US. After the meeting, Salih's foreign Minister announced that Salih would transfer the power within days through the Yemeni parliament.¹⁹ However, the American ambassador stated that the power transfer must take longer time as his administration is worried about the fate of its "security investment in Yemen".²⁰ The attitude of the U.S. was taken by Salih and his party as an indicator to stay in power. Accordingly, Salih did not call the parliament to be held to transfer the power, instead he pushed his followers to demonstrate in Sana'a just like the revolutionists do. In fact, the U.S. did not want an early election where the Yemeni people can choose new leaders without its consent.²¹ The U.S. wanted to do some preparations to guarantee its continuous influence over Yemen. Somehow, the agreement signed by Salih and the pro-revolutionists sent to Saudi Arabia in order to make it basis for an initiative in the name of Gulf States to settle the political dispute in Yemen by launching a process of power transfer. As a result, the door was opened to foreign states to intervene in Yemeni affairs and to lead its political process.

18 See أحمد عبد الواحد الزندان , الحوار الوطني في اليمن مقترحاً أمريكياً! : استراتيجيات استنباة الأقليات وبحكيتها دراسة وأيقية في 46 أسباب الصراع, صنعاء : مركز البحوث للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية: 2015 - ص 46

19 Ibid.

20 The U.S. under the name of security partnership programs was able to train and build the capacity of the Yemeni security forces. The U.S. managed to help in establishing, the republican guards, the Special Forces and the Anti-Terrorists Forces during Salih's rule. That is by spending several US\$ millions every year, especially since 2005. For more information see Anthony H. Cordesman, Robert M. Shelala II, and Omar Mohamed, *Yemen and U.S. Security*, August 8, 2013, Center for Strategic and International Studies, p 13, available at: http://csis.org/files/publication/130808_yemen_burkechair_updated.pdf

21 See بحري الآن مفاوضات تسلم السلطة بضغط أمريكي: صحيفة أمريكية: واشنطن بدأت بحث مرحله ما بعد صالح ورحيله سيكون الرابط <http://marebpress.net/nprint.php?sid=32622> : المفتاح لترتيب نقل السلطة باليمن , مارب برس , الثلاثاء 5 أبريل 2011م على الرابط

The U.N. and the Process of Power Transfer

In the name of the international community, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) intervened to supervise the power transfer process in Yemen. In fact, as we explain in the framework, the UN is influenced by the hegemonic role played by the U.S. in international politics. Accordingly, the role played by the UN was to give legality U.S. policies in Yemen. On this basis, the representatives of the UNSC, Jamal Benomar, arrived to Yemen in April 2011 to prepare for a power transfer political in the country. Benomar started to deal selectivity with Yemeni groups and individuals within the political spectrums. The individual groups who are known for their resistance to the Western strategies and policies, based on the values of the global system, in the Muslim world, were deliberately excluded. Most of the individuals of the excluded group belong to the revolutionary camp, in particular, those who defend Yemen's sovereignty based on Arabic Islamic identity.

Actually, the severe conflict between the political groups in Yemen facilitated the UNSC mission as its representative became able to select and exclude whoever he wants. Based on this selectivity, Benomar, successfully, penetrated the Yemeni political fabric. His success was not only due to the political antagonism between the Yemeni groups, but also due to the unlimited collaboration with him by many Yemeni politicians. These were people who had strong ties with the foreign "civil society" associations working in Yemen for almost two decades. Benomar's collaborators in fact, were to be found in all the political groups including the revolutionaries' camp. They were the pillars on which the foreign powers depended on to pass their agendas in Yemen. Benomar declared that after months of negotiations, the Yemeni political groups had reached an agreement called the Executive Mechanism of the Gulf States' Initiative (EMGS), based on the Gulf States Initiative.²²

الألية التنفيذية للمبادرة الخليجية , صحيفة 14 أكتوبر العدد رقم : 15319 , الموافق 24 نوفمبر 2011 , يوم الخميس متوفرة على النت الرابط : <http://www.14october.com/news.aspx?newsno=3019505>

The American Suggestion: A Formula of Conflict

While the Yemeni constitution contains very clear articles tackling the problem of power vacuum,²³ the EMGS abandoned the Yemeni constitution and launched a “National Dialogue Conference» (NDC) based on an American suggestion.²⁴ The American-suggested NDC is but a process of compromise between all legal and illegal groups in Yemen, except Al Qaeda, to set the fate of Yemen. However, the process of compromise neglected the Yemeni constitution, the democratic rules, and the political will of the Yemeni people. In fact, it was a process of legalizing and empowering Yemeni illegal groups like Al Houthi movement, the separatist movement in the south, the secularist groups, and the ousted President, Salih. Those groups categorized as illegitimate groups due to their violation of the Yemeni constitution. Here, it is important to emphasize that the people revolted against President Salih because he violated the rules of the Yemeni Constitution and, therefore, he lost his legitimacy as a President. However, the American-suggested NDC came to legalize the ousted president and other illegal groups as the U.S. policies would not be implemented without planting conflicting groups in power.

Al Houthi movement which is a militia implicated in a militant conflict against the state and the people who resist its rule. This movement is responsible for killing and displacing hundreds of thousands of Yemenis. Ironically, it has been given the right to participate in the NDC without compelling it to stop even its expansionist wars. Moreover, this movement, which constitutes only 2% to 5% of the Yemeni population, bears an odd

23 According to the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, article (116) : “If the post of the President of the Republic becomes vacant or should the President become permanently disabled, the Vice President temporarily takes over the presidential functions for a period that does not exceed sixty days, during which new elections for the President of the Republic shall take place. If the posts of the President of the Republic and Vice President become vacant at the same time, the Presiding Board of the House shall temporarily take over the functions of the President. If the House of Representatives is under dissolution, the government shall replace the Presiding Board of the House in carrying out the functions of the Presidency, and in this case election of the President of the Republic shall take place within a period that does not exceed sixty days from the first session of the new House of Representatives” see the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, at <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3fc4c1e94.pdf>

24 See : السفير الأمريكي: لدى الجنوبيين "مظالم مشروعة , الثورة نت , الإثنين, 25-مارس-2013 , على الرابط : <http://www.althawranews.net/portal/news-39046.htm>

theology of that of the Yemeni people, whether Zaydis (Moderate Shia) or Shafei (Sunnah). Its leaders studied and trained in Iran since 1980s, particularly in Qum the stronghold of the Shia' Twelvers who have no followers in Yemen at all.²⁵

In addition, the door of the NDC was also opened for what so called Al-Herak Al-Janoubi (Hirak) which is movement for a group that fights for independence in the south of the country. It claims that the central government of Sana's is discriminating against southerners and looting their natural resources. The separatists wish to control the south of the country to establish a country for their own in the name of the southerners. Furthermore, the secularist groups which are working through a network of "civil society" associations, in particular, those associations that pursue a westernization agenda in Yemen, in the name of modernity and civil life, were also invited to participate in the NDC. While it's clear that the main crisis in Yemen was between the revolutionists and the regime, inviting illegitimate groups to the NDC will complicate the crisis rather than solving it.

Moreover, the process of compromise had granted the ousted president Salih immunity from jurisdiction for any crime he may committed during his rule period, 33 years. It, also, gave him the right to practice politics as he kept the position of the head of the General People's Congress (GPC), the ruling party during his rule, for himself. Therefore, the GPC was also invited to participate in the NDC. Furthermore, all these illegitimate groups were given almost 80% of the seats of the conference while the legitimate groups takes only 20% of the seats in the conference. In addition, the regulations of the NDC declared, very clearly, that no decision can be made without getting at least 75% of the votes of the participants in the NDC. However, if the participants cannot reach the required 75%, they have to empower the groups' leaders of the NDC to pursue negotiations to reach an agreement. If they cannot reach to an agreement, the NDC rules do not provide any solution. This, of course is but a formula of conflict rather than a formula of conflict resolution. Logically, the bitterly conflicted groups would never come to any kind of compromise without referring them to legitimate controlling references, such as the constitution, referendum, and powerful actors to force the reluctant group to apply the agreement.

25 For a serious study on Houthi Movement see أحمد محمد الدغيثي، الحوثيون دراسة منهجية شاملة، الدار العربية للعلوم، لبنان- والمورد للإعلام- قطر الطبعة الأولى 2010م.

Based on these unjust rules, the NDC was launched on March 2013 and lasted for 10 months. It was held under the supervision of 10 countries, the permanent members of the UNSC and the Gulf States except Qatar.²⁶

The Empowered Projects by NDC

It was very clear that the so called NDC was a smart way to assassinate the Yemeni revolution. In fact, in the name of dialogue, it was very clear that the country was set to go through a very dangerous process, NDC. A process that threatens the core issues of its national security: its identity, its security, its people freedom, and its territorial unity. In reality, Yemen's fate was set to be in the hand of illegal local actors who are bearing short-sighted projects which are refused by most Yemeni people but supported by international actors. These projects were four: first, Salih's project (the ousted president) which focused on regaining the power again depending on the deep state capabilities. Second, Al Houthi's project which focused on controlling Yemen to resurrect an Imamate polity based on Shia's theology, that Yemenis have a bitter history with, depending on full support from Iran. Third, the separatists' project which pursued by groups working to separate Yemen into two countries, claiming that they were defending what so called the Southern Issue. Lastly, the fourth project, which is the project of the anti-Arab Islamic identity of Yemen, adopted by the "civil society" associations sponsored by foreign organizations interfering in Yemeni affairs under the banner of "human rights", and pursuing a westernization agenda.

Legitimizing the Illegitimate, Why?

To the surprise of Yemeni people, who became powerless as their revolution being stolen before their eyes, the NDC did not started until all the participated political powers agreed to sign a document called the

²⁶ Qatar withdrew when it realizes that President Salih is not serious in applying his part in the agreement.

Twenty Points.²⁷ This document was but an agreement contained articles in favor of the separatists, Al Houthi movement and the secularists. Of course, the representatives of the revolutionaries who were chosen by Benomar, the UNSC's representative, accepted the Twenty Points believing that this document was a right step towards a just solution to the Yemeni crisis. They considered it as essential step to the success of the political process led by Benomar. However, many Yemeni organizations and figures have been opposing the political process as they believe that it was but a duplication to the political process applied in Iraq which ended up with the destruction of the country and the exclusion of the Sunni people of Iraq. In fact, those organizations and figures were deliberately marginalized and deprived the right to express their views through effective media to alert the Yemeni people. For that reason, the Yemeni people and also those who were interested in Yemeni affairs, were misled on purpose what made them put great hope on the NDC.

Consequently, the above mentioned political process, the illegitimate powers gave legitimacy to the illegitimate powers, Salih, Al Houthi movement, the secessionists and the secularists. Thanks for the foreign interference, served by the UNSC representative, the Yemeni constitution was frozen to remove the legal barrier before the illegitimate demands and policies of the illegal powers. In sum, all the illegitimate powers' policies and actions, since the launching of the political process, could not be stopped as the constitution became impotent and the country became an open theater for the illegitimate powers. Consequently, Yemen became open theatre for external players to pursue their agenda in through a local actor.

Saudi Arabia and UAE have supported Salih to thwart the Yemeni revolution. Of course, their main aim was to make sure that the "infection" of revolution would not spell over to their absolute Monarchies. For its part, Iran has found a golden opportunity to enhance its support to its claw in Yemen, Al Houthi movement. The goal is to establish a loyal government to be controlled by Iran. So, it will be able to extend its influence to the southern part of the Arab peninsula including the strategic strait Bab Al Mandab the only marine route leading to Suez Canal of Egypt, one of the

27 <http://www.hiwar-watani.org/nd-documents/1605158515801593161015751578-157516041581160815751585-157516041608159116061610.html>

most important straits of the world. This will enable Iran to be the most important regional power in the Middle East. Moreover, its importance would be multiplied before the great powers what gave it strategic weight. This would drive the great powers to deal with Iran as a strategic partner in the Middle East.

Western countries on their part, enhanced their support to the secular groups who focused on creating a new constitution based on secular principles in Yemen. By a secular constitution Yemen would be compatible with global system values adopted and defended by the U.S. with its "liberal idea". In fact, they have succeeded by ending the NDC with a draft to a new secular constitution as the outcomes of the NDC show. The outcomes are full of secular concepts and declare, very clearly, that Yemeni laws must be rewritten to be compatible with the international treaties issued by the United Nations Committee of Human Rights.²⁸ And it is well-known that the reference of the human rights treaties of the UN Committee is the values of the global system defended by the U.S. In fact, in these treaties there are many articles in stark contrast with Islamic law. For instance, the rules that organized the obligations and rights of the members of the Muslim family.

As to the separatists, they were able to secure support from several supporters: internal, regional and international supports. In fact, separatists are several conflicting groups. Each group wants to control the South of Yemen after separation. One of the separatists groups is led by Ali Salm Al Biad who was the vice president of Yemen (1990-1994). He had committed treason by launching a war to separate the South in 1994. But, he failed and ran out of the country. Recently, Al Biad managed to get support from Iran to realize his goal of regaining South Yemen as an independent state.²⁹ Other separatist groups managed to get support from the socialist party in Yemen. The Yemeni socialist party was the ruling party of South Yemen before the reunification of Yemen in 1990. On this basis, the socialists claim guardianship over the South. Their main goal is to re-gain the

28 To see the Document of Outcomes of the NDC visit the official website of the NDC at : <http://www.hiwar-watani.org/nd-documents--1605158515801593161015751578-157516041581160815751585-157516041608159116061610.html>

29 See Middle East December 5, 2012, "Long-exiled South Yemen leader Beidh defends his calls for secession", at <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24741268.html>

control of the South as a sovereign state. They are active in maintaining financial support from Yemeni merchants of Gulf States, especially those who are of Hadrami origins, a province in Southern Yemen. In addition, many separatists managed to get support from the foreign-sponsored “civil society” associations for their fervent support to the values of the global system supported by the West, the U.S. in particular. They promised to create a secular state in South Yemen once separated.

The Civil War Erupted, Why?

On 25-Jan. 2014, the NDC came to its end; its outcomes reflected most of the demands of the above conflicting projects. In fact, the NDC and its outcomes are the main reason of the civil war erupted in Yemen directly after the end of the NDC. The conflicting groups gained the legitimacy by the NDC, and during the NDC they worked to enhance their short-sighted projects in Yemen at the expense of the national project. They exploited the political chaos in the country and the external interference to achieve their own goals and this has created divisions among Yemeni people, and led to civil war.

The secularists (the pro-global system values) believe that the implementation of the outcomes of the NDC is the most important goal. Hence, they push towards issuing the Security Council Resolution 2140 (2014) under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. That is to force the Yemeni people to accept the secular constitution prepared in the NDC. However, once this resolution issued, Yemen has lost its sovereignty. Its fate, according to international law, became at the disposal of foreign nations, in particular, the permanent members of the Security Council. Yet, those members are in disagreement over the fate of Yemen as each of them has its own interests and agenda to follow in the Middle East region including Yemen.

Al Houthi, the Iranian claw in Yemen, realized that the UNSC members are in disagreement over Yemen. This encouraged Al Houthi to impose his agenda by force. Accordingly, Al Houthi movement declared that the outcomes of the NDC were not just outcomes and continued their expansionist wars until they occupied the capital of Yemen, Sana'a. Al

Houthi, also, expanded to the other governorates including the southern governorates of country. Al Houthi expansionist wars caused violent resistance by the Yemeni people to defend themselves. The resistance is to be found in several provinces, Marib, al Bayda, Taiz, Ebb, Al Dhali', Aden and others.

The separatists refused the outcomes as the outcomes would divide the South into two provinces while they want to regain the control over the South as one independent state.³⁰ On this basis, they focused on enhancing their militia in the South and started to attack the citizens of Northern origins to force them to leave the South. Moreover, they had to face Al Houthi militia that started to invade the Southern governorates.

For his part, the ousted president Salih put his loyal army, the Republican Guard, under the disposal of Al Houthi movement to enable it to control the country. His plan was built upon a cunning idea. He understands that Al Houthi movement is but a tiny minority in the country, 2%-5% of the population. They are not strong enough to control the country. Also, Salih realized that Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States will not allow Al Houthi movement to control Yemen due to the fear of the influence of Iran over Al Houthi movement which threatens their national security. Thus, at one point, Salih thought, that the Yemeni people and the Gulf States would be in dire need for him and his Republican Guards to fight Al Houthi movement. For him, this would be his time, to regain the power in Yemen by directing the Republican Guard to fight and control Al Houthi movement.³¹

However, Salih's calculations were not accurate as Saudi Arabia refused his offer to play this role. The Saudis, after the coming of King Salman to Power, decided to build and lead an Arab military coalition to fight Al Houthi movement under the banner of liberating Yemen. They lost any hope of Salih as he proved time and again that he never respects his treaties or keeps his promises. This drove Salih to strengthen his alliance with Al Houthi movement and fight beside it under Iranian support against what they call the Saudi aggression on Yemen.

30 See 130 أحمد عبد الواحد الزندان ص

31 See Wall Street Journal, Yemen's Ousted President Salih Helps Propel Houthi Rebel Advance, at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/yemens-ousted-president-salih-helps-propel-houthi-rebel-advance-1428704009>

Unfortunately, the battles still are going and the Yemeni people suffering a lot. The conflict has now reached 21 out of 22 of Yemen's provinces. While the population of Yemen reached 26 million, more than 1.4 million people have been displaced. An estimated 12.9 million are considered food insecure. More than 20.4 million people now lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation or hygiene services. Moreover, an estimated 15.2 million people across Yemen now lack access to basic healthcare. Suffice to say, that tens of thousands of Yemeni People were killed and injured.³²

Conclusion

This study shows that Yemen serves as an example how the great powers have exploited the political crises in the Middle East countries to follow their agendas. Nevertheless, in the Yemeni case, we need to know that the strategic mistake committed by the pro-revolutionists, is the call upon the regional and international actors to intervene while the pro-revolutionists have no national agenda to bear and defend. Consequently, the external interference came to impose its agenda at the expense of the Yemeni people. This strategic fiasco reflects the complete failure of the pro-revolutionists powers in managing the battle of 2011 revolution. However, the main responsibility is to be borne by the Yemen's corrupt authorities, as they allowed the penetration of the Yemeni political powers, since mid 1990s, by foreign actors in the name of supporting "civil society" and defending "human rights". This failure, led to the historical catastrophe Yemenis are suffering from.

In fact, the external interface in Yemeni affairs led to civil war and the civil war turn to be regional war by proxies. In addition, with the Russian military interference in Syria the winds of Cold War are looming again over the Middle East, including Yemen. This may affect the power balance in the region and perpetuates the proxy wars. Thus, a Russian military interference in Yemen is expected. Undoubtedly, this will affect and complicate the Yemeni crisis. However, the only way to a practical resolution to the Yemeni conflict is to establish a strategy of liberating Yemen from foreign control.

³² For more information on the Yemeni humanitarian situation see Yemen crisis: How bad is the humanitarian situation? at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34011187>

That is by enabling Yemenis to freely decide their fate by democratic means reflecting their free-will by free and fair elections. Yet, to create a political environment for free and fair elections, the Yemeni legitimate resistance must regain control over the Yemeni capital and governorates occupied by Al Houthi movement, the Iranian claw. For that reason, the resistance must be supported to regain peace in Yemen.

Bibliography

- Barnett, Thomas. (2003), "the Pentagon's New Map", Esquire, via Thomaspmbarnett, <http://www.thomaspmbarnett.com>
- Buzan, B. (2003). Implications for the study of international relations. In Buckley M. & Fawn, R. (eds.), *Global Response to Terrorism: 9/11, Afghanistan and Beyond* (pp. 269-309). New York: Routledge.
- Dessouki, A. H. (1991). The primacy of economics: the foreign policy of Egypt. In Koraney, B. & Dessouki, A. H. *The foreign policies of Arab states: The challenge of change*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Harvey, A., Sullivan, I., & Gorves, R. (2005, Autumn). A Clash of systems: An analytical framework to demystify the radical Islamist threat. *Parameters*, 35 (3), pp. 72-86.
- Hinnebusch, R. & Ehteshami, A. (2002). *The foreign policies of Middle East states*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Khor, Martin. (2000). *Globalization and the South: Some Critical Issues* (Malaysia: Third World Network).
- Murden, Simon W. (2002). *Islam, the Middle East, and the new global hegemony*. London: Lynne Renner.
- Rosenau, James N. (1997). *Along the domestic-foreign frontiers: Exploring Governance in a turbulent world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

الشميري, عبد الولي. (1995). *ملحمة الوحدة اليمنية: ألف ساعة حرب, صنعاء الزنداني, احمد عبد الواحد. (2015). الحوار الوطني في اليمن مقترحا امريكيا! : استراتيجية استنبات الأقليات وتمكينها دراسة وثائقية في اسباب الصراع, (صنعاء : مركز البحوث للدراسات السياسية والاستراتيجية).*

الدغشي, أحمد. (2010), *الحوثيون دراسة منهجية شاملة, (الدار العربية للعلوم- لبنان- والمورد للإعلام -قطر).*