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INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES ON POLITICAL CRISIS IN YEMEN FROM 2011 TO 2020

MASTER`S THESIS

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Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz KATMAN

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "The Impact Of Socıal Structures On Polıtıcal Crısıs In Yemen From 2011 To 2020", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (.../.../20...)

Yaser Yahya Mohammed AMER

FOREWORD

The world has gone through a difficult time due to the Covid-19 health crisis that changed lifestyles and imposed tight restrictions on people's movements. I have personally had a hard time writing my thesis, especially regarding interviews that required social contact which was altered to become social distancing. Moreover, the thesis writing required collecting references that were difficult to obtain due to the flights' suspension and continuous siege imposed on my home country, Yemen. However, there are lifesavers who appear on time to provide hope and lend hands to alleviate hard circumstances. To those generous people heartfelt thanks are due.

I am really grateful for Istanbul Aydin University which agreed to extend my study period. Many thanks go to Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz KATMAN who also extended my last semester. Such generous cooperation is really the light that one finds at the end of a dark tunnel.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GCC   : Gulf Cooperation Council
GPC   : General People's Congress
JMP   : Joint Meeting Parties
NDC   : National Dialogue Conference
YCR   : Yemeni Congregation for Reform

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES ON POLITICAL CRISIS IN YEMEN FROM 2011 TO 2020

ABSTRACT

The Republic of Yemen was established shortly after the eruption of Yemeni Revolution on 26 September, 1962 against the Yemeni monarchy, which ruled Yemen for several centuries. The most recent one was the Mutawakil Kingdom led by Imam Ahmad Hamid Aldeen. After the revolution against Imam Ahmad Hamid Aldeen, Yemen entered a new phase in which five leaders took control over it: Alsallal, Aleryani, Alhamdi, Al-Ghashmi and Alarashi until 1978, and Ali Saleh who was elected as president of Yemen on July 17, 1978. Saleh was the military commander from Hashed tribe, one of Yemen's largest military-armed tribes. Saleh continued as a ruler for more than 33 years until the outbreak of the Youth Revolution or the Arab Spring revolution in Yemen in February 2011. He was overthrown later through a Gulf initiative presented by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to solve the crisis in Yemen. After Saleh left power on February 27, 2012, Yemen witnessed a transitional phase. The Vice President Hadi was chosen as a president for a two-year transitional period. An inclusive national dialogue conference was held to solve the existing political problems in which all political components participated, including the Houthiss (who are also known as "Ansar Allah", an armed religious group). It was agreed on the form of the state and the way to distribute wealth and power, but the Houthiss, with the help of former President Saleh and the tribes loyal to them, led an armed coup on September 21, 2014 and took control over the State institutions. The Houthiss expanded their control until they controlled the city of Aden in the far south of Yemen. Subsequently, an Arab coalition, formed and led by Saudi Arabia launched a war on Yemen on March 26, 2015 under the pretext of restoring legitimacy. As a result, the government was forced to exercise its duties in exile from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, because of which Yemen entered a new phase of conflict in which the political scene became more complicated. During this period, Yemen's political life has been characterized by many complexities as a result of the social connections that have affected political life. These complexities have emerged as a phenomenon more clearly than in other political societies in the Middle East. It can be said that the social structures connected with sectarian, tribal and regional factors and represented inputs that all produced a very complex political problem. Tribalism in northern Yemen, for example, was present and influential in the public policy of the state, in monopoly the leadership positions in the army, and in the basic functions of the state; while the regionalism was present in the south of Yemen in terms of dealing with northerners as occupiers. The problem was complicated when the religious and sectarian speech was employed in determining the course of politics. The doctrinal approaches in the Arab legacy, which limit power in a particular sect, established an ideological basis for a political problem existing until today. Hence, the researcher, who is in the process of understanding the impact of social structures on Yemeni political life,

believes that the real understanding of the drives of political life requires understanding their social drives inherent in the structure of Yemeni society. According to that, the researcher chose the period from 2011 to 2020, as a time frame for the study, which witnessed the start of youth movement in the Arab Spring countries, that opened the way for subsequent developments that continue until now.

Key words: *Yemen, Yemeni Crisis, Social Factors, Yemeni Tribes, Houthis, Religious Groups, Saudi Arabia, Arab coalition, Iran.*

SOSYAL YAPILARIN 2011'DEN 2020'YE YEMEN'DEKİ SİYASİ KRİZLERE ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Yemen Cumhuriyeti; sonuncusu İmam Ahmed Hamideddin liderliğindeki Mütevekkil Krallığı olan ve birkaç yüzyıl boyunca Yemen'de hüküm süren imam monarşisine karşı 26 Eylül 1962'de patlak veren Yemen devriminin ardında kurulmuştur. Ülke; 1978 yılına kadar beş liderin başkanlığı devraldığı yeni bir aşamaya girdi, bunlar Al Sallal, Al Aryani, Al Hamdi,AL Ğaşmi ve Al Arşi, 17 Temmuz 1978 yılında ise Ali Salih Yemen cumhuri başkanı ise seçilmiştir. Salih; Yemen'in en büyük ve askeri yapıya sahip Haşid aşiretine mensup ve orduda askeri bir liderdi. Salih; Şubat 2011'de gençlik devrimi ya da Arap baharı devrimi patlak verene kadar yönetmeye devam etti. Yemen'deki krizi çözmek için Suudi Arabistan ve diğer körfez ülkeler tarafından sunulan bir Körfez girişimi ile sonunda onu devirmeyi başardı.

Salih'in 27 Şubat 2012'de iktidardan ayrılmasının ardından Yemen bir geçiş aşamasına tanık olmuştur. İlk önce başkan yardımcısı Hadi; iki yıllık bir geçiş dönemi için cumhurbaşkanı seçildi ve Ensar-ullah hareketi (Husiler) dahil olmak üzere tüm siyasi bileşenlerin katıldığı mevcut siyasi sorunları çözmek için kapsamlı bir ulusal diyalog konferansı düzenlendi. Bu konferansta devletin şekli, serveti ve iktidarı dağıtma şekli üzerinde anlaşma sağlanmış olsa da ancak silahlı bir dini grup olan Husiler, 21 Eylül 2014'te eski Cumhurbaşkanı Salih ve ona sadık aşiretlerin yardımıyla silahlı bir darbe yapıp devlet kurumlarının kontrolünü ele geçirdi ve meşru hükümetin peşini takip etti. Bu durumdan dolayı meşru hükümeti zorlanarak çalışmalarını Suudi Arabistan Krallığı'ndaki sürgününden yapmaya başladı. Husi grubu, Yemen'in en güneyindeki Aden şehrine ulaşana kadar kendi kontrol altındaki kapsamı genişletti. Bu durumdan dolayı Suudi Arabistan önderliğindeki Arap koalisyonu ülkeleri, meşruiyeti geri kazanma bahanesiyle 26 Mart 2015'te Yemen'e karşı savaş başlattı. Daha sonra Yemen'deki sahnenin karıştığı ve hadiselerin iç içe geçtiği yeni bir kargaşa içine girmiş oldu. Bu sırada; yani Yemen devrimin başladığından bu yana Yemen'deki siyasi hayatın; siyasi hayatı etkileyen etkili ve aktif sosyal bağlantıların sonucu olarak birçok karmaşayla karakterize edilmiş ve bu karmaşa, Ortadoğu bölgesindeki diğer siyasi toplumlarda olduğundan daha açık bir şekilde ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sosyal yapılar; hepsi son derece karmaşık bir siyasi sorunu temsil eden mezhepsel, aşiret ve coğrafi faktörlerin iç içe geçmesiyle bağlantılı olmuştur. Örneğin kuzey Yemen'deki aşiretçilik; devletin genel politikasında, ordudaki komuta mevkilerinin ve eyaletteki temel işlevlerin kazanılmasında güçlü bir şekilde etkili olmuştur. Güneydeki bölgeler ise Yemen kuzeyi ile işgalci olarak ilgilenmiş ve siyasi akımı yönlendirme konusunda dinsel ile mezhepsel yönelim uygulandığında sorun katlanarak artmıştır. Yönetimi belli bir kesimle sınırlandıran dini mezhepsel teoriler katkısı nedeniyle hala bugüne kadar devam eden siyasi problem içim ideolojik bir temel oluşmuştur. Araştırmacı; buradan yola çıkarak, sosyal yapıların Yemen siyasi yaşamı üzerindeki etkisini anlama sürecindeyken siyasi hayatın gerçek kavramını doğru bir şekilde anlamak için

Yemen toplumundaki temel sosyal itici güçlerin anlaşılmasını gerektiğine inanıyor. Araştırmacı; Arap baharı ülkelerindeki gençlik hareketinin başladığı ve bugüne kadar devam eden sonraki gelişmelerin önünü açan çalışma için 2011-2020 dönemini bir zaman dilimini seçmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Yemen, Yemen krizi, Sosyal faktörler, Yemen aşiretleri, Dini gruplar, Husiler, Suudi Arabistan, Arap ittifakı, Iran*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

Since 2004, the Republic of Yemen has witnessed a political crisis and multi-level conflict which has negatively affected the political situation in Yemen. In this context, this study aims at investigating and analyzing the impact of the social structures on the Yemeni political life as one of the most important factors.

1.2 Argument

This study assumes that there is an interactive relationship between the social structures and the political crisis in Yemen, so that the social structures, based on tribal, sectarian, and regional factors, led to the political problem that is currently taking place in Yemen.

1.3 Time Scope

The time scope of this study is confined to the period from 2011 to 2020, the period in which the youth movement had launched in its beginning and opened door for subsequent developments that are still continuing.

1.4 Chapters

The current study consists of five chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework
3. Historical Framework
   - Tribal Factor
   - Religious/Sectarian Factor

- Regional/Geographical Factor

4. The Impact of Social Structures on Political Crisis in Yemen

    - Youth Revolution

    - Gulf Initiative and the National Dialogue Conference

    - Houthis' Coup

    - Arab Coalition war in Yemen – the Operation Decisive Storm

5. Conclusion

1.5 Methodology

In this thesis, the researcher adopted the following research methods:

- The historical method: The historical methods was adopted in this study due to the importance of the historical dimensions and contexts of the social structure in Yemen. The researcher used the historical method to identify the components and elements of the social structures in the past and the extent of their influence in the present time by observing the factors that produced these structures, which in turn led to the creation of the current political crisis in Yemen.

- The analytical descriptive method: The analytical descriptive method was used in this study as a basic tool to study and describe the extent of the influence of Yemeni social structures on the political life. The researcher also used this research method to describe the current events as a continuation of the historical dimensions identified by the historical method. Thus, the researcher took into account the continuity of the phenomenon in its past and present dimensions. Using this method helps to describe the phenomenon as it is in reality, as this method is concerned with analyzing the texts and ideas that the researcher has read, and the analysis method contributes to studying and analyzing the political opposition of the active parties in Yemeni society.

1.6 Significance

The significance of the current study emerges from the topic it investigated. The study is an attempt to understand the mutual influence between social structures and the political phenomenon in Yemen. In other words, the study seeks to analyze the impact of the social factor on the political life in Yemen. Besides, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the current study is the first study that investigated such an important subject related to the current situation in Yemen.

This thesis has certain contributions as it tackles the impact of tribal, religious and geographical factors on the political crisis in Yemen in a sensitive period of the contemporary history of Yemen, starting from the eruption of the youth movement in 2011 during the Arab Spring uprisings and its repercussions in the present time, a period in which the Yemeni political panorama has witnessed many complications as a result of the impact of the social factors that have contributed to the continuation of the Yemeni crisis and to the impedance of reaching a peaceful political solution that can restore the normal life to Yemen.

In the light of this, it can be stated that this study is an attempt to understand the extent of the impact of these factors on the Yemeni political crisis during this sensitive period, which witnessed several developments at the political, economic, social and security levels.

According to the researcher's follow-ups, there is still no previous studies dealing with the impact of these factors during the time period specified in the title of the research, and all the publications that dealt with this issue or part of it was in different periods of time. In the researcher's point of view, the failure to address this important topic by Yemeni researchers can be due to the ideological (sectarian) fanaticism that casts its shadow over the thinking patterns of the current authority in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, and the restrictions it imposes on public life, especially university and academic life, which constitutes a risk to researchers who wish to address this issue.

1.7 Sources

To investigate the subject of this study, the researcher depended on two types of sources:

1. **Original** sources: Books, scientific letters, doctoral dissertations, documents and information collected through interviews.

2. Secondary sources: periodicals, reports, papers, encyclopedias, and electronic sources as well.

1.8 Literatures Review

There is a number of publications that tackled some of the social factors investigated in this study and their effects on political life. Some studies dealt with some of the tribal factors, while other studies dealt with the sectarian factor and the impact of these factors on the patterns of political life in Yemen.

The book *Society and State* by Dr. Mohammad Al Dhaheri, the professor of political theory at Sana'a University, is one among those works. The book tackles the tribe's relationship with the political pluralism in Yemen.

The current study starts with studying the impact of the tribe on political and partisan pluralism in Yemen and the nature of that impact at the positive and negative levels, and the study aims, as its author explained, at explaining the nature of the community relationship with the state and the effect of this relationship on the variables of the tribe and political and partisan pluralism in Yemen and at recognizing the privacy of the Yemeni tribe.

The study raised several main questions which the author considered them as the problem of the study. The key question elaborates the concept of the state in Yemen and its privacy, the nature of the political system, as well as whether the general Yemeni societal framework can help in establishing effective political and partisan pluralism, and whether it is possible to establish a strong and effective modern Yemeni state in the light of the existence of tribal formations attributed by traditionalism. The study started from the assumption that there is a positive and interactive relationship between the tribe and the state, and that the state mainly composes of two systems, a tribal one and an official one, and that the political system exploits tribal values in fueling conflict, which negatively affects the principles of the peaceful transfer of power as well as the tribal values whenever they are present, which causes a decline of the political role of the state.

The study relied on several approaches. The most important ones are those of Ibn Khaldoon's statements about tribalism (Asabiyyah) and its relationship with the state. The another used such a view as an analytical and interpretive framework to study some dimensions of the phenomenon. The author also used the groups' approach due to the connection of the concept of political and partisan pluralism with the group's approach, the society is composed of a complex network of groups, institutions, and organizations linked to one other. Besides, the author used the comparative approach in terms of observing the historical roots of social and political phenomena.

Regarding data analysis methods, the author analyzed the study data both quantitatively and qualitatively, and in an complementary manner and the extent of the available information about the two variables (tribe and political pluralism).The study consisted of six chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. In the first chapter, the writer tackles the theoretical framework to study the tribe and political pluralism in Yemen. While the first chapter deals with the concept of tribe, political pluralism and the relationship between the concepts of political tribe and political pluralism, the second chapter highlights the social framework of the tribe and political pluralism.

In the third chapter, the writer tackles the relationship of the tribe with the state, while in the fourth chapter the writer tackles the political and partisan pluralism and its relationship with the tribe in Yemen through the framework of the civil society organizations and in terms of the political map of political pluralism. In the fifth chapter, the writer talks about the political participation of the tribe in Yemen and the presence of the values of the political tolerance between the party and the tribe, while in the sixth and final chapter tackles the experience of unity and the role of the party and the tribe in achieving unification.

In brief, the study focused on the impact of the tribe on political pluralism and tackled the social factor, but it did not address other religious, regional and ancestral factors. The study covered the period from 1990 to 1997, from the date of the unity of the north and south parts of Yemen in 1990 until 1997, a period which the writer assumed that it represented a turning point and a new stage for the reality of pluralism, politics and partisanship in general, where the first parliamentary elections were held without a need to create a coalition with other

parties by the ruling party due to its winning of 75% of the total seats in the Parliament.

The book *"The Palace and The Diwan- The Political Role of the Tribe"* is another work conducted in 2009 by several researchers and university professors headed by Adel Al-Sharjabi, the Professor of political sociology. The palace refers to the political symbolism of ruling, while the *diwan* symbolizes the place of meeting of tribes, which is, the tribal authority. It usually takes place in the house of the tribe's sheikh, which is "the dualism of ruling" in Yemen. The study aims at investigating and analyzing the existing relations between the tribe, the state and civil society in Yemen, the nature of the power building resulting from this relationship, and studying the extent of the impact of traditional structures on the state institution, the study's inquiries about the features of continuity and the change in the roles of tribes' sheikhs as mediators between the state and the tribe, the legal and institutional requirements to reform the relationship between the state and the tribe, how the decision-making takes place in the tribe, and what is the political role of the tribe on the development of civil society.

With regard to the research methodology, it was based on a multiple approach based on analysis, interpretation and description to analyze the political role of the tribe. The study lasted two years and three months, during which the researchers performed a field study that included social surveys on a sample of 483 respondents and 24 focus group discussions were held. The study consisted of an introduction, conclusion, and six chapters. The first chapter tackles the traditional tribal structure in Yemen, the social structure of the tribe, and the social relations in tribal society, while the second chapter tackles the relationship between the state and the tribe. The third chapter sheds light on the political role of the tribe, elaborating the term "organized chaos" and the difference of the political power of tribes and the methods and mechanisms of the tribe in political influence. The fourth chapter describes the intermediate space between the state and the tribe and the roles of tribal sheikhs in mediation between the state and the tribe and the representation of citizens in the political system. While the fifth chapter deals with the democratic transformation in the tribal society, the sixth chapter, *the freedom of woman in the society of*

oppression, deals with the political role of the tribe and its impact on the rights of women. It also discusses the gender relations between religion, tribe and family authority, as well as the participation of women in the public domain. In the conclusion, the authors highlighted the most important results in relation to the negative effects that the tribe has on state building, democratization, equal citizenship and independence, social and political stability.

The third reference is a research paper entitled *"Building a guardian State in Yemen, Unifying the Elite and Dismantling the Nation"* by Adel Al-Sharjabi, a professor of political sociology at the University of Sana'a. The study tackles the causes and social factors that have contributed to the national disintegration in Yemen since the unity of the north and south of Yemen in 1990, the period before the Arab Spring revolution, which represented in the merging of the social movements, such as the "Southern Movement" that demands the secession of southern Yemen from the united Yemen and the religious Houthis movement, which later led an armed coup in 2014 and took control of state institutions.

Besides, the study tackles the behavior of the political system during that period, which imposed its authority through power and social relations without having a real legitimacy that enjoys the acceptance of the ruled population and how that behavior constituted a threat to national unity and social integration. In addition, the study sheds light on the geographical factors that led to the decline of the national identity, the emergence of geographical identities in the south, and the religious factors that led to the emergence of the religious identity represented by the Houthis movement in Saada, northern Yemen, weakened state building, and doubled the political crisis. Moreover, the study focuses on the role of the ruling elite in the emergence of these primary identities and the role of government public policies in promoting integration or social disintegration.

The study assumed that the democratic transformation process that Yemen witnessed in 1990, i.e. the unity of the north and the south, was carried out by an elite that does not believe in democracy. As a result, instead of building a state of equal citizenship, it built a pastoral state and damaged the principle of

the peaceful transfer of power through weakening the institutions of the democratic transformation.

A third study *"Informal Actors in Yemen - Causes of Formation and Means of Treatment"* was published in 2010 by the Al Jazeera Center for Studies in Qatar, and prepared by a group of Yemeni researchers. The study deals with the role played by the informal active groups in Yemen, which were able to compete with the state. In some of the roles entrusted to it, these active groups were able to perform the functions supposed to be allocated for state. These groups were distinguished by their strength and ability to obstruct the system and impede its work and they shared the state the power and influence, causing the erosion of power and the division of the country.The study identified the informal actors as the "Southern Movement", which demands the separation of the south of Yemen from its north, the Houthis movement, that led a coup and took control of the state in 2014, the tribal blocs, and Al Qaeda.

Moreover, the study deals with the social causes and factors that produced informal actors, determining the type and amount of action they perform in political life, outside the constitutional framework and state institutions, and the role of tribal, sectarian and regional factors in generating the crises in Yemen.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POLITICAL MOVEMENTS, MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

2.1 Social and Political Movements

The social and political movement is a human bloc that arises, in its beginnings, with numerical and geographic limitations, and then, with the passage of time, it starts to expand in number and area. Such blocs are usually established by an elite of thinkers and intellectuals who are aware of the reality of the stage that their society is going through, politically, socially and economically and who work to enlighten the followers who believe in their ideas and perceptions for the present and the future with a view to achieving the social and political goals in both present and future.

2.2 Movement Concept

The movement, in the language of politics, is the general trend that pushes social or political groups to organize their ranks with the aim of undertaking unified action to improve their economic, social or political situation, or to improve all these aspects, such as the labor movement, the peasant movement, the women's movement, and the students movement. In general, a movement is more inclusive and less coherent than the party (Abdulwahab, 1994).

2.3 Houthis Movement

At the beginning of its formation, Houthis movement was established as a youth and islamic movement based on the Zaidi sect thought. It began to appear in a specific geographical area, namely in Saada governorate in the northwest of Yemen, and then began to expand vertically and geographically. The term "Houthis' refers to the name of its founder Badr Al-Deen Al- Houthis.

It is the educational intellectual organization that declared itself in 1990, in the name of (Believer Youth) as an educational and cultural framework, according

to a Zaidi sectarian vision, and then in mid-2004, it turned into an armed military organization due to some factors (Al-Daghshi, 2013).

2.4 Muslim Brotherhood Movement

It is an Islamic group founded by Hassan Al-Banna in the city of Ismailia, Egypt on the 22nd of March, 1928. It is the largest political opposition movement in many Arab countries and has been classified as a terrorist group in a number of countries of the world, such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

2.5 General Features of Social and Political Movements

Social and political movements have some features that can be summarized in the following points:

- Social and political movements are characterized by their ability to create some social change. The study of social influences tackles the activities of people as members of stable groups that have their strong structures, values and rules of behavior. Within the stage of a new formation, the social movements are directed towards creating change in the existing situations, and then the beginning of the relationship between the movement and social change lies in viewing it as a relationship of mutual influence (Abdulhadi, 1993).

- Social and political movements are attributed to a conscious and purposeful behavior. They exert a dynamic effort in order to achieve a specific goal, and because they are conscious efforts, they must have a full awareness that they are oppressed. Therefore, they present a vision closer to integration in order to attract people and influence them.

- A social and political movement lacks a tight organizational structure or has a semi-organization that leads its members and directs them towards the goals proposed by the movement. The lack of a tight organization is due to a set of reasons, the most important of which are the emergency nature of the movement, the changes and transformations that take place in the movement at the level of leadership and members, and the sense of

the movement that is unstable and insecure about its existence. In contrast to its lack of a tight organizational structure, the movement possesses a strong internal solidarity, which is clear through the relationship between the leaders and members on the one hand and the strength of loyalty felt by the member towards the movement on the other hand.

- Social and political movements are characterized by continuity and speed of spread. They go through cycles in which their activities sometimes flourish and other times fade and weaken. In this, the movement differs from other forms of collective behavior, such as crowding and panic, as it continues for a relatively long period of time. As a result, the activity or efforts of the members in a movement may last for a period or perhaps for several decades. In fact, major movements, by virtue of their broad framework and large goals, increase in number of their members, achieve and success over time, and continue and last for a long time. Moreover, the movements spread rapidly and penetrate into broad sectors of society as they appear in response to social, political, cultural and economic conditions (Al-Shargabi, 1997).

- There are some movements that are characterized by no stability, fluctuation and development from time to time. The absence of a tight organizational structure, with its advantages of flexibility and speed of spread, and non-movement leads to the movement's feeling that it is unstable and threatened to disappear under the influence of other circumstances in the society; therefore, the movements go through critical changes during their existence.

3. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK: TRIBAL, RELIGIOUS AND GEOGRAPHICAL STRUCTURES OF YEMEN

3.1 Tribal Structure

The tribe, in its various forms in Arab society, and based on its connection with its geographical environment, such as desert, nomadic areas, mountain, sea, coast, and agriculture in oases, is considered the main social unit in society. Over time, tribes played important roles in society. Contemporary literature often associates the tribe with the desert or nomadic regions (Badya). Actually, this is the common and most widely used concept despite the inaccurate connection between the tribe and nomadism since they are two different concepts as noted by anthropologists and sociologists (Alkandari, 2016).

The tribe is defined as "a social unit or a solidarity group of people which appreciates its affiliation with a common origin, shares a common culture, customs and interests, resides in a specific area, and constitutes a single social, political, economic and military organization." This denies its exclusive relation to the desert or nomadic (Bedouin) societies. The tribe represented an essential component of social capital and an economic power that its effects extended on the relationship between the state and the tribe, and thus determined the level of state institutionalization, its ability to guide and make decisions, and the extent of the enforcement of the rule of law (Althahiri, 1994).

The state according to Ibn Khaldun is the temporal and spatial extension of a rule of specific "*asabiyya*" (i.e., bond/group consciousness and sense of shared purpose), that is, what follows the extension of the state in the place, the extent of influence and immensity of its area, and what follows its continuity in time, i.e. the various stages that the governance of asabiyya rule from the day it assumes power to the day it is forced to leave it (Aljabiri 1994).

The Yemeni society was made up of tribal groupings, and due to the policy adopted by the previous rulers to isolate Yemen from its external environment

for many successive centuries during the rule of the Zaidi imams, the Yemeni society has moved towards adopting tribal customs and traditions which have impeded the formation of an inclusive national identity, and devoted absolute loyalty to the tribe and its "Sheikh", leader. This had a negative impact on the adoption of political and national values.

In the absence of the state at that time, the political and economic duties and functions were entrusted to the tribe. This means that the tribe was carrying out all the economic, political, social and cultural functions that the state was supposed to perform. The tribe was, therefore, responsible for organizing the use of natural resources, regulating relations with other tribes, and settling disputes between the tribe's members. Moreover, it was entrusted to protect its members and their property. While some attributed the absence of the modern state to the diminishment of its political powers and not to the political presence of the tribe, others believe that the tribal system supported by the tribal leaders contributed to the disturbance of the balance of the relations within the social structure for the benefit of the tribe against the state (Al-Moghalles, 2013).

The tribe's structure was based on some foundations and determinants that made it coherent and effective preserving its pivotal role in various aspects of Yemeni life. Perhaps the tribal upbringing, which was based on elements such as blood, lineage, low awareness and limited education, enabled the tribe to lead its societies and to control its members. What strengthens that domination is that the tribal system is built up on a network of political and economic relations as Al-Moghalles (2013) suggested.

It was argued that the authority of the Yemeni state historically was only "the authority of the most powerful tribe." It was not possible for the national state, in an environment where the tribe plays the most important political role, to be established apart from the tribe. Rather, in the past and today, the state itself, especially in the northern part of Yemen, is more akin to the tribal alliance than to the modern state that is based on equal citizenship and the prevalence of law (Almawiri, 2006).

Accordingly, the widening and effectiveness of the tribal role in Yemen has worked to strengthen tribal structures and commit to the concept of privacy and unequal citizenship that have remained one of the most critical issues around

which a conflict between modernization and traditional forces revolves. This situation has weakened the role of the civil society and made it unable to contribute to the process of democratic transformation since the traditional forces are mainly social and are conservative and change resistant.

3.1.1 Tribal alliances

Historically, there were three tribal alliances of major tribes in Yemen, namely Hamadan, Himayr, and Madh'hij. The Hamadan Union consists of Hashid and Bakil tribes, the largest tribes in Yemeni. These two tribes have managed to maintain their tribal cohesion until now. On the other hand, Madh'hij tribe consists of three tribes: Aanis, Murad, and Al'hada. The political and economic conditions in Yemen during the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era led to redraw the tribal map, so the Madh'hij tribes joined the union of the Greater Bakil tribe, and some of Himayr's tribes joined the Hashid union (Hamza, 1985).

The Yemeni tribes constitute about 85% of the total population. The number of the sub-tribe is about 165, of which about 140 tribes live in mountainous regions and approximately 25 tribes live in coastal areas and Tihamah in western Yemen. These tribes are distributed over the Yemeni geography. Hashid and Bakil, the two most famous Yemeni tribes, are located in the northern and eastern regions extending from Sana'a in the middle of Yemen to Saada in the north and from Al-Jouf and Barat in the east to Washiha and Haradh in the west. This area is divided by a latitude between Sana'a and Saada; the eastern side for Bakil and the western side for Hashid (Althahiri,1994). See Figure (3.1).

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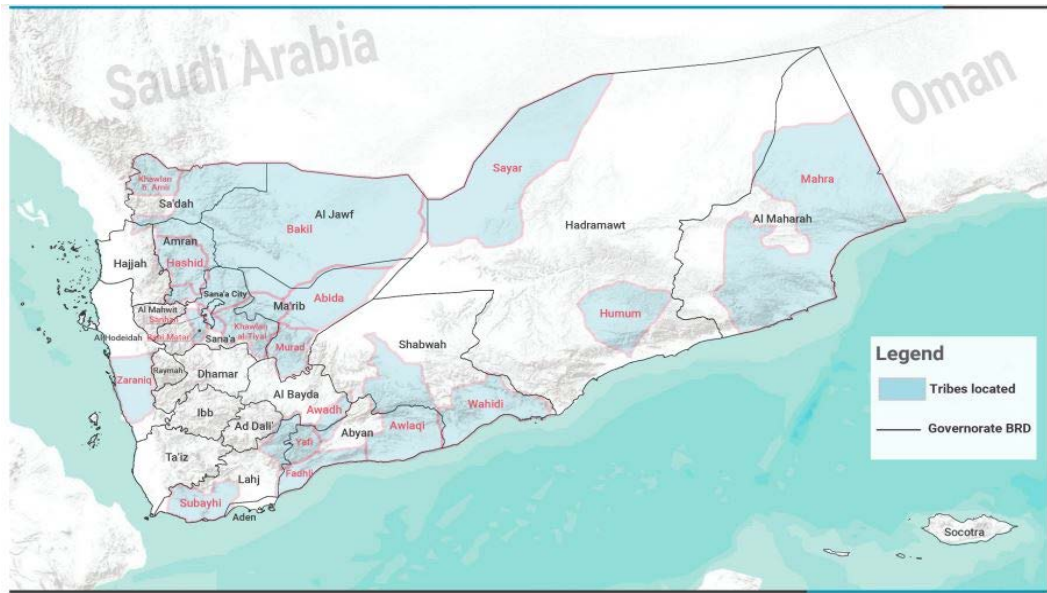
Figure 3.1: Distribution of tribes in Yemen

Source: ACAPS (2020)

Himayr tribe inhabited the southern part of the highlands and central plateaus located between the Red Sea and Hadramawt. These areas are considered one of the most fertile agricultural regions of Yemen, with abundance of springs and groundwater that attracted internal migrations. Madh'hij tribes, on the other hand, are composed of Aanis, Murad, Al'hada, and other tribes which occupied the eastern regions coming down to the outskirts of Rub'al Khali (the Empty Quarter). The borders of Madh'hij tribes start from Al-Bayda and stretch toward north-east to Al-Jawf (Abu Ghanim, 1985).

The geographical distribution of most of the Yemeni tribes has not changed significantly. Hamir tribes' area remained almost the same, except of limited internal migrations forced by some of the subgroups of Hamadan tribe (Aljouaidi, 1999). Likewise, Hashid and Bakil remained coherent geographically and demographically as a result of their coherent tribal customs. However, Madh'hij lost its old alliances despite the firmly established customs of some of its tribes, such as Al'hada and Murad.

3.1.2 Tribal classification

The Yemeni people inherited very ancient social traditions and customs dating back to the times before Christ regarding social patterns and their roles. The

ancient Yemenis dignified and respected the priests because they represented the religious authority of society. In addition, the standard of dealing in the "tribal society" is the family not the individual. The Hashemis hold a high social position among the tribes with which they were connected and their primary role was to mediate between the warring tribes. In addition, there was a tribal custom that it is imperative for the tribe man to protect his neighbor. The "Hashemi master" does not fight or carry arms and they live under the protection of the tribes (Abu Ghanim,. 1991).

The tribe in Yemen is divided into multiple categories based on tribal and hereditary beliefs. Such division is not according to class meaning; i.e., it is not based on economic foundations, but rather on inherited faith-based and cultural grounds. An individual can, under class diversity, move from a class to a higher one while he, in the case of categorical diversity, cannot move to a higher class due to the established customary rules and the hereditary nature of these categorization (Alfaqih, 2013).

Therefore, the tribe was divided horizontally and Yemeni society was divided accordingly. This resulted in producing categories that formed what might be called the social pyramid within the same tribe. All of these groups interacted with political phenomena according to their strength and social privileges they obtain in the tribe. The tribal society in Yemen can be divided into the following:

- **Hashemis:** They are also call "the masters", or the nobles, and attribute themselves to the family of the Prophet Muhammad and Fatima, his daughter and the wife of Ali bin Abi Talib. They adhere to the Zaidi and the Twelver Shi'a sect. They place themselves at the top of the social pyramid (Farwan, 2006).

  A study conducted by the World Bank in 2007 estimated the proportion of the Hashemis at 5% of the total population (World Bank, 2006).

  The Imami Shi'a and Zaidi sect, which has taken the Hashemi class a social incubator, believes that the governance in all its forms is an exclusive right for the Hashemis, for they are the sons and grandchildren of Imams Hassan and Hussein, sons of Ali bin Abi Talib. It is a political

and religious principle in their books under which they claim their right to monopolize power.

According to the categorical division of the tribe, the "masters" were entrusted with the practice of politics and governance on the one hand and with jurisprudence on the other hand. The social position they occupy, the monopoly of authority, and the right to interpret religious science enabled them to be major landowners (Aljiraisi, 2006).

Some historians argued that the "tribes" class was historically the highest social class, and the "Hashemi masters" and judges occupy that high position socially only with the tribes' consent and conviction.

- **Judges:** Judges (and, in some cases, tribal sheikhs) rank second in the social pyramid. They are historically allies of the Hashemis. Working in the judiciary, which is an inherited profession, enabled them to become one of the largest landowners in the country. Judges constitute a small group within the tribe in the Yemeni society. Despite the transformations that Yemen witnessed and that new Yemeni families practiced judiciary, while others from judge's category left the profession, judges' class still plays the same important political role in the traditional society today (Alfaqih, n.d).

- **Tribes:** Tribes, as a social formation, are a category or group of people who descend from the same ancestor, have real bonds and live in one land. The sheikh or the leader of the tribe leads it, runs its affairs, resolves conflicts and disputes between its members, and mobilize the tribesmen to support any one of its members in confronting other tribes or the state bodies. The members of the tribe owe the tribal leader absolute loyalty. Tribesmen usually carry arms. The sheikh is usually chosen on hereditary grounds; a tribe man inherits the leadership from his deceased father or relative. The new tribe leader is supposed to be strong, wise, and familiar with tribal customs and rules, and he is usually a landowner.

- **Craftsmen:** This category includes the craft or vocational groups that engage in certain manual works. The tribesmen look at them as

categories of a deficient origin compared to the one the tribe man enjoys. Deficiency means weakness of descent, and therefore they lack the high position that the tribal groups occupy (Abu Ghanim, 1985).

- In fact, in the past, the tribe considered craftsmen and even merchants inferior, and they disrespected the people who serve them or bring their needs. According to Khaldoun al-Naqib, this behavior may be due to the fact that the tribal economy in the Arabian Peninsula in general is economy of invasion, so the individuals who carry out the duties of protecting the tribe occupy a high position, while the tradesmen and the craftsmen occupy a lower degree (Aljazeera, 2010).

Recently and until now, the tribe ostracizes the practitioners of these vocations. The tribe man is not allowed to practice or do these jobs or create any marriage band or other kind of relationship with them. This category includes the following:

1. Blacksmiths: Blacksmiths performed blacksmithing for agricultural machinery and others. They were assigned to produce the primitive war equipment and to provide tribesmen with the equipment they needed. This made them in a lower degree than tribesmen.

2. Butchers: Butchers, who are also called "Al-Mazainah", are responsible for buying and slaughtering sheep and cattle in the local or weekly markets.

3. Barbers: Barbers' responsibilities included cutting hair, shaving and circumcising for tribe members on occasions, such as weddings and holidays.

4. The "Hamamis'/public bath workers: The Hamamis are the people who bath and massage persons in public baths in large cities.

5. Cafe owners are the people who owned special rest shops to serve travelers on the roads travel.

6. The "Qashams" are the sellers of legume and leeks. Perhaps that classification is related to a religious dimension, as there were prophetic texts of the Prophet Muhammad indicated that legume and leeks are not favorable especially in mosques and in social gatherings due to their smell, and the person who eats legume or leeks is not allowed to pray with others.

7. The "Dawashans", similar to eulogists, are the people who praise the Sheikh and the members of the tribes with verses or specific texts on social and other occasions for money (Abu Ghanim, 1985).

3.2 Religious/Sectarian Structure

Religion has strongly affected the nature of politics as being a set of values on which institutions stand. Although the religion of each individual indicates his/her non-political behavior, such as the method of work, life, ambition and judgment; the different religious groups have different political identities as well. Undoubtedly, that religious backgrounds contribute to policy-making through the religious political party, such as the Christian democracies. Nevertheless, many European countries are still greatly affected by religion despite the absence of religious parties. In this, they are unlike some Arab countries which are still influenced by religion (Mousa, 2019).

In Yemen, religious sects and doctrines played a major role in the political activity on the official and popular fronts, and they have been present in the Yemeni political landscape since the beginning of the revolution in 2011. Therefore, it is important to understand the religious sectarian map in Yemen. The effects of these sects and religious doctrines on the political crisis in Yemen will be discussed in the coming chapter.

More than 99% of the population of Yemen are Muslims. Article 2 of the Yemeni Constitution stipulates that Islam is the religion of the state and that Shari'a is the source of all legislation. Accordingly, the Personal Status Law and minority rights are subject to religious interpretations. The Constitution requires that the member of the Parliament must "perform his/her religious

obligations" and the presidential candidate must be a Muslim. (Yemeni Constitution 1994).

There is no a large number of Jews in Yemen at the present time even though it was the only indigenous non-Muslim religion in Yemen. Their origin is very old and traced back to the first centuries AD, but in recent history, they immigrated to the United States or Israel. Their most well-known immigration was in 1949 and 1950, when about 49 thousand Jews immigrated to Israel in an operation called "Magic Carpet". The last immigration was in March, 2016 when about 19 Jews departed to Israel. In the present time, only a few Jews are still in Yemen constituting a very small proportion of the population. The Jews number estimated for 2017 was fifty persons (Stephen, 2012).

As for Christianity, according to United Nations and World Christian Database (WCD), there are about 3,000 Christians all of which are immigrants and diplomatic representatives, and a few of them are Indian immigrants with Yemeni passports (BBC news, 2017). According to a study conducted in 2015, 400 Yemeni Muslims have converted to Christianity (Johnstone & Miller, 2015).

There is also the Baha'i Faith, a religion called by an Iranian youth named Ali Muhammad Al-Shirazi in 1844 and he called himself "Al-bab" meaning "The Gate". He announced that there was a prophet that would be sent following the other messengers: Muhammad, Musa, Jesus and others. The origin of the Baha'i Faith in Yemen dated back to 1260 AH (corresponding to 1844 AD) when the ship that carried Ali Muhammad Al-Shirazi, the "Gate", docked in the port of Al-Mokha. He attracted a number of Yemenis to the Baha'i religion, and the number has been increased slowly until today. Their number is estimated in Yemen to be about three thousand adherents spreading throughout the provinces mainly in Sana'a. The Baha'i Faith does not believe in the traditions of Islam and distinguishes itself with special precepts, book, and messenger. It declares that it believes in God and is an extension of previous religions. Baha Allah, the founder of the religion, says that his religion accepts all other religions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hinduism (Yahiya, 2019).

Yemeni community is religiously homogeneous except of the Jewish community whose number does not exceed a few individuals life (Al-Moghalless, 2013). The Jewish community lives in a semi-isolation from society, and it has a special system for education and litigation. Jews do not tend to participate in the public political.

3.2.1 Sects in Yemen

Yemen was one of the most countries that hosted different religious sects due to various historical and political circumstances it has experienced. This is why sects were related to the Yemeni geography. Sunni sects occupied a certain geographical area, while the other sects occupied another region.

There are two main sects in Yemen. The first sect is the Shafi'I, which it is one of the four Sunni doctrines. It is located in central Yemen down to the south. The second sect is the Zaidi sect, very related to Shi'a thought (Twelver sect), is located in the middle of Yemen up to the north. In addition, there are other religious minorities, such as the Ismaili sect, which spreads across several regions. [1]

There is no accurate study on the percentage of these sects in Yemen, but some estimate the proportion of Shafi'i sect at about 56% to 65% and the Zaidi at 35% to 40%, while sectarian minorities, mainly Ismaili and Sufi, represent less than 1 % (Al-Moghalles, 2013). see Figure (3.2).

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[1] Ismaili is a Shi'a sect, named after Imam Ismail bin Jaafar. It shares the concept of the Imamate with the Twelvers, but it differs in the seventh Imam, where the Ismailis see that the Imamate is a right for Ismail and his descendants after him, not to his brother Musa Al-Kazim. The dispute between Ismailis and Twelvers emerged after the death of Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq in 756. The Ismaili current in Shi'i thought represents the Sufism and Knowledge side, while the Twelver current focuses on the twelve imams and what is related to them.
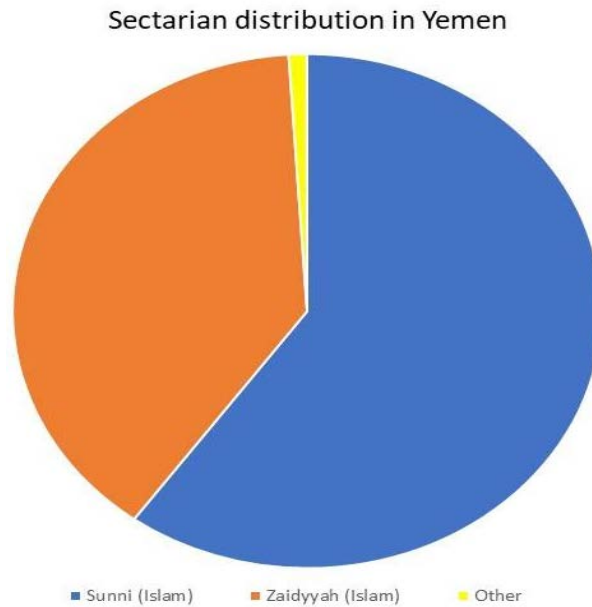
Figure 3.2: Sects in Yemen

Source: Al-Moughallis (2013)

3.2.1.1 Shafi'i sect

The beginning of the establishment of the Shafi'i sect in Yemen was related to the journey of its founder, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'I, to Yemen, specifically to "Najran" in the eighth century AD and to the rule of the Ayyubid dynasty in Yemen in the twelfth century AD. Shafi'i was the state's sect of the Ayyubid state which facilitated, along with Shafi'i scholars, the spread of the sect in most areas, especially in Sana'a, Janad, Aden, Tihama, and Hadramout (Yemeni Encyclopedia, 2003).

It then became the sect of the Sunni states ruling and settling in what is known as Lower Yemen (Sayed, 1987), starting from Yarim city in Ibb province in central Yemen and extending to Taiz and then to Aden in southern Yemen, and from the coasts of the Red Sea in the west and along to the eastern provinces in Hadramout and Mahra, (Alkaf, 1989) while the Shafi'i sect widespread in the middle of the seventh century and has continued until today.

3.2.1.2 Zaidi sect

Zaidiyyah is a religious subgroup. It is considered as one of the branches of Shi'a by some while others confirm that it is an independent sect even if it is close to the Shi'a sect. It is attributed to Imam Zaid bin Ali, the grandson of

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Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib. Its basic idea is to raise up against the unjust ruler and reject the political system. The Zaidis are divided into several groups, but the most important one is Jarudiyah, called after Abul Jaroud Al-Kharifi, whose followers lived and ruled parts of Yemen. It complies with the Imami Shi'a, the Twelvers, that the ruler must be a descendant of Ali and Fatima. This theory is called "Al-batnin", i.e., the two uteruses, that affirms that ruling is totally exclusive among the descendants of Hassan and Hussein, the sons of Ali bin Abi Talib (Alasha'ari, 1990).

On the other hand, Zaidiyyah differs from Shi'a, the Twelvers, which Iran is its current stronghold, in several points. Zaidiyyah does not believe in the idea of the "Hidden Imam" that the Twelver Shi'a believe, and on which the theory of the "Guardianship of the Jurist" is based. This theory holds that the jurist, Al-faqih, is a ruler on behalf of the Hidden Imam who will come at the end of time. Zaidiyyah also does not uphold the idea of the infallibility of the twelve imams, who are considered religious references and sources to follow for both Shi'a and Zaidi. In addition, Zaidiyyah permits the ruling of two imams at the same time in two different geographical regions. Rulership in Zaidiyyah is not hereditary as it is in Twelver Shi'ia, but rather is based on Al-bay'ah, Allegiance. Al-bay'ah involves choosing the ruler by a Council of Eminent Persons called Majlis Alhali wa Aqd (a council for solving problems and making agreements). However, the Zaidi school accords with the Imami Shi'as that the ruler must be descended from Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, and from the sons of Hassan and Hussein; "Al-batnin" theory (Moghnia, 1979). It is a concept similar in content to the theory of the "Divine Right" that developed in medieval Europe.

Imam Yahya al-Rassi, known as Al-Hadi, was the first to introduce the Zaidi sect to Yemen at the end of the ninth century AD. He was a descendant of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, and he came from Jabal Al-Rass in Medina. Al-Hadi could establish a state in Saada in northern Yemen; i.e., he was the first founder of the Zaidi state in Yemen. He was succeeded by his children and grandchildren, and his adherents' domination continued sporadically in parts of Yemen until 1962, i. e, until the Yemeni revolution and the establishment of the Republic of Yemen (Groups Encyclopedia, 2012).

Currently, Zaidiyyah has enlarged in the areas that were subject to the Zaidi state from the era of the Hadawi state until the period of Mutawakkilite Kingdom in 1962 (Al-Moghalless, 2013). Stretching from Dhamar governorate in central Yemen to Saada governorate in the far north.

3.2.1.3 Salafi movement

In addition to the Shafi'ia and Zaidiyyah, Yemen witnessed a wave of Wahhabi expansion (named after Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdel Wahab) in the 1980s. It is a Sunni Hanbali sect revived by Abdel Wahab more than 100 years ago in Najd, known later as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, i.e., before the founding of the Kingdom. This sect was the basic of the thought on which the Salafi movements in Yemen were built (Mamdouh, 2018).

Wahhabism has been a traditional enemy of the Houthis movement, especially in the regions that is considered a social incubator of the Zaidi sect in its Shi'a version. The first to introduce Wahhabism to Yemen was the Salafi Sheikh Muqbel ibn Hadi al-Wadii. The adherents of this sect do not want to be called Wahhabis considering that it is not a new sect established by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, but rather revived in Yemen, so they call themselves Salafis instead. Salaf, the predecessors, are the companions of the Prophet Muhammad who lived after his death and from whom Salafis has drawn their religious concepts (Aljazeera, 2014). The Salafi movement was able to position itself in the Shafi'is region and was in harmony with the Shafi'i sect due to their rapprochement in the religious literature. Moreover, the Salafi movements that were known for their intellectual and advocacy activities in Yemen were able to influence Shafi'i followers and motivate them to change their convictions, especially in relation to juristic aspects.

3.2.1.4 Islah party

Foundation

Islah Party, or the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, is a Yemeni political party whose ideology rooted in the global Muslim Brotherhood movement founded in Egypt in the 1920s by Sheikh Hassan al-Banna. The outset of the Islamic movement in Yemen dated back to the 1950s through the contact of Yemeni students studying in Cairo with members of the Muslim Brotherhood in

Egyptian cities and through some members of the Brotherhood who traveled from Egypt to Yemen. The most prominent of these members was Al-Fudail Al-Wortalani who came to Yemen for commercial and advocacy purposes related to the dissemination of the ideology and expanding the movement (Ali, 2009).

After the Yemeni revolution in 1962, the Brotherhood practiced their intellectual activities through secret organizations within the Brotherhood's organization because the regime ruling after the revolution banned political parties under the Permanent Constitution of the Republic of Yemen issued in 1970 (Hassan, 2014).

The party continued its intellectual activity in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh took office in 1978, Islah was an ally of the president despite the ideological differences between the two parties. (Sabri, 2013). In fact, President Saleh made an agreement with the movement to fight the Socialist Marxist expansion that was active in Southern Yemen at the time in exchange for allowing it to practice its intellectual activity through scientific institutes distributed throughout Yemeni cities and urban areas.

Establishment

The status of the Islamic Movement changed in 1990, as it profited from the issuance of a new constitution allowing the establishment of political parties within the interest of the Constitution's objectives. The movement announced the establishment of a politician party on the 13th of September, 1990 by the tribal Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussain Al-Ahmar, the leader of Hashed, as a political congregation. Its headquarters was opened on the 3rd of January, 1991. It can be stated that the party, along with its political current, consists of other religious and tribal currents. The most prominent representative of the religious current was Sheikh Abdul Majeed Al-Zindani, while the most remarkable leader represented the tribal mainstream was Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar, the founder of the party.

The party adopted a political program, forged political alliances with left-wing socialist and nationalist parties, ran for parliamentary and presidential elections, and announced in more than one occasion its disengagement from the global Muslim Brotherhood Movement. Despite that, it had been accused of being an

extension of the Muslim Brotherhood with its religious background and political project (Yemen Press, 2013). Perhaps these accusations were due to the theory adopted by some leaders of the party, especially the religious current's figures related to the Islamic Caliphate holding a concept of governance alternative to democracy.[2] This theory is one of the literatures of the global Muslim Brotherhood movement and the first in their perception of governance. The most distinguished Sheikh in Islah party, Abdul Majeed Al-Zindani, took the stage in the 2011 revolution and promised the youth by saying, "The Deputy Speaker of the Russian State Duma, Samuel Huntington, wrote in his book, *Clash of Civilizations*, that in 2020 the world would witness the emergence of a new global civilization extending from China in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The name of this civilization is the Islamic Caliphate". His speech was welcomed by a number of attendants and was considered as one of the theories adopted by the one of the most prominent Sheikh in the party.

Impact's Magnitude

Islah is one of the largest Yemeni opposition parties that has a wide popular base and great influence. Its presence is not confined to a specific geographical area, but it is stretches over cities and rural areas in northern and southern regions. It has had a clear impact on important events in Yemeni affairs since the outbreak of the Yemeni revolution in February 2011 to the present day (Aldaghashi, 2012).

The Islah party led the opposition parties in the parliamentary elections during the previous years and came second after the ruling General People's Congress party led by former President Saleh. In the 2004 parliamentary elections, the third elections after the reunification, Islah won 47 seats in Parliament ranking second between the Congress Party, which won 227 seats, and the Socialist Party, which obtained 7 seats (Thabit, 2004). In the second parliamentary elections in the 1997, Islah Party won 53 seats compared to the ruling Congress

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[2] The Caliphate is a system of rule applied by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad after his death 1400 years ago, and it means that one Muslim takes over the rule, and is chosen through a mechanism called (Shura) by a council called Majlis Alhali wa Aqd (Council for the solving of problems and making of agreements) and governs them with the provisions of Islamic Sharia as a basic constitution.

Party which won 189 seats, while in the first elections in 1993, Islah Party won 63 seats while the Congress Party got 122.

3.2.1.5 Houthis movement

The Houthis Movement is an armed religious political movement which adheres the Shi'a Twelver doctrine. It chose Saada as its major center in the north of Yemen on the border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Yemeni people call them "the Houthiss", after the family's name of their founder, Badr al-Din al-Houthis, while they call themselves Ansar Allah which means the "Supporters of God" (Banfoa & Alrabidi, 2017). The movement started its educational and cultural activities in 1986, i.e., (Aljazeera Encyclopedia, 2014).Seven years after the outbreak of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, within a union called "Youth Union" to teach the youth of the Zaidi community by the Sheikh of the Zaidi sect, Salah Ahmed Fleetah.

"Believing Youth" Forum

The Youth Forum has turned into a political party, which is "Alhaq Party", i.e., the Right Party, but the movement has established another group called the Believing Youth Forum, the core of the Houthis movement. The Believing Youth Forum is an organization of cultural and teaching activities that teaches the Zaidi sect. It was established in 1992 by Muhammad Badr al-Din Al-Houthi, the religious theorist of the Movement. In 1997, the sect transformed into a political movement called the Believing Youth Organization in which many defections occurred, such as the departure of Salah Fleetah and Majd al-Din Al-Mu'ayyadi who accused the Organization of contradicting Zaidiyyah (Aljazeera Encyclopedia, 2014).

In 2002, the movement started practicing its activities in public, and it launched its slogan; "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam" shouted out after every prayer. It is the same slogan that the Shi'as chant in Iran.

In 2004, armed confrontations began between the movement and the government accusing them of turning the organization into an armed movement that threatened the republican system of the state. The state launched six rounds of wars on the movement from 2004 to 2009 (Aljazeera Encyclopedia, 2014).

The leader of the movement, Hussein al- Houthis, was killed in the first war in 2004, and the movement's leadership was assumed by his father Badr al-Din al-Houthis, one of the references of the Zaidi sect, until his death in 2010. His son Abdul-Malik al- Houthis has taken the leadership until now.

Houthis movement joined the youth revolution in 2011demanding the departure of the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. (Abdulwahab, 2019). In September 2014, it led an armed coup in which it managed to control the government, and it currently controls 20% of the Yemeni regions; from northern Yemen in Saada to Taiz in the south. However, this area is inhabited by about 80% of the population of Yemen.

"Imamate" Theory

The Houthis movement embraces the Zaidi sect even though many accuse it of converting to the Twelver Shi'a sect because they celebrate the Day of Ghadir and Ashura. Zaydi sect states that "the Imamate" is the only method of governance; i.e., the leader of the ummah chosen is required to be a descendant of Ali bin Abi Talib and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. This theory is called "Al-batnin", which means that ruling is an exclusive right for the grandsons of Hassan and Hussein, the sons of Ali bin Abi Talib. It upholds that ruling is a divine and sacred right granted by God to the Imam (Abdulwasi'a, 2015). This theory is paralleled to the Caliphate Theory of the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

3.2.2 Geography and sects in Yemen

There is a relationship between geography and sects in Yemen which is divided into two main parts. The northern and western mountainous highlands where the stronghold of the Zaidi sect is located representing about 35% of the population. These areas are called the Upper Yemen and they extend from Saada Governorate in the far north Yemen up to central Yemen, specifically to Jabal Somara in Ibb Governorate. Most of these areas were fertile and subject to the rule of the Zaidi Imams who ruled Yemen since the arrival of Yahya al-Rassi, called Imam al-Hadi, to Yemen in 897 CE and followed by the Zaidi Imams until the Yemeni revolution in 1962. On the other hand, the Shafi'i sect represents about 65% of population, and it is located in the highlands in the

middle of Yemen and the coasts, the so-called Lower Yemen, starting from the south of the Jabal Somara and extending up to Aden in the far southern coast on the Arabian Sea (Al-Moghalless, 2013).

In addition to the Zaydi and Shafi'I sects, there are limited followers of the Ismaili sect estimated by about 40,000 people living mainly in certain areas like Haraz in northwest of Sanaa, Jebla in south of Ibb governorate, and Yarim in the middle of Yemen (Dresch, 1993). This sectarian division differs from the political division of Yemen in the south and north. This sectarian-geographical division occurred in what was known as "North Yemen", before the unification in 1990.

3.3 The Geographical Structure

3.3.1 The Impact of geographical size on domestic Politics

As the strategic location plays a vital role in the foreign policy of any country, the geographical factors clearly affect domestic policy (Alaswad, 1991). Geographical factors include terrain, climate, natural resources, the size and nature of the territory, and the geographical distribution of the population.

Studying the relationship between geography and domestic policy has been receiving significant attention of thinkers since ancient times. Aristotle referred to the relationship between climate and political freedom in his book, *Politics* (Book VII), and mentioned that the cold climate leads to freedom. Jean Bodin, in the *République* (1576), mentioned that people of temperate zones are more active than the people of the south hot regions but they are less prudent. On the other hand, southerner people are more contemplative than those of the north and have less physical strength, but they are endowed with better qualities qualifying them to lead and rule. In his book, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu tried to explain the impact of climate on political moods and temperament of people. He explained that extreme hot air hampers people's force and courage, while cold climate helps to increase their strength and spirit making them able to accomplish long, arduous, and partial works. Montesquieu concluded that the temperate climate privileges because it formulates moderate

human behavior appropriate for political systems based on freedom (Alaswad, 1991).

This, certainly, does not affirm that revolutions and political movements are intrinsically associated with the climate, but time and space are factors that influence the outbreak of any of them. In fact, revolutions have their objectives, economic and social determinants while climate only influences the timing of the outbreak of popular and political revolutions and movements. Another geographical factor is natural resources which affect the political phenomenon at two levels. The first level is the abundance of natural resources which are a source of strength of any country or region and one of the important means to achieve stability and social and political development. The other level is the impact of resources' abundance or scarcity on the psychology of members of society (Alaswad, 1991).

Ibn Khaldun differentiated between the Bedouin and the agricultural communities. He wrote about the impact of this economic pattern on the conflict between tribes and sedentary people, stressing that natural resources largely control the style of people's life (Bouthoul, 1964). Moreover, the country's wealth and potentials can be the reason of conflict with the geographical poor neighbors. Here, arid geographical elements interact with the abundant material resources within the territory.

Regarding the type of nature and terrain, Montesquieu considered that the fertility of lands and the abundance of food create a peaceful society. On the contrary, the land's lack of natural resources contributes to the freedom and independence of citizens (Maurice, 1964). They have more freedom and courage since they have nothing to lose. Some modern theories have argued that indigence and need are important factors in aggravating political conflicts, and that wealth reduces their intensity (Maurice, 1964).

3.3.2 The impact of geographical size on political status

The region size affects the political situation. Countries of large territories tend to adopt a federal system, as in the United States of America, Germany and India. Small countries. On the other hand, smaller countries are inclined to adopt centralization of power like France and Iraq. Switzerland is an exception,

it adopts the federal system, even though it is a small country. Geographical conditions determine the form of the state and the structure of constitutional institutions (Alaswad, 1991).

Therefore, the form of any country and the nature of the relationship between the states in federal countries may help in solving the political problems arising from that division or else be one of the causes of disagreements if the country is weak or does not have a strong central army. Similarly, in the unitary state, political problems arise between the central state and other states usually due to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the center while other states are marginalized.

The impact of the nature of the region is as important as that of the size of the region on the political situation. The nature of geographical borders in each country affects substantially the nature of the political relationship between neighboring countries as well as the size of the region itself. Aristotle referred to the relationship between the nature of the geographical environment and that of institutions in the islands and countries bordering the seashore. Montesquieu recalled this old idea in more details in *The Spirit of the Laws*. He stated that people of the islands tend to be free unlike the peoples of the continent because sea separates the islands from the great empires and stops the invaders (Maurice, 1964). On the contrary, the lack of natural barriers facilitates invasion and makes countries more threatened and less stable.

3.3.3 The impact of region nature on political mentality

Some believe that the geographical factors control the political mentality and the method of exercising power, starting from the location of the region. Greek philosophers pointed to the connection between the geographical environment and the political practice of the regime. Spartan's isolated location was a reason for its roughness; alternatively, as Athens approaches the sea, it is liable to external influences reflecting on its political life by direct democracy and made it more open and influenced by the nature and practice of neighboring political systems. Some authors have linked the arid deserts with the autocratic system, as in the Babylonian and Assyrian empires. They also linked between agricultural lands and the advanced community system which had gained

experience in organization from enacting irrigation and agricultural laws (Georges, 1959).

3.3.4 The impact of population factors on political life

Population factors affect political life from several ways, the most important of which are as follows:

1. **Population**: As the population of a country or territory increases rapidly, it is likely to suffer from the outbreaks of revolutions and increasing of number of political movements. On other hand, if the population is low, the country enjoys relative stability because natural resources are not often sufficient to meet the increase in the number of population or able to meet their needs. Therefore, poverty increases and indigence drives them to start political movements in order to change the existing political and social system. Aristotle, Montesquieu, and Rousseau established a connection between population and political life and Malthus, in his theory of population, tried to prove the same association (Duverger, 1964)**.**

2. **The nature of population societies**: The nature of population societies affects the cohesion of political societies. Differences in origins of population groups like in nationality, race, religion, and language may lead to elasticity in political concepts and are reflected in the liberalism of existing institutions. Therefore, lack of diversity of population groups may lead to inflexibility, and a single ethnicity seeks to control the state ending up with the introduction of a minority regime; the Oligarchy System (Alaswad, 1991).[2] The stronger the country, the more it will benefit from the diversity of population groups, their ethnicities, religions and languages. This diversity represents a cultural richness and a cornerstone of a strong state. However, if the country is vulnerable, its diversity will be a curse leading to social conflicts affecting as much as the state is absent or unable to carry out its tasks, and this may lead to fragmentation.

3. **Geographical location**: Geographical location contributes to creating a specific political and social situation. For example, the austere mountains

and terrain contribute to isolating the region from the center and causing it to lag behind. Internally, new sub-state entities emerge like tribal entities and, at external level, the geographical location of a country directs it to greater openness to other countries or else its isolation from them leaving it far behind development. Moreover, strategic geographical location attracts the occupation of external forces, which, in turn, contributes to the impair of the local central authorities (Almoad'a, 2015).

3.3.5 Geography of Yemen

Yemen has never been immune from being affected by the geographical factors that characterized the nature of Yemen. It has directly caused the formation of a particular political situation linked in one way or another to geographical factors: terrain, climate, natural resources, as well as the geographical distribution of the population and their sectarian map. The diverse nature of the Yemeni terrain has made some of its territories open up to the center and isolated others.

Hence, the researcher considered that it is necessary to study the geographical features and characteristics of Yemen in order to recognize the extent of their impact on the emergence of political crises as a results of certain geographical factors.

3.3.5.1 Geographical location

Yemen is located in the southwestern end of the Arabian Peninsula in southwestern Asia, occupying about 555,000 square kilometers. Yemen's population is 26,687,000 people according to the 2015 census. It overlooks the Bab al-Mandab strait which is one of the most important waterways in the world for oil and goods tankers. It links the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea (National Information Center, 2013). What increases the importance of Yemen's geographical location is the spread of islands in its territorial waters along the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

3.3.5.2 Neighboring countries

Yemen is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the north, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to the south, Oman to the east, and the Red Sea, which separates Asia and Africa, to the west. Yemen shares 2000 kilometers of land borders with Saudi Arabia and 288 kilometers with Oman. Its coastline stretches for about 2,500 kilometers from the borders with Oman in the east to the borders with Saudi Arabia in the north. It encompasses more than 200 islands in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, the largest of which is Socotra and Hanish. Yemen's strategic location has caused it to become a stage of local and international conflicts, especially because it is located next to the oil kingdoms; Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

3.3.5.3 Terrain

Yemen is characterized by a variety of surface features; therefore, it is divided into five main geographical regions:

- **Coastal Plains Region**: It extends intermittently along the western and southern Yemeni coasts. It is crossed by mountains and highlands reaching directly to the Red Sea in the west and the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea in the east. The coastal plains in the west and south are characterized by a hot climate throughout the year with few rains but considered an important agricultural region, especially the Western Tihamah Plain due to the large valleys receiving sufficient flash floods resulted from rainfall in the mountainous highlands.

- **Highlands Region**: It extends from the far north of Yemen to the far south including plateaus, bottoms and agricultural fields resulted from breakages in the Earth's rocky surface. These mountainous highlands are rich in steep valleys. The mountains of this region are the highest in the Arabian Peninsula, with an average elevation of 2000 meters, and their peaks reach to more than 3500 meters. The highest point in Yemen is An-Nabi Shu'ayb mountain, about 3666 meters high. The water dividing line is located in these mountains where the water descends through a number of valleys from east, west and south. Among the most important of these valleys are Wadi Moor, Haradh, Zabid, Siham and Wadi Rasyan,

all of which flow into the Red Sea. The most important valleys flowing into the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea are Wadi Toban, Wadi Bana, and Wadi Hadramaw.

The highlands include the western part of Yemen and are only separated from the sea by Tihamah Plains. They constitute about 18% of the country's area; however, they are inhabited by 80% of the total population. Temperate climate and protection means are the main reasons of population density in these highlands in the past. People headed, from them, towards the coastal plains when the country was exposed to external invasion. As a result of the heavy density of population, highlands represented one of the most important determinants of political instability in Yemen through history.

This region led to the formation of different groups due to difficult communication and geographical isolation, and to a great internal diversity whether in terms of customs or sects; Shafi'i, Zaidi and Ismaili (Alwishali, 2007). Mountains inhabitants usually embrace sects contradicting those of the plains. Most of the people of the high northern mountains are Zaydis, while the inhabitants of the highlands in the central regions and coasts are Shafi'is. This has led some to argue that the sectarian differences in Yemen are due to the natural factors existing, its population is concentrated in plains and mountains and includes different sects, parties, or other groups (Salim, 1971).

- **Mountain Basins Region**: It represents the basins, plains and bottoms located in the mountainous highlands, mainly in the central section, and extends from the far north to the far south. The most important basins are Yarim bottom, Dhamar, M'abar, Sana'a Basin, Amran and Saada. These bottoms are often agricultural.

- **The Plateau Regions:** They are located in the eastern half of Yemen, expanding further towards the desert of the Rub Al-Khali (i.e. Empty Quarter) and declining gradually. The surface slopes slightly towards the north and east. The majority area of the surface of this region is of a desert rocky surface in which some valleys extend, especially Wadi Hadramawt and Wadi Huraib. This region is about 1000 m above the sea level, the temperature reaches more than 40 $^{\circ}$C, and the average rainfall

is only 100 mm. Due to the harsh climatic conditions and low rainfall, population is very low, and the agricultural production barely meets the needs of a few of them. This region was one of the poorest regions of Yemen until the recent oil discoveries.

On military side, the eastern plateau region does not enjoy any natural protection means, for it lacks fortified barriers except some jagged mountainous hills. In addition, the demographic diaspora makes defending this region difficult in light of the current conditions of Yemen. Working in this semi-desert nature is difficult and arduous (Alwishali, 2007).

- **Desert Region**: It is a sandy region almost devoid of vegetation except areas adjacent to streams of rainwater falling on the mountains near the region. The climate is extreme and characterized by high temperature, great temperature range, scarce rainfall and low humidity.

Figure 3.3: Topography in Yemen

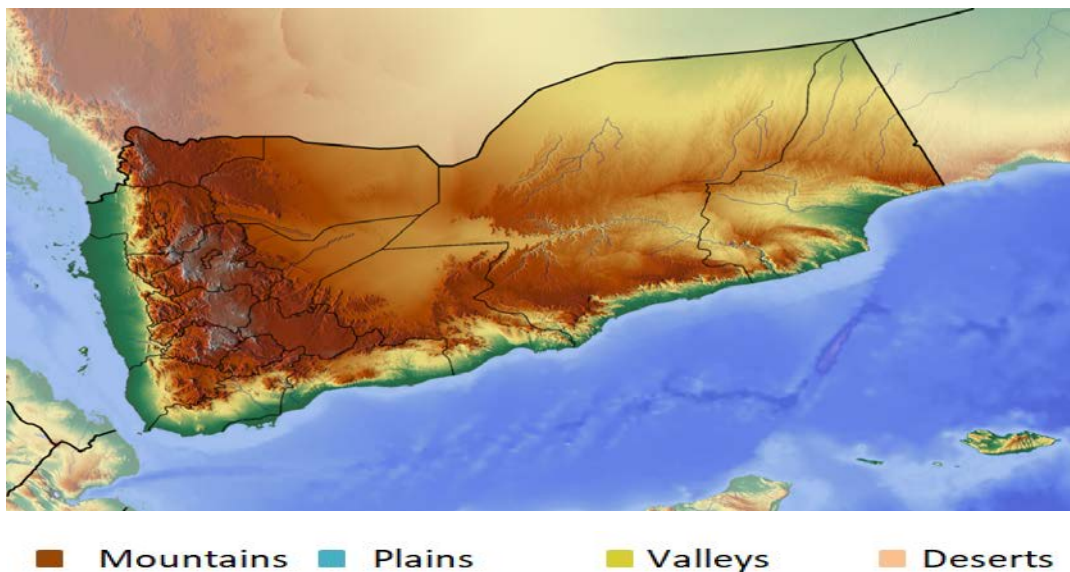Source: National Information Center Yemen (2014)

3.3.6 Population Geographical Distribution

The Republic of Yemen is administratively divided into 21 governorates, and the governorates are subdivided into 333 districts which are subdivided into 2,200 sub-districts and quarters, then into 36986 villages and then into 91489 localities and neighborhoods. The number of local constituencies (voting

stations) is (5620). The population is distributed unequally in the governorates due to natural and economic reasons. The largest governorate by population is Taiz Governorate followed by Al Hudaydah, Ibb and the capital Sana'a, respectively. These four governorates include about half of the population of the country by 42.8%. Mahra, Marib and Rima governorates are the smallest governorates by population, by 0.45%, 1.2%, and 2% respectively of the total population (Table 3). The large dispersion in the distribution of the country's population appears on those population concentrations, especially the rural population. This dispersion is found in the governorates that are essentially mountainous in nature. The dispersal of villages and population groups on the rugged mountainous terrain has made it difficult to deliver basic services for the population and increased their cost (National Information Center, 2013).These natural phenomena have contributed to the isolation of the population for many years.

3.3.7 Patterns of Human Settlement

There are three types of human settlement in Yemen:

- **Concentrated Settlement** means high population density in a small area, as in the highlands which are occupied by more than 78% of the population of Yemen. The density increases in the southern part of this region as in the areas surrounding Ibb and Taiz governorates due to high rainfall, temperate climate and soil fertility. Urban areas also are characterized by concentrated population density.

- **Scattered Settlement** is characterized by small and dispersed gatherings of low number and density as in the eastern plateau region. They are formed due to low soil fertility, high temperature, scarce rain and lack of agricultural resources except for few scattered areas containing seasonal valleys and brooks flow. The most important valleys are Wadi Al-Jouf, Wadi Hadramout, Wadi Huraib.

- **Linear Settlement** stretches along the main roads and valleys in the Tihamah Plain and extends to the coasts of the Red Sea as well as the seaports and fishermen villages located in the southern coasts along to the sea.

3.3.8 The Sectarian Map

There is a relationship between geography and sects in Yemen which is divided into two main parts. The northern and western mountainous highlands where the stronghold of the Zaidi sect is located representing about 35% of the population. These areas are called the Upper Yemen and they extend from Saada Governorate in the far north Yemen up to central Yemen, specifically to Jabal Somara in Ibb Governorate. Most of these areas were fertile and subject to the rule of the Zaidi Imams who ruled Yemen since the arrival of Yahya al-Rassi, called Imam al-Hadi, to Yemen in 897 CE and followed by the Zaidi Imams until the Yemeni revolution in 1962. On the other hand, the Shafi'i sect represents about 65% of population, and it is located in the highlands in the middle of Yemen and the coasts, the so-called Lower Yemen, starting from the south of the Jabal Somara and extending up to Aden in the far southern coast on the Arabian Sea (Al-Moghalless, 2013).

In addition to the Zaydi and Shafi'I sects, there are limited followers of the Ismaili sect estimated by about 40,000 people living mainly in certain areas like Haraz in northwest of Sanaa, Jebla in south of Ibb governorate, and Yarim in the middle of Yemen. This sectarian division differs from the political division of Yemen in the south and north. This sectarian-geographical division occurred in what was known as "North Yemen", before the unification in 1990 (Dresch, 1993).

Yemeni community is religiously homogeneous except of the Jewish community whose number does not exceed a few individuals. The Jewish community lives in a semi-isolation from society, and it has a special system for education and litigation. Jews do not tend to participate in the public political life (Al-Moghalless, 2013). By 2017, there have been approximately 50 Jews while most of them emigrated to Israel (Day, 2012). They are the only non-Muslim minority of Yemen's indigenous population. Jews were an old component of Yemeni community since the first centuries after Christ.

3.3.9 Climate

Yemen has a long coastline along the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea causing high humidity in the western and southern coasts where high temperature exceeds 42

°C in summer. Rain falls in Yemen in two seasons: during spring season from March to April and in summer from July to August. The average rainfall in Yemen varies spatially; the highest annual precipitation is in the southwestern highlands and in the middle of Yemen, in Ibb, Taiz, Al Dhale'e and Yarim, from 600 to about 1500 million cubic meters per year. However, the annual precipitation in the western coastal plain, Hodeidah and Mokha, is lower. The southern and eastern coasts of Yemen receive about 50 mm per year, as in Aden, Al-Faiyush, Al-Koud, and Al-Rayyan. Temperature in the southern and western plains is very high, exceeding 42 °C in summer but falls to 25 °C in winter. The average temperature in highlands varies from 33 °C to 20 °C. In winter, temperatures on highlands dips to 0 °C. Humidity is high in the coastal plains, increasing to more than 80%, while it is lower in the interior areas reaching the lowest level by 15% in the deserts.

3.3.10 Natural Resources

3.3.10.1 Oil Wealth

Yemen's main natural resources are oil, natural gas, agriculture and fisheries. Oil sector in Yemen is strategically important for the Yemeni economy since it was discovered in the mid-eighties of the last century due to its contribution to the gross domestic product, the general budget and the balance of payments. This sector had witnessed a growth in production since the Yemeni unification in 1990 until 2001, from 69.1 million barrels in 1990 to 160.1 million barrels in 2001, with an average of about 440,000 barrels per day. Then production has declined in the period from 2002 to 2007 by an average of 117 million barrels per year (Yemen country profile, 2006).

However, oil production has been deteriorated and suffered from structural problems, the most important of which are corruption, local conflicts, and the tribal mentality that rules the country (Ja'shan, 2012). The weak oil resources, the deep-rooted corruption in the government, wars and disputes are all reflected on the economy and the rate of growth in Yemen. Yemen's petroleum exports before the Houthis coup against the State in September, 2014 was approximately 259,000 barrels per day generating 40% of gross domestic product (GDP), 70% of the revenues, and 90% of the general budget.

3.3.10.2 Gas

The liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in Yemen began as preliminary studies and surveys of possible construction sites in 1995. By 2004, drilling began and the main gas pipeline extended from Sector 18 in Marib to the Balhaf for about 320 km. In August 2005, the Yemen LNG Company signed long-term sales contracts for about twenty years with three of the world's largest companies: Swissgas, South Korean Gas Corporation (KOGAS), and Total.

LNG exporting started in 2009 and its profits contributed 5.1% to 6.9% of the total annual general budget revenues. Nevertheless, gas production soon stopped due to the Houthis coup in September 2014, then to the Saudi Arabia's military operations in Yemen in March 2015. Since then, gas production has almost stopped. The Yemeni government's efforts to resume gas exports have been unsuccessful under the turbulent security situation around Balhaf export station.

3.3.10.3 Fish Wealth

Yemen's coastline stretches for about 2500 km and it is rich in fish and marine life. It includes about 200 islands, such as Kamran, Zuqar, Great Hanish, and Little Hanish in the Red Sea as well as Socotra, Abdul Kouri, Darsa and Samha in the Arabian Sea (World Bank, 2002). Yemeni regional waters contain more than 350 types of fish and marine creatures. Fisheries sector is considered one of the most important sectors that supports Yemeni economy. Despite that, it constitutes only 1 to 2 % of Yemen's GDP as a result of the declining volume of fish production, the undeveloped fishing methods, and some other obstacles that hamper exploiting this wealth optimally.

3.3.10.4 Agriculture

 Agricultural sector plays an important role in the national economy of the Republic of Yemen as it is one of its most important cornerstones. Its average contribution is about 13.7% to GDP, and about 16.5% to the national income of Yemen. In addition, it significantly participates in the economic development by supplying the population with food, agricultural products and raw materials needed for many agricultural industries, such as cotton, tobacco, vegetables, wool, dairy, oils and leather as well as fibers and wood. It is also considered an important market for non-agricultural commodities. The agricultural sector is

ranked first in labour absorption by 54% of the total working population in the country (National Information Center, 2010).

Cultivatable area in Yemen is estimated to be more than one and a half million hectares, while the areas under cultivation represents more than one million and two hundred thousand hectares, by 81%. Agriculture in Yemen is characterized by diversity due to its varied climatic characteristics resulting from varied rain rates, temperatures, humidity and topographic conditions, which led to the different plant regions and production. However, many regions depend mainly on rain in agriculture affecting the sustainability of agricultural production. The estimated percentage of the rainy area is 51% of the total cultivated area. Other areas depend on pumping groundwater, reservoirs, dams, brooks and springs. The irrigated area represents 49% of the total area under cultivation (Alhashid, 2003). The agricultural exports are modest, ranging between 3 to 5% of the total exports, while agricultural imports constitute between 15 to 20% of the total imports (Ministry of Planning, 2006).

As a matter of fact, the agricultural sector has been affected by the recent war and conflict, and the government does not support agricultural projects. Therefore, this sector has witnessed a decline and failure. In the past, Yemen had achieved self-sufficiency in agricultural products, but during the last few years it has decreased to 15%, and its contribution to GDP fell to 13% even though the Yemeni community is agricultural and about 53% of the workforce is employed in this sector, and 50% of the republic's population depends on agricultural production revenues (Alhomaidi, 2004).

 The decline in agricultural production is considered a threat to the economic and political stability in Yemen. The agricultural growth is lower than the rate of the population increase. Growth rate in this sector is only 2% compared to the estimated population growth by 3.5%. This means that there is a gap between the population growth and agricultural growth. The agricultural sector is supposed not to be affected by variations and external factors as is the case in other economic sources such as oil, tourism and others, but the growth in this sector is very low and an indicator of real economic risks and the spread of poverty and starvation among the population (Muharram, 2010).

4. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES ON POLITICAL CRISIS IN YEMEN

4.1 Introduction

As the current research covers the timespan starting from February 12, 2011, the date on which the Youth Revolution has sparked out up to today, it is necessary to highlight the major events and turnouts that have taken place during this time span and its characteristics that have formed the nature of the political life in Yemen during this period of time. It is also important to mention that there are tribal, religious (i.e. sectoral) and geographical factors that have impacted these events, whether negatively or positively.

- **The Youth Revolution**

The Youth Revolution represented a key turnout and the beginning of a new crisis the consequences of which are still prevailing today. While many people argue that the youth revolution was a solution to the pre-2011 political and economic problems of Yemen, many others believe that it has further complicated the problem. However, all of them agree that it has paved the way for a new phase, in which Yemen has entered into dangerous turnouts due to the complications that have taken place, most notably the fact that Saleh regime has refused to hand over the power at the very beginning and the events that has resulted from such refusal as well. Then, the gulf countries presented the so-called the GCC Initiative. After that, the Houthis armed group has taken power. Later, the legitimate authority represented by President Abdurabo Mansoor Hadi and the legitimate government have left Yemen into Saudi Arabia, where they are still residing up to nowadays.

- **The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative**

Two months later, the gulf countries presented the GCC Initiative led by Saudi Arabia to solve the crisis in Yemen. The GCC Initiative was announced on the 13th April, 2012. In November 2012, this initiative was signed by the conflict

parties: the ruling party (the GPC) and the opposition parties. The GCC Initiative included a number of points that the concerned parties agreed upon. The key points are as follows:

- Presidency shall be handed over to Vice President Mr. Abdu Rabu Mansoor Hadi, this shall be followed by a referendum to have Hadi in office for a two years transitional period.

- President Saleh and his aides shall be granted legal immunity from prosecution and being held accountable.

- A national reconciliation government shall be formed.

- A National Dialogue Conference (NDC) shall be organized in which all components of the Yemeni society shall participate and contribute (Al-Riyadh Newspaper, 2011) to develop a new vision for the country in which shall define the state form and the way to distribute power and wealth.

- **Electing a Transitional President**

After the GCC Initiative was signed and power was handed over, the Vice President Abdu Rabu Mansoor Hadi was elected on February 21, 2012 as a transitional president for a two- year transitional period. This was made by means of a public referendum in which 6535000 voters (66%) out of 10243000 eligible voters have participated in the election. The vast majority of voters (99.8%) have voted for Hadi to be a transitional president for a two-year transitional period that was initially supposed to end up in February 2014. (BBC Arabic, 2012) Unfortunately, the political events that have occurred later on, as well as the Houthis coup, have prevented the finalization of the political process as planned and has extended Hadi term in office up to today.

- **Launching the NDC**

After that, President Hadi was sworn in as a transitional president of Yemen. Then, on March 18, 2013, the first NDC session was held in Sana'a. This NDC was stipulated to buy the GCC Initiative signed by major political parties in Yemen. The NDC lasted for 10 months; i.e., its final session was held on January 25, 2014 - the day on which the President of Yemen has announced the

final document of the NDC that was agreed on by various Yemeni parties and actors, including the youth component.

- **Houthis Group Coup**

The most significant turnout in the political path of the crises in Yemen took place on September 21, 2014 when the Houthis group turned around the NDC outcomes, the Peace and Partnership Agreement signed by the government and Houthis. Then, it has launched a coup d'etat on the legitimate and the elected government and took control over state entities in Sana'a as well as in some other cities and put the president of the republic under house arrest in Sana'a, before he managed to escape out to Saudi Arabia later on. By this, Yemen has entered into a dark tunnel and is still in till today.

A coalition between the Houthis Group and the ex-president Saleh-led GPC. Unfortunately the coalition has not lasted for a long time as the relations between the allied parties have deteriorated quickly as Saleh openly accused Houthis of acquisition everything. Having denied and deprived Saleh of many privileges that he used to enjoy, the relations have deteriorated further and further. The escalations have come to its peak in early December 2017 and has led to military confrontation between the Houthis and pro-Saleh military forces, in which Saleh was killed on December 4, 2017. This has resulted in giving Houthis more focused powers and increasing their domination and further weakening and marginalizing Saleh GPC.

- **Launching the "Decisive Storm"**

On March 26, 2015 at midnight and after the Houthiss have marched towards and taking control of the city of Aden in south Yemen, Saudi Arabia has announced the launch of a military operation with the participation of 11 Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and UAE. This intervention was called "Operation Decisive Storm" and its goal was to restore the legitimate government and to end-up the coup of the Houthis Group. The Saudi-led Coalition has targeted the Yemeni air forces and made it out-of-service. It has also targeted so many official government entities and thousands of civilians. This operation is still ongoing up to day, but under another name coined by Saudi Arabia, "Hope Storm". The Saudi-led coalition has successfully freed the Aden city out of

Houthiss and have controlled the city as well as its port. The UAE has been directly in charge of Aden city and has created armed forces outside the formal Yemeni army. In summer 2017, a new political entity - "the Southern Transitional Council"- was launched and it called for "separation" between the south and north Yemen. The UAE is still having full control over the city of Aden until today. The events that have occurred in Aden have taken a new path similar to what is happening in Sana'a controlled by Houthis.

- **Prelude**

As per the course of events, the first station in the period under study is represented by the youth revolution that has erupted on February 12, 2011 and the social factors that have contributed to its occurrence or have accompanied its chapters. However, before indulgent takes place, it is worth mentioning here that there are some mutual tribal, religious and geographical factors that have contributed to the occurrence of these events making them either easier or more complicated. That means there may be some overlapping between these factors in their tribal, sectoral or geographical origins to the distinctive characteristics of the social structures in Yemen. Thus, it is very difficult to distinguish between the tribal factor and the sectoral factors when analyzing these events since Yemen is distinguished by its complicated and over living social structure that is based on tribal and sectoral grounds which are at the same time overlapping with various political, economic and social aspects (Al-Mawla, 2011).

When talking about the tribal role in the Yemeni crisis, it should be mentioned that it is complemented with the sectoral role or identifier in terms of crises occurrence and continuity. For example, in many instances, in order to take power, the sectoral Imams used to utilize and make best use of whatsoever conflicts that may exist between tribes. Cindy's endeavor they rely on the vast popular base of these tribes solely to accomplish their (sects Imams) own narrow political interests. On the other side, the tribal system has utilized and made use of the sect in order to enhance and enforce the sense of belonging to the tribe and to maintain its unity as one solid tribe. This goes deeper and deeper as there are overlapping interests between both the tribal and the sectoral

side up to the level in which there is complete and full overlapping of interests (Mousa, 2017).

The other thing is that the researcher has intended to highlight the impacts of these social factors on political life in one dedicated chapter and the impacts of these factors on the political parties in another separate chapter. However, overlapping between the political life and the political parties has made it difficult to completely distinguish between them, since the political party is the main actor in the political process and has a religious or tribal background. For example, the PGC, which was the ruling party for more than 30 years and has the largest block in the Yemeni parliament, has a tribal background as this party has relied on attracting the tribe sheikhs and leaders who were linked with the head of the political regime by means of a network of interests. In contrast, the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, a party commonly known as Islah, which is the GPC main competitor and has the second largest block in the Yemeni Parliament, has a religious background and usually relies at some level of its propaganda on religious propaganda directed towards its members and followers. In fact, it is very difficult to talk about the impact of the tribal and religious factors on the political life without talking about the impact of such factors on political parties. Therefore, the researcher has intentionally divided this chapter into several sub-sections each of which is dedicated to highlight one key event in the course of Yemen crisis, along with the impact or effects resulted from tribal, religious and geographical factors, starting with the youth revolution and then the GCC initiative and the agreements that were reached on its basis such as the NDC. After that, the researcher shed light on the Houthis rebellion against the state authorities and the military operation led by the Arab Coalition (the "Decisive Storm"). After that, the researcher referred to the stands and positions of the Yemeni political parties toward this military intervention, as well as its consequences, and so forth.

4.2 Youth Revolution

In the very beginning, it should be mentioned that the Youth Revolution which is classified to be one of the Arab Spring revolutions that were inspired by the revolution in Tunisia in January 2011 and the revolutions that has followed in

several Arab countries, including Yemen was the overall result of economic deterioration and political corruption that has gone very deep in these countries as well as the monopoly of power and wealth. The Youth Revolution in Yemen has erupted after a situation of intense congestion and blockage between the ruling party (GPC) and the opposition parties. The main trigger that has sparked the Youth Revolution was the proposal made by President Saleh in late 2010 to make some amendments in the election laws and the constitution of Yemen that will enable him to run as a candidate for the presidential elections for a seventh term after his sixth term that was supposed to end in 2013 (Al-Sharah, 2013).

Shortly after this proposal, the Youth Revolution erupted on February 12, 2011. The beginning was when some groups of university students in Sana'a and Taiz cities went out to streets calling for not to renew for Saleh and not to allow him to bring in his son, Ahmed, to presidency. These demonstrations were depressed with force. Then, within less than one week, the demands escalated and the demonstrators started to call for the Saleh regime to hand over power (Al-Ghafori, 2016). They have literally repeated slogans that were made by demonstrators in Egypt and Tunisia, such as (the people demand to take the regime down). It seems that the positive way in which the regime in Egypt has responded to the demonstrator' demand to hand over power, as well as the fact that Tunisian President Zain Al-abdeen Bin Ali has escaped Tunisia and left to Saudi Arabia, has further inspired the youth in Yemen who have insisted on their demands calling for Saleh regime to hand over power.

4.2.1 The tribal factor

The year 2011 has witnessed the breakdown of an old coalition "contract" between "Al-Ahmer Family" and "Ali Abdullah Saleh". This breakdown was manifested when Sheikh Sadiq Al-Ahmer, the leader of Hashid tribe - which is Yemen's largest tribe and to which Saleh himself belongs - has joined the Youth Revolution. The Al-Hasabah zone in Sana'a city has witnessed the worst armed confrontations between the pro-Saleh forces and the armed tribesmen supporters of Hameed Al-Ahmer. In these confrontations, tenths of people from each side were killed and it has resulted in huge destruction and damage to houses and buildings in the confrontation areas that have forced thousands of families to flee their own houses. Worth mentioning here that these armed confrontations

have expanded greatly to the degree that the Yemen armed forces that have supported the revolution and the armed forces whose loyalty to Saleh have both participated in the fighting (Al-Sharah, 2013).

Since the beginning of the Youth Revolution many tribal groups have joined the demonstrations and sit-ins. When major sheikhs of major Yemeni tribes such as Hashid, Bakeel and Madhaj have joined the Youth Revolution, this has formed a fatal strike against the political regime since the tribe was one of the most dominant power centers in Yemen. This meant that tribes have abandoned the ex-president Saleh and his political regime, who used to utilize their help and assistance throughout his term in presidency that have lasted for 30 years (Al-Himiari, 2018).

This has also constituted the beginning of a split and a division in the coalition between the political regime and the tribes represented by their heads, sheikhs and leaders. Therefore, the regime has lost one of the most important pillars on which the regime used to rely throughout its term in office that has lasted for more than three decades. All of this has led to looking at the tribe from a different angle that reflects the continuity of tribal influence and the fragility of other civil powers in confronting the regime and in the overall situation prevailing in the country (Al-Himiari, 2018).This is crystal clear by the continuous arrivals of tribesmen and tribal leaders into the sit-in squares, as well as their roles during popular demonstrations, supplying the square, protecting the youth protesters and participating in various events.

4.2.1.1 The importance of tribal support

The importance of tribe becomes more important in this regard since it is an active social power that has contributed in drawing the overall political scene. Some people view the tribe as the axis or center of the formation of both old and modern Yemeni state. The tribe, as a social power, has played a dominant and effective role and has been a part of the balancing game within the political scene. This is because when a tribe joins this or that political party, it will for sure give that party a greater weight that will help it to improve its negotiation position and to change the terms of the political game for its own favor. The revolutionary uprising has gained a lot when the two tribes of Hashid and Bakeel declared their support for the people's peaceful revolution, in solidarity

with the peaceful demonstrators in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden. This has severely weakened president Saleh in his strive to remain in power and has forced him later on to sign the GCC Initiative that stipulated for handing over power to his vice president Mr. Abdu Rabu Mansoor Hadi (Al-Salahi, et al, 2012).

However, the whole tribe did not stand entirely with the revolution against Saleh regime. Some of Hashid, Bakeel and Madhaj tribes who are spreading across wide regions of Yemen, have remained loyal to Saleh regime. The political breakdowns and infiltrations, particularly, within the political parties, have also made a breakdown within the structure of each individual tribe. This means that while some tribesmen have supported the revolution, many others have remained loyal to Saleh regime (Ghanem, 2016).

The tribal system has been one of pillars of the ruling political system in Yemen as Saleh used to rely on the tribe to support his regime. This was through the Sheikhs who have a tight grip on tribesmen and utilize them to serve the regime through political participation in support for the regime. The majority of tribesmen were under the influence of influential tribal personalities who support the regime. Thus, those tribesmen have voted for the ex-president Saleh. Furthermore, since both systems (the tribal system and the regime) have both remained a supporting pillar for each other, it was a natural result that the dramatic fall of the political system would virtually lead to the breakdown of the tribal system and a very likely fall of its partisan style (Al-Salahi et al., 2012).

Additionally, the political system has utilized the tribe and used it to serve the regime services through its strong and vast relations with tribe leaders, empowering them to hold political positions and to make material gains in order to keep this vital social structure and its members a human source for protecting the political system and a tool in the regime hands to launch its wars whenever and wherever it is necessary. A good example is the 1994 summer war and the wars against Houthiss (Al-Himiari, 2018).

Thus, the damages inflicted by the tribe as a result of the regime's policies and the deterioration of the overall situation in the country have reached far deep up to the tribe culture and traditions that have witnessed some changes. Of course, these changes were not for the modernization of the tribe; rather, it was towards

a family dispute and some material interests that have made the tribe appear as a weak and broken structure that is not homogeneous with its civil surroundings (Al-Moghalis, 2012). It is worth mentioning here that Saleh regime has relied on tribe leaders and on the officials appointed by the central government. As a result, the government has never exercised its control over several parts of the country (Green, 2013). There were many tribal groups who have retained their independence. This has resulted in having many areas and locations limited public services.

4.2.1.2 Tribal disputes

In fact, the majority of tribal influential figures who have joined the youth revolution were ones who already have some past disputes or rivalries with Saleh regime, as they had a feeling of being marginalized by Saleh who have favored his close family members and supporters to get appointed in sensitive military positions, including his brother Mohammed Abdullah Saleh who held several high positions, the last of which was the Commander of the Central Security Forces till he died in 2001. The same has applied to his other half-brother Ali Saleh Al-Ahmer, who held the position of the Commander of the Revolutionary Guards and then the position of the Director of the Office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Force up to the date on which Saleh regime has handed up the power in 2012 (Al-Salahi, 2012).

Additionally, Saleh has appointed the sons of his brother, the late Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, in high military positions. Saleh has appointed Yahya Mohamme Abdullah Saleh as the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Security Forces (CSF), his brother Tariq in the position of Commander of the Private Guards and Commander of the Third Republican Guards Battalion, while their third brother, Amar Mohammed Abdullah Saleh was appointed as Deputy Chairman of the National Security Bureau. This was in addition to the appointment of tenths of his close relatives and hundreds of his far relatives who have all held some high state positions (Aljazeera net, 2011)

However, the major source of motivation for tribe to join the youth revolution was Saleh intentions to appoint his son - Ahmed Ali - as his successor. Ahmed Ali was the Commander of the Republican Guards. Just before the eruption of the Youth Revolution, many voices had gone up pushing for Ahmed Ali to be

the next president of Yemen after his father. Of course, this will be through election. However, the tribe was suspected of the freedom of any elections run by Saleh. Anyway, Saleh intentions to have his son to be his successor president and appointing his close family members in high state and military positions have sparked a wave of family sensitivities and wars within Hashid tribe, which is the most powerful tribe in Yemen (Al Hemiary, 2018). Thus, the Hashid tribe split into two parts: the Sanhan Hashid and the Osimat Hashid.

4.2.1.3 Privileges and interests

In addition to their desire to get rid of the regime that has marginalized them, the tribes desire to get more privileges and to build strong bridges with the new regime were their major motivations to join the youth revolution. In this context, a distinction shall be made between the tribe leaders and tribesmen in terms of their motivation for joining the revolution. While the tribe leaders wanted to get some new privileges from the new regime, the tribesmen wanted to change the regime because it had failed to fulfill their urgent development needs (Al-Salahi, et al, 2012).

The protesters have welcomed the tribesmen and tribe leaders who have joined the uprisings since tribe is a major source for support to the revolution which gained more weight and popularity, particularly when some tribal elements that belong to both the political and military elites joined the revolution, as well as more breakdowns and resignations that have include prominent members of Saleh family and his allies (Al-Sharah, 2013).

However, this was also a source of concern for the protestors who feared that this will deviate the revolution from its original path towards making some political gains in the conflict on power and authority. Therefore, the protesters have cautiously welcomed the tribal leaders joining the revolution. This was clear the stand of the tribal leaders in support of the uprisings. Although they have adopted the uprisings demands to bring the regime down, they were less enthusiastic for the idea of a thorough change of the regime. They have quickly welcomed the GCC Initiative which stipulated handing over the power to the Vice-President and keeping the GPC as an active and vigorous partner in Yemen future (Al-Moghalis, 2012). This can be attributed to the Saudi role and influence deeply rooted within the tribe in Yemen which has played a major role

to keep the limits of the tribe political demands low in return for giving a chance for survival for the ruling party who was a close ally of Saudi Arabia before the revolution.

4.2.1.4 Positive role

While tribe is viewed as a parallel power to the state, the tribe tends to be governed and controlled by social norms and traditions more than by laws. The tribe played a positive role during the uprisings and sit-ins that called for Saleh regime to hand over the power. Unlike the typical image of tribes tending more towards violence and cannot be controlled by means other than weapons, some tribes that supported the uprisings played an important role in protecting the protesters and in contributing to the popular uprisings. Nihim and Arhab tribes - which held key locations in the surroundings of the capital city of Sana'a and which were housing major pro-Saleh Republican Guards camps - hampered and restricted the movements of military units to the uprisings squares. The same thing applied to the Freedom Square in Taiz city, as a wide assembly of social and tribal personalities was organized and decided to provide necessary protection for the peaceful protestors and to protect public facilities in Taiz city (Al-Moghalis, 2012).

Among the major positive roles of tribes in serving the youth revolution was the role of the tribes that abode by rules and order since this has prevented the pro-Saleh military forces and their allies from going far by bloody responding to the peaceful uprisings, most notably in Sana'a, Aden and Taiz (Al-Sharah, 2013). This is added to the peaceful approach adopted by the tribes in the uprisings squares. Moreover, the tribes and provided financial support to the revolution and protesters (Al-Salahi et al., 2012).

This peaceful nature was the result of a high degree of precaution from the tribes part that Saleh regime was keen on attracting the tribe to a violent confrontation and thus getting rid of the revolution peaceful demands for change and manage to portrait them as some violent groups seeking to spread chaos and sparkling civil wars. Unfortunately, this precaution and peaceful behaviour did not last for long, as military confrontations erupted between Saleh forces and the sons of the most dominant tribal sheikh, namely Abdullah Ibn Hussain Al-

Ahmer, in the surroundings of his house in Al-Hassabah zone at the center of the capital city of Sana'a.

4.2.2 The religious factor

4.2.2.1 joining the islah party

The majority of the youth who have initially called for the regime to hand over the power were independent youth and free from party or religious ideologies despite the fact that some few youth among them were affiliated members of the left-wing parties. However, groups of youth that belong to the Islah Party, Al-Houthis group, the Yemen Socialist Party and the Nasirite Unity Organization Party have joined these demonstrations calling for Saleh regime to hand over the power. The leaders and members of the Islah Party joining the uprisings have constituted a remarkable turnover and a great support to the uprisings. On one hand, huge numbers of individuals physically joined the uprisings, which is in line with the vast popular base of the Islah Party within Yemen society, and on the other hand, the uprisings became more and more well organized due to the long experience that the Islah Party had in organizing its own events (Al-Manai, 2017). The youth component of the Islah Party formed the core basis of the revolution and the majority of participants in the uprising squares in the governorates of Yemen (Al-Daghshi, 2017). The Islah Party was then one of the major components of the Joint Meeting Party Coalition (JMP), (Al-Muhatwari, 2012) which include the Islah party, the Yemen Socialist party, the Nasirite Unity Organization party, the Arab Socialist Baath party, the Septembarian party, the Popular Forces party and the Al-Haq party.

4.2.2.2 Fears of manipulate

The youth feared that Islah would manipulate their revolution and their revolutionary decisions due to the influence and capabilities that this party enjoyed. These fears and concerns rose as tribes and tribal leaders started to join the revolution. Thus, the independent youth and some left-wing parties considered this would enable the Islah party to manipulate and control the revolution decision. The youth saw how the join of the Islah party to the youth revolution empowered the cadets affiliated to Islah party to control the stages all over the governorates of Yemen, and then controlling almost all events

organized at the revolutionary stages. In the meanwhile, the youth had some serious concerns that the JMP, headed by Islah, which was the major opposition coalition, marginalized the youth by not giving them due representation in the agreements that were concluded later on. This was a major obstacle that hindered the democratic change and transformation. Since the JMP should have played more influence in the decisions taken later such as the immunity granted to Saleh and his aids from being prosecuted after handing over the power, as per the GCC Initiative, this enabled Saleh to step in once again into the political arena and to play a significant role in empowering the Houthiss and providing them with all weapons and finally to the Houthis coup against the state (Yemen Press, 2011).

The Islah Party acted under the umbrella of the JMP and, along with other opposition parties and forces active in calling for political reform, did not make alone a clear stand from the revolution, but it was a joint collateral stand and position contained in the JMP call for all community and party components to get out to the streets in support of the protesters calling for President Saleh to hand over the power. This call was made by the JMP on February 20, 2011; i.e., eight days after the eruption of the Youth revolution (Al-Daghshi, 2017).

With regard to youth accusations that Islah Party controlled the revolutionary decision, stages and squares and has neutralized youth from any decisions; the Islah party stated that such accusations were just mere political arguments and that their activities in the stages reflected their huge numbers in the squares. With regard to the non-representation of youth, in fact, the youth were not affiliated to any entity in order to be represented. Their very presence in the squares and setting outs had partially some regional classification in terms of the governorates they originated from, such as the Camp of the people from Al-Qafr District, the Camp of the people of Ans District, … etc. This made it very difficult to get them represented in the GCC Initiative, which has stipulated in one of its clauses that Saleh shall hand over the regime. Additionally, the Islah party explained that the youth were not represented in any agreements due to the lack of charismatic youth leaders who enjoy the trust of the protesters in all squares. With regard to granting immunity to Saleh, it was a mere proposal raised by the JMP in order to entirely end up Saleh era and to start a new

one(Al-Muhatwari, 2012). Anyway, the Islah party has responded that the representation or non-representation of the youth is a matter of which Islah party should not be held accountable since the Islah party is just one of the eight components of which the JMP is composed of.

4.2.2.3 Religious propaganda

The use of religious propaganda and discourse during the revolutionary events by members of the Islah party formed a phenomenon of which the Islah party is well known. The Islah party used religious discourse and propaganda in a number of revolutionary events that were held at the stages and squares in various Yemeni governorates. Although this has satisfied some people, whether they are members of the Islah party which is a party with a religious background or whether they are religious in nature; such a thing was not welcomed by many other people, who believed it was inappropriate to use religious propaganda and discourse to accomplish mere political objectives despite the fact that the latter group were an integral part of the revolution.

The Islah party point of view was that religious discourse and propaganda has a role in deepening the revolutionary beliefs of the Yemeni people who are born religious by nature as well as the beliefs of the youth who demanded the regime to be changed. Its role is clear in furthering the revolutionary work to change the regime. The best evidence for this was the speech delivered by Sheikh Abdu Almajeed Al-Zindani, a prominent Islah Party leader, Chairman of the Islah Party Shoura Council and one of the Islah part Founders. Sheikh Al-Zindani stood at the Change Square stage in the center of the capital city of Sana'a in 2011 and addressed the youth saying, "There are political and surveillance reports and on religious researches all of which confirm that the new Caliphate era is coming soon". This was welcomed by some youth demonstrators who chanted loudly (God is the Greatest). "The latest US National Security Council report to President Obama that in 2025 Muslims will declare the Islamic Caliphate," Sheikh Zindani added. Then, Al-Zindani posed a question in which he wondered how the Islamic Caliphate would be established while Muslim nations were controlled by tyrant rulers and while all State bodies were run into the opposite direction. "This was until the winds of change have blown all over

the Arab World in a manner, we cannot say that it is a manly one," Sheikh Zindani added meaning that it is a divine manner (Alzandani, 2011).

In that very speech, Sheikh Zindani also said that the Vice Speaker of the Russian Parliament -Samuel Hintington, in his book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations"* said that in 2020 the world would witness the rise of a new global civilization that would spring from China in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. The name of this civilization would be (the Islamic Caliphate). While this was welcomed by a number of youth who chanted loudly (God is the Greatest), it was denounced by others.

It is true that Sheikh Zindani did not made such a release as he was just citing the book *"The Clash of Civilizations"*. However, he adopted this vision and employed it by making it into a context that served the Islah party desire to change the regime. This was a source of concern for many who believed that the change was not Zindani's means for change and building a fair democratic political regime, but rather a means to call for the Islamic Caliphate which he believes to be the best regime.

Additionally, the Islah party preachers recalled stories of Prophet Mohammed (may peace and prayers be upon him) with a view to highlighting the demand for change. An example was a speech made by the Preacher of the Youth Square in which he said that "Sheikh Mohamed Ali Gadi - the Imam of the Algos Mosque - has told me in earl Hijiri month of Shaaban " I swear by God that I have seen the Prophet (may peace and prayers be upon him) along with Khalid ibn Al-Waleed sitting together at the Change Stage in Sana'a and the Prophet has said, "I swear by God that victory will be yours and I am with you". "Thanks to God for His support and help," he added (Alkady, 2011)

In addition, the Islah Party leader and preacher of the Change Square - sheikh Abdulraqeeb Obad made a speech in which he tried to add some divine attribute to the location of the Change Square in Sana'a city when he said, "Remember who has chosen this exact location to be the Change Square in Sana'a? Wasn't it God? God has chosen next to the Al Eman Yaman minaret (referring to the memorial located in the middle of the Change Square). "... and has chosen the square next to one of God's houses, in which there is a minaret that symbolizes steadfastness, strength and highness … it is a blessed Square" (Obad A. , 2011)

All these calls were religious discourse and propaganda that was welcomed by religious communities but also were denounced by some others. However, these calls sparked a political battle, the consequences of which are still present today, all of which are centered around the use of religious propaganda and discourse to serve political objectives.

4.2.2.4 The houthis movement

The Houthis group participated in the setting outs since the very beginning. This came after six wars that the regime launched against the Houthis group in Saadah city north of Yemen since 2004 till 2010. This group called for Saleh regime to hand over the power. However, it did not succeed to take control over the Change Square or the revolution stage though the Houthis group made great use of the revolution in an endeavour to present itself as a group that believes in change and it published and distributed its leaflets and printouts in the Change Square. It is worth mentioning here that the Houthis group left the Change Square after a few months later, in late August 2011. This was the time in which there were some rumors that the Saleh regime intended to violently break into the Change Square from all sides and directions. Some critics believed that the withdrawal of the Houthis group from the main squares in Sana'a took place after the group had realized that it was ultimately impossible for it to take control over the Square. However, the Houthis group returned once again into the Change Square after real developments had taken place in the ground signaling that the political regime would fall soon. In any way, the Houthis presence was weak during the revolution and therefore such presence did not make any significant results (Al-Daghshi, 2013). However, the larger political crisis caused by the Houthis group was when they rebelled against the authority later on in 2014.

4.2.2.5 The salafies

The Salafies are a group that prohibits democracy and political parties. The Salafies gained a notable voice during the revolution. They opposed the calls for Saleh to step down and hand over the power. Thus, they supported Saleh as the legitimate President and ruler. They believed that it was not allowed to demand him to step down and leave. This is deeply rooted and well documented in the Salafi literature. One Salfi literature believes that the president as a ruler shall

have unlimited term in office that cannot be ended by means of elections but rather by his death. In the same time, the Salafies believed that the youth and parties demands for Saleh to step down and leave were not legitimate demands and were religiously forbidden. During that time, a Salafiest sheikh, namely Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ma'ribi, gained reputation. He is a man of Egyptian origins who has lived in Yemen since early 1980s and reside in Marib where he gained the respect of both the sheikhs and tribesmen. Another one is sheikh Mohammed Al-Mahdi, as well as several others who joined the "Yemen Religious Ulama Organization" and issued a statement on September 29, 2011 in which they declared that it is religiously not allowed to call for Ali Abdullah Saleh (in his capacity as ruler) to step down and leave power. This was a good support for Saleh that he made good use of. Furthermore, the Salfiests stand and position had contributed to the creation of some specific popular awareness in support for President Saleh against the revolution (Al-Daghshi, 2012).

However, there was a newly incorporated Salfiest Party that split out of the Salfiest accord, not only in its revolutionary stand, but also in the overall idea of democracy and political parties. In this, it made a rebellion against the literatures of the Salfiest group. The name of this new party is the Al-Rashad Party and it has retained its religious and sectoral ideas but practices political activity (Thabit, 2016). The incorporation of the Al-Rashad Salfiest party was announced on July 15, 2012 and it participated in the revolution and called for Saleh to step down and leave. Later on, this party participated in the National Dialogue Conference.

4.2.3 The geographical factor

The geographical spatial factor has its own impact on the event in Yemen. Since the eruption of the Youth Revolution and the beginning of the peaceful sit-ins, the protesters have established camps that were spatial and geographical in nature. This means each camp was set to house a group of people who originated from the same district, area or governorate. Each governorate, district or sub-district had a dedicated camp separate from others. For example, there was a Camp for the people of the Al-Qafr District, another camp for the people of Gifah area, a third one is the Tent of the people of Marib, a fourth one is the Tent of "Albidah Youth", and so on (Hamzah, 2011).

This had its impact on several aspects, including that this was an opportunity for the people of these governorates, districts and areas who live individually in the capital city of Sana'a to come together and to have a sense and a feeling that they have some common project that links them all together. The impact of this was the reason and motivation for them to keep on and to continue and stay in the Change Square. In turn, this formed a push and source of pressure on the regime which was upset and wanted to end the sit-ins and demonstrations. Having the people of the same district or sub-district to set together in one camp helped in reviving the sense of solidarity and cooperation. Some unemployed people found shelter in these camps amongst the district men, and they managed to secure daily nutrition and food that could help them to continue the set-ins for a much longer period of time. This is a logistic support that sometimes came from the sheikhs and the social figures of the same districts to which these camps belong.

In addition to that, one of the key reasons that motivated the youth to join the revolution was the fact that their home districts and areas were neglected and marginalized. This means there are some rural areas and locations where there are no infrastructure projects, including roads, schools and health facilities for tenths of years. In fact, there are some locations in Yemen in which there is no school built since Ali Abdullah Saleh first came to office as a president of Yemen in 1978 up to the date on which the Youth Revolution erupted. School boys and girls in those areas study under trees (Aljazeera net, 2013)

Thus, one of the key reasons for tribes to join the revolution was devastation policy dredging that was used against the tribe both as a social structure and as individuals. The rural tribal areas have not received much of the services that would make the people of these areas feel the feasibility and validity of the regime and that this regime deserves to remain. Such areas lack so many services and infrastructure in almost all fields. This has further enhanced tribesmen's sense of rejecting and opposing their living conditions and the regime behind these deteriorating living conditions (Al-Himiari, 2018). This had pushed and motivated many tribesmen to join the demonstrations and sit-ins.

4.3 The gulf initiative

After the political crisis following the outbreak of the revolution, Saudi Arabia submitted an initiative project on April 3, 2011 to resolve the crisis in Yemen in order to prepare a democratic transition by transferring power in Yemen and forming a Government of National Unity. This initiative was called the "Gulf Initiative". International and regional pressure led to reach a political settlement in Yemen. Beside these international pressures, there was a national one with a view to trying to persuade President Saleh to accept the handover of power to the vice President, Abdrabbo Mansour Hadi (Aljabarat, 2018).

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia advanced on April 3, 2011, less than a month after the outbreak of the revolution, a political settlement called the Gulf Initiative. It was signed in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, by the ruling party and opposition parties on November 23, 2011. The Gulf initiative, amended several times, included many provisions, the most important of which was the handover of power from Saleh to the Vice President Hadi, and granting Saleh and the officials of his regime immunity, ratified by the Parliament, from prosecution.

4.3.1 Saudi concerns

Saudi Arabia's feared of the Yemeni revolution more than the Yemenis themselves. Therefore, it put forward an initiative called the "Gulf Initiative" which is, in fact, a Saudi initiative in form and content. Saudi Arabia was concerned to find, through the initiative, a loyal political system, after believing that loyal Saleh was no longer feasible.

The Gulf Initiative was the most important means to absorb this new and impulsive revolutionary and political surplus that surprised Saudi Arabia in order not to confuse the Yemeni political formula. It seemed that it only wanted the damage of the revolution, if it was a must, to be confined to the officials of the regime without threatening the rest of the parties, tribal forces and power centers of the ruling and the opposition parties. In addition, the regional role that Saudi Arabia led under the cover of the Gulf initiative responded to the same fears of a new reality in Yemen emerged out of the revolution and might cause many problems later, especially that it avoided the establishment of a new Yemeni republic difficult to control (Al-Mathihaji, 2012). It was also worried

that its revolutionary momentum would extend to Saudi Arabia; therefore, Saudi Arabia worked to control the situation in Yemen to ensure the ruling of a loyal regime preventing a democratic transition of unknown results.

4.3.1.1 The special committee

Saudi Arabia worked to ensure the loyalty of the tribal sheikhs and a number of Yemeni tribal have received monthly salary from Saudi Arabia since the 1920s. It should be noted here that King Faisal bin Abdulaziz, the king of Saudi Arabia at the time, gave his orders to form a special committee in 1962 after the Yemeni revolution, that established the first republic and ended the monarchy, in order to oversee the file of Yemen after the revolution. In the early 1970s, a number of names were included in the list of the Special Committee, including some Yemeni tribes' sheikhs, and were granted generous salaries, and until now, as a result of the settlement between the remnants of the monarchies and the fighting tribes overseen by Saudi Arabia. Those salaries were considered as a soft force through which Saudi Arabia sought to influence the Yemeni decision through tribal sheikhs understanding that they had a role to play in influencing the political decision, particularly since a number of tribal elders were holding political and military positions at the same time. Therefore, it had used the tribes in the settlement under the name of the Gulf Initiative.

4.3.2 Tribal pressures

The social figures and tribal leaders as well as religious figures were mediators who visited Saleh to convince him to hand over power. Although those mediations failed to convince Saleh to leave power, they sent a clear message that many tribal sheikhs were no longer in Saleh's side, and that if he did not respond to them, they would not support him accordingly

In one of his statements, Islah Party Sheikh, Abdul Majid al-Zandani, revealed that he and a number of tribal sheikhs, including Hashid leader, Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, Aljad'an leader, Sheikh Rabeesh bin Kaalan and a number of Yemeni scholars visited Saleh, trying to defuse the crisis and to persuade him to hand over the power, but he threatened and said that he was a descendant of Himiar, an ancient Yemeni tribe, and that blood would "reach knees", a Yemeni proverb

used to emphasize courage and threatened to explode the situation (Al-Zandani A., 2011)

Although that incidence and the like did not convince Saleh to hand over the power, they put pressure on Saleh to accept it. It was a sign that the alliance between Saleh and tribal sheikhs was on its way to be broken. Actually, the leader of the tribes of Hashid Sadiq Al-Ahmar, as well Sheikh Zindani and other sheikhs, joined and supported the revolution and demanded for change. A war broke out between the military forces that had loyalty to Saleh and the opposing tribes of Al-Ahmars in Al-Hasaba region in the heart of Sana'a, following al-Ahmar tribal leader Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar joining the revolutionaries (BBC Yemen, 2011).

One of the pressuring factors on the former President Saleh was that the military commander and tribal figure Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar joined the revolution. On September 21, after the massacre of "Karama", in which more than fifty young revolutionaries were killed in the Change Square, Mohsen issued a statement announcing his joining revolutionaries and his readiness to protect them from any attack. Saleh considered that a treason and stabbing in the back, and that widened the gap between him and Mohsen. (Al-Ahmar A. 2011)

Mohsen, who belonged to Sanhan, Saleh's hometown, was a military commander, Saleh's closest ally and was considered as the second man after Saleh. Therefore, Mohsen joining the revolution created a split in the military of Saleh in favour of the the opposition parties (Al-mathihaji, 2012). In addition to being a military commander, Mohsen was a tribal figure having wide spread influence among Yemeni tribes and enjoying the support of their influential figures. Joining the revolution was the greatest blow to Saleh during the revolution.

Saleh's loss of a tribal ally and the religious establishment in Yemen, most of whose members were formed by the Islah party, put pressure on Saleh to finally accept the Gulf initiative that determined that he should hand over the power to his Vice President, Hadi.

The initiative was supported by the United Nations, the United States of America and the European Union. It did not many details about the

implementation mechanism, but then the implementation mechanism was attached. Although signing the initiative was delayed by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the initiative was finally signed in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on November 23, 2011. The first stage of its implementation was forming a government of national accord on January 3, 2012 headed by Mohammed Salem Bassandwa, followed by a presidential election with Hadī as the only candidate on February 21, 2012. The Gulf initiative was signed by two parties: the General Public Conference party and its ally parties and the Joint Meeting Parties and their ally political parties and entities (Al-Domaini, 2018). It provided for the GPC party to hold the presidency, a figure from Joint Meeting parties to head the government, and the government to be formed by both parties sharing the government ministries, including the sovereign ones.

4.3.2.1 Responding to the pressures

Saleh had no choice but to sign the initiative, handing over the power under public, Gulf and international pressures. The initiative granted him and the members of his party immunity from accountability in exchange for engaging in the implementation, and the parliament voted on that immunity on January 21, 2012. However, the indications showed that Saleh, who survived the fate of his counterparts in the Arab Spring countries, was looking again to return to power; he remained as the President of the GPC party as a way to be politically and popularly present.

The young revolutionaries did not participate in signing the initiative, but categorically rejected it. They considered it an attempt to enable Saleh to go unpunished, and that the acceptance of the initiative was a betrayal of the blood of the young people who lost their lives for Saleh's departure and trial. Moreover, they believed that since the initiative had not started from the streets, it would not meet the ambition of the youth of the revolution or represent the will of the Yemeni people which was mainly that President Saleh and his relatives should resign immediately and be brought to justice with all those involved in the murders (Al-mathihaji, 2012).

However, the youth, despite their rejection of the initiative and its provisions, they could not prevent it. The political and tribal forces were the most influential in the political scene and those owned the ability to make political

decisions at that time (Ayesh, 2012). The Houthis group, as well, rejected the Gulf initiative on the grounds that it did not serve Yemeni's revolution or achieve its objectives.

4.3.3 National dialogue conference (NDC)

The Gulf Initiative resulted in a conference, called the "Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference". The declared objective of the conference was to resolve the Yemeni political crisis, not only the crisis that arose after the youth revolution demanding the departure of the Saleh regime, but also the crisis that arose in Yemen before the youth revolution. Saudi Arabia submitted the proposal for the initiative, later called the Gulf Initiative, which enjoyed unprecedented regional and international support. It had taken a long time to prepare for the conference; the first session was held on March 18, 2013 (SABA, 2013) in the Yemeni capital Sana'a and lasted until January 25, 2014 (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

The Gulf Initiative was signed by the ruling party and the opposition parties, including an implementation mechanism of several steps, the most important of which was to hold a National Dialogue Conference involving all political components and all segments of society in order to develop a new vision for the future of Yemen and adopt a new constitution that will define the shape of the new state, the way to share wealth and power, and resolve outstanding problems, such as the southern issue calling for separation of the south of Yemen and the issue of the Sa'da, the stronghold of the Houthis group (National Information Center, 2012).

All political forces and parties participated in the National Dialogue Conference, as well as new religious and sectarian forces, such as the Houthiss and Salafists, AL-Rashad Salafist Party, and regional forces, such as the Southern Movement, which called for the secession of the south of Yemen from its north, as well as the young people who called for the overthrow of the regime and there was representation of women as well (Aljabarat, 2018).

Although Houthis and the youth did not agree to the Gulf initiative, they joined the National Dialogue Conference and were represented, for the objective reality and the balance of power imposed itself since the outbreak of the

revolution made a consensual political process one of the most secure solutions preserving the unity of Yemen and its society (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

The sectarian factor in the nature of representation was highlighted at the National Dialogue Conference, where the Houthis movement was represented with 35 seats out of a total of 565 seats while Al-Rashad Salafist Party, a faction of a religious group becoming later a political party following the youth revolution, was represented with seven seats.

Moreover, representation was also on the basis of a regional geographical consideration; the geographical division of northern and southern Yemen was taken into account during the distribution of seats. The Southern Movement calling for secession of the south of Yemen was represented by about 85 seats, which was a significant number commiserating with the importance of the issue of secession. The representation of southern Yemen was about 50% of all components taking into account the balance of all components of Yemeni society. The general distribution of seats was as follows:

1. 112 seats for the GPC party and its allies.

2. 50 seats for Islah Party.

3. 37 seats for the Socialist Party

4. 50 seats for the Nasserist Unionist Organization

5. 20 seats for five political parties, with 4 seats per party; Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, Yemeni Unionist Party, Union of Popular Forces, National Council, Al-Haq Party).

6. 85 seats for the Southern Movement calling for the secession.

7. 35 seats for the Houthis movement.

8. 40 seats for civil society organizations.

9. 7 seats for the Al-Rashad Salafist Party.

10. 7 seats for the Justice and Construction Party.

11. 62 seats chosen by the President of the Republic from outside the parties

The division depended on four principles to achieve a balance that reflects all components of society. It was stipulated that women were represented by 30% in each component and youth by 20%. The result was the following:

12. 40 seats for women within the 30% quota of all components.

13. 40 seats for youth within the quota of 20% of all components.

It also stipulated that the people of the southern regions should be represented in all the components participating in the National Dialogue conference so that their level of representation reached 50% of the total number of participants in the Conference (National Dialogue Conference, 2013). The Conference's agenda included drafting a new constitution dealing with the circulation of power and revenues between Yemen's provinces and the central authority in the capital Sana'a, as well as preparing for legislative and presidential elections scheduled for February 2014 (Green, 2013).

The National Dialogue Conference came up with a convention jointly developed and agreed on by representatives of all Yemeni political forces, groups and social groups. It was a national charter that set up to determine the main foundations and outlines for rebuilding the State, achieve national reconciliation, get Yemen out of its chronic and acute political and social crises, and to avoid a slipping into a long period of chaos (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

4.3.3.1 Tribal support

Regarding the tribal matter, the conference enjoyed the support of many tribes, especially those joining the revolutionary movement in Yemen. The sheikhs of Saba region issued a statement calling for national alignment and commitment to the outcomes of the National Dialogue with a view to avoiding dragging the country into conflicts and chaos. They affirmed that they supported the political leadership represented by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to build the State and implement the outcomes of the Conference (National Dialogue Conference, 2014).

While the conference was supported by tribes, it caused damage to other tribal sheikhs. The outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference harmed sheikhs who were loyal to the former regime. The Conference suggested removing the Department of Tribal Affairs, which the former regime used to win the loyalty

of tribal leaders, and established rules and legal foundations to prevent the tribe from being involved in the authorities and jurisdictions of the State in order to build a civil state and develop legal texts that promote the complete separation of parties and the State structure (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

Decisions relating to national reconciliation, if realized, would have brought the conflicts and wars in the northern regions to an end, thus some tribal leaders dependent on the war economy to huge loss of this resource. Nonetheless, national reconciliation was in the interest of the northern tribesmen who lost many lives in the armed conflicts in the northern provinces over the past years. Tribal leaders were also expected to lose some of their political power by changing the electoral system of the Parliament from the individual election system in small constituencies to the closed proportional list system at the federal level. The narrower the constituencies, the greater the chances for traditional elites depending on kinship relations in electoral mobilization to win. In contrast, the larger the constituencies, the less the chances. Therefore, these elites sought to reduce their potential political losses by resisting the proposal to divide the federal State into two regions, supporting the division into six regions. That might increase the chances of winning the Federal Council seats whose members were elected by the proportional list system at the federal level and by the equal representation of the regions (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

President Saleh's three-decade legacy cast a shadow over the National Dialogue. His style was based on inclusive authoritarianism where he attracted political rivals by engaging them in the State's system of power and the cronyism. He often encouraged various factions, tribes and leaders against one other by pursuing a "divide and rule" policy, and using pressure and force when needed to achieve his goals. Accordingly, he and his tribe could take control of government institutions and positions (Green, 2013).

It should be noted that Saleh relied in his rule on tribal leaders and officials appointed by the central government; as a result, the government did not fully expand its authority over many parts of the country (Green, 2013). Some tribal groups largely retained their independence, while many areas received limited services.

4.3.3.2 Doctrinal freedom

From a sectarian perspective, with regard to the issue of Sa'da, the stronghold of the Houthis movement, the Convention stressed "ensuring sectarian and intellectual freedom, practicing rituals, prohibiting imposition or preventing them by force from any party, and that the State and its organs should be neutral and not adopt or provide material or moral support, or provide facilities for any sect or ideology as guaranteed by the Constitution and regulated by law (National Dialogue Conference, 2014). It also confirmed "establishing controls of the curriculum and religious and civil education under the supervision of the State" (Aljabarat, 2018).

4.3.3.3 Federation

Geographically, to resolve the issue of the South, the Conference adopted the principle of transition from a unified and integrated State to the "Federal State", where the South to be represented by 50% in the first election cycle, after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, in all leadership structures: the executive, legislative and judicial bodies, including the army and security sectors, which their positions are appointed by decisions of the President or the Prime Minister. The South will also represent 50% of the parliament (National Dialogue Conference, 2014).

With regard to the southern issue and the calls for the secession, the federal system can provide a solution to this problem. The Conference adopted the principle of transition from a unified state to a federal state where the South will be represented by 50% in the first election cycle, after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, in all command structures: the executive, legislative and judicial bodies which their positions are appointed by decisions of the President or the Prime Minister including the army and security (Aljabarat, 2018).

At the level of organizations, the outputs of the National Dialogue Conference were in the interest of modern civil organizations, including political parties over the traditional and tribal organizations in general, and civil and tribal organizations in particular. Their influence is expected to be declined in decision-making and policy formulation at the central "federal" and regional levels. The influence of regional powers in decision-making in Yemen is likely

to regress due to the decline in the role of Yemeni traditional elites (Al-Shargabi, 2014).

Ten months after the National Dialogue, Yemeni forces approved a convention including rebuilding the Yemeni State on a federal basis, and authorizing President Hadi to form a committee to determine the number of regions. The first step for President Hadi to implement was to issue a presidential decree to form a committee headed by 88 instead of dividing Yemen into six regions (Aljabarat, 2018).

The outcome of the Dialogue Conference was balanced and consensual, addressing the various contentious issues, meeting the aspirations of most Yemenis, trying to put an end to the existing problems, and anticipating problems that might occur in the future and suggesting ways to control them (Al-Shargabi, 2014). Besides, it constituted a model for a national charter that set up the main foundations and guidelines for rebuilding the State, achieving national reconciliation and getting Yemen out of its political and social crises (Aljabarat, 2018).

However, the National Dialogue Conference failed after Yemen was about to reach an unprecedented level of understanding. Houthis movement led an armed coup against State's institutions, backed by a number of military brigades that pledged allegiance to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh (Aljabarat, 2018). Sana'a fell with the support of the Republican Guard and the Special Guard forces of President Saleh on September 21, 2014, and the democratic transition that Yemen was to witness at that time was thwarted.

4.4 The Houthis Coup

The most important event in this decade since the outbreak of the Youth Revolution was the coup d'état of the Houthis armed group over the political regime when it took control of the country. It represented the most important turning point in the political process and democratic transition in Yemen. It is worth talking about the emergence of the Houthis group and how it has gradually grown until it was able to possess military power to have military control of the country.

4.4.1 The movement's history

The Houthis group is an armed religious political movement of the Zaidi sect, later became converters of the Twelver sect. It chose the city of Sa'da in northern Yemen, on the border with Saudi Arabia, as its main stronghold. The Yemenis call them Houthiss after its founder Hussein Badreddin Al- Houthi whereas they call themselves "Ansar Allah", i.e., Supporters of God, a religious description similar to the name of the Lebanese Hezbollah, which, as the Houthis group, is a Shiite group and has a good relationship with Iran (Benfoua, Alzabidi, 2017). The movement began its educational and cultural activity in 1986, about seven years after the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution of Iran (Al-Jazeera Encyclopedia, 2014), within a union called the "Youth Union" to teach the youth of the Zaidi sect by a Zaidi sheikh called Salah Ahmed Falitah.

4.4.2 "The Believers Youth" Forum

The Believers Youth turned into a political party called Al-Haq Party after a dispute between the founders of the Youth Union. As some of the founders of the union refused to turn it into a political party, they founded another religious organization called the "The Believers Youth" Forum. That forum became the core of the Houthis movement founded in 1992 by Mohammed Badreddin Al-Houthis, the religious theorist of the group. The activities of the forum were limited to organizing cultural and educational activities that taught the Zaidi sect. In 1997, the forum became a political movement called the Believers Organization founded in 1992 by Mohammed Badreddin Al- Houthis. There were some defections of number of the organization's founders, most notably Salah Falitah and Majdelddin Al-Ansari, who accused the organization's founders of violating the Zaidi sect (Aljazeera Encyclopedia, 2014).

In 2002, the group began its public activities and launched the slogan "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam", shouted after every prayer. This slogan is modeled on the slogan that Shiites in Iran chant. At that time, the group was collecting taxes, zakat and financial dues from Sa'da merchants at gunpoint causing a clash between it and the local authorities in the province. Those clashes evolved into the first armed clashes between the group and the Yemeni authorities, which broke out in 2004. This was the first round of

war between the Houthiss and Yemeni army forces. The Yemeni government accused the Houthis group of turning the organization into an armed movement, launching six rounds of war known as the Six Wars from 2004 to 2009 (Ibid, 2014). The movement's leader, Hussein A- Houthis, was killed in the first round of war in 2004, and his father Badraddin Al- Houthis, one of the Zaidi authorities, assumed the leadership until his death in 2010. After his death, the group has been led by his son, Abdul Malik Al- Houthis.

In 2011, the Houthis movement took part in the Youth Revolution demanding the resignation of the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Houthiss then withdrew from the sit-ins in conjunction with the leaking of unconfirmed information that former President Saleh had promised them some privileges if they left the revolution and gave up their demands. They also rejected the Gulf Initiative but participated in the National Dialogue Conference with 35 seats out of 565.

4.4.3 Iranian support

At that time, Iran had accused Saudi Arabia of supporting Ali Abdullah Saleh in his war against the Houthiss. It revealed in its media that sources in the Saudi opposition confirmed that Riyadh made commitment to Saleh to cover the budget of the war against the Houthiss. Iranian media quoted a statement of former Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki with the outbreak of the war between the Houthiss and Saudi Arabia, "Saudi Arabia intervenes in Yemen's affairs" (Al-Daghashi, 2013).

On the other hand, the Yemeni government accused Tehran of interfering in Yemeni affairs. The head of the National Security Service, Ali A-Ansi, stated, in December 2009 on the sidelines of the Manama Dialogue Forum, "Iranians have a role in Yemen, and they know it. Their role is based on the material, political and media support of a rebel group. If they really have no role and do not interfere in Yemen's affair as they claim, they should condemn the actions of this terrorist rebel group as condemned by the whole world." The Major General Ali al-Ahmadi, head of the National Security Service after the revolution, at a media conference in Sana'a on January 8, 2013 stated, "Iran is

involved materially and morally in supporting the Houthiss" (Al-Daghashi, 2013).

The Houthiss' relationship with Iran is reflected in the slogan, "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam". It was a religious slogan echoed by Khomeini after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and adopted by the Houthis group. The religious slogan was instrumental in mobilizing some supporters, representing the encounter with political regime inside and outside Yemen as a religious battle seeking to support Islam and to fight America, Israel and their allies inside and outside Yemen, namely the Yemeni political regime and the Saudi regime.

In the six wars that broke out between Yemeni forces and the Houthis group, the Houthis group suffered enormous losses but in return received generous support from Iran. Ships were coming loaded with weapons to the coast of Midi in western Yemen, the nearest port to the Houthis stronghold of Sa'da. The support continued until after the Youth Revolution in 2011, but the Yemeni authorities at that time held two Iranian ships loaded with weapons. The first ship was Ceyhan I, which was detained on January 23, 2013, loaded with weapons - 48 tons of weapons, missiles and explosives according to the Yemeni Interior Ministry (Al-Jazeera Channel, 2013). The other Iranian ship was Ceyhan II, which was detained on March 7, 2013, near Bab al-Mandab, carrying a shipment of weapons to the Houthiss (Al-Thawra Newspaper, 2013).

During the war with Yemeni forces, the Houthis movement gained considerable combat experience. It should be noted that Yemeni forces weakened the Houthis group but could not eliminate it because the group received continued support from Iran and recruited tribes to fight in its ranks. In this regard, the Houthis movement went in four main formation stages: the stage of construction and establishment, the stage of expansion and proliferation, and the stage of armed confrontation, which was the actual stage transformation of the movement. It fought six wars from 2004 to 2010 with the Yemeni political regime under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh (Al-Nouri, 2016). Then, they took control of governorates one after the other until came down the zero hour when Sana'a fell on September 21, 2014.

4.4.4 Religious discourse

At that time, the group relied on religious discourse in recruiting and mobilizing for its battle. It also depended on the tribes belonging to the same "Hashemite" dynasty, i.e., those descending from the Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hashem, and on tribes that follow the Zaidi sect. In fact, there are Zaidi tribes that do not descend from the Hashemite dynasty. Houthiss portrayed these religious, sectarian and dynastic characteristics as common grounds reflecting a common destiny in order to push those tribes to join and fight in their ranks.The religious discourse was intensified by the speeches of the group's founder Badraddin Al- Houthis, later of his son Hussein, and then of his other son Abdul Malik. They also spread through the "handouts", which contains the lectures of the three former Houthis leaders, especially those of Hussein Al- Houthis. In these handout, Hussein explained that their battle with the regimes is a battle of right and wrong and a battle of Islam and Kufr (disbelief in God as per Islam). The current leader of the group Abdul Malik Al- Houthis appeared in several videos during the battles that broke out after the coup of the group to give faith-based speeches on right and wrong and Islam (Abdul Qawi, 2009).

Moreover, the Houthis movement followed the Zaidi sect before it has been recently influenced by the Twelver Shite doctrine of Iran. Revolting against the unjust ruler is one of the foundations of the Zaidi doctrine, i.e. one of the constants of the Zaidi school is it necessary to revolute against the unjust ruler. Thus, this doctrine remained resistant in front of the challenges it went through and was a constant concern for the rulers (Ziyadi, 2011).

That revolutionary principle of doctrine, which is obviously a religious factor, is reflected in promoting the idea of revolutionary movement against the regime and remaining ready for a coup against the ruler. Something that took place in September 2014 after the Houthiss acquired arms and benefited from the contradictions occurred between the parties to the conflict in Yemen.

4.4.5 Geographical dimension

Geography contributes to the creation of a particular political and social situation; for example, mountains and rugged terrain contribute to isolate the

territory from the center, leading it to lag behind development and to strengthen sub-state entities, such as tribal entities (Al-Mawadda, 2015).

Thus, the mountainous nature of Sa'da, the stronghold of the Houthis group, helped to rebel against the State. On the one hand, this geographical nature created the isolation of the group from the center, and on the other hand its mountains and caves represented a refuge for the group to shelter whenever it decided to lead a rebellion against the local authority in Sa'da. That was done during the six rounds of war taking place from 2004 until 2010. The Houthis fighters took shelter in the mountains making it difficult for the government forces to reach them. Those mountains even provided protection to Sa'da civilians when the coalition launched air strikes on the Houthiss in May 2015 (Masr Alarabia, 2015)

Figure 4.1: The Houthiss in the mountains of Saa'da city

Source :Sahafa net

The rugged mountain have been reflected heavily in the harsh nature of the inhabitants, and their propensity towards using weapons and impacted on the political situation and fuelling conflicts which began between the tribe and the

local authority, and then developed into larger wars (Al-Ziyadi, 2011). These characteristics have clearly appeared in Sa'da, whose location was one of the reasons causing the Houthiss to engage in a confrontation with the Yemeni army forces.

4.4.5.1 Sectarian geography

In addition to the Houthis complex topography that contributed to their abilities to take up arms and confront the State, they relied on the geography of the Zaidi sect; the tribes that embrace the Zaidi sect in various Yemeni governorates, particularly those in and close to Sa'da governorate, from Amran governorate in northern Yemen to the Dhamar governorate in central Yemen. They also depend on the Hashemite tribes descended from the same lineage of the Houthis. Therefore, most military leaders of the Houthis were from Hashemite families following zaidi sect. Zaidis are located in Sa'da and in the nearby city of Hajjah (Al-Ziyadi, 2011).

The group was therefore concerned of excluding and liquidating any doctrine contrary to it in Sa'da, once they gained power. The first armed conflict the Houthiss experienced after the revolution was with the Salafists, a Sunni group that stationed in Sa'da since the 1980s, and that Saleh had authorized the establishment of a religious educational center in Dammaj, Sa'ada in the early 1980s, in order to resist the active incursion of the Houthis group a few years after the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The Salafists were loyal to Saleh and opposed the revolution calling for his resignation in 2011, on the pretext that it is not permissible to disobey and rebel against the ruler. This was a sufficient reason for the Houthiss to eliminate them. Therefore, the Houthiss, who fought wars with Saleh, saw that the Salafists' loyalty to the regime were a threat to them. They also believed that it was unsafe that parts of Sa'da were under the control of a non-Zaidi Sunni group. The Houthiss, as a result, attacked the Salafists and fierce battles took place between the two sides. In October, 2013, the Houthiss imposed an siege on the village, where the Salafist center was located, ended with intervention by a mediation ruling that the Salafists were driven out of Sa'da (Benfoua & Al-Rabidi, 2017).

After the deportation of the Salafists from Dammaj- the Houthiss first military victory after the revolution- the movement grew stronger. It worked to increase its power after the military and moral victory it achieved. In parallel with the National Dialogue Conference in which the group participated, it had another activity(Al-Nouri, 2016). It forged other alliances with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, aiming at eliminating the Islah Party, the most influential party that led the revolution demanding his resignation.

4.4.6 The fall of Amran city

Although the coup took place on September 21, 2014, when the Houthiss took control of Sana'a, the political capital of Yemen, it can be said it actually began with the fall of the city of Amran in the northern of Sana'a, which fell on July 8, 2014, about two months before the fall of Sana'a. The importance of Amran is that it is the northern gate of Sana'a and contained military brigades stationed in its mountains, most notably the 310th Brigade headed by the General Hamid Al-Qoushaibi, a personal close to Islah party. The Houthiss managed to take control of the 310th Brigade after weeks of fighting. After the interruption of support, they killed the General Al-Qoushaibi and a number of his companions arguing that Al-he opposed the economic reforms they demanded, but their goal was to liquidate the military commander who was an obstacle on their way to Sana'a (Benfoua, Al-Rabidi, 2017).

Initially, the Houthiss used tribes to launch demonstrations in Amran demanding the dismissal of Al-Qoushaibi and accusing him of rebelling against the regime. Meanwhile, the State did not support General Al-Qoushaibi against the Houthiss accusation. On the contrary, they dismissed the governor of Amran, Mohammed Mohammed Hassan Dammaj, at the request of the Houthiss. At that time, Al-Qoushaibi requested the President Hadi to dismiss him as well, but President Hadi called him to Sana'a and asked him to remain in his position and fight the Houthiss. It seemed that it was intended to sacrifice the man affiliated with the Islah Party as part of a broad plan aimed at eliminating the party's leaders (Ajazzera channel, 2015).

The Houthiss, backed by a large number of armed tribes they attracted to fight in their ranks over the past years, announced the attack on Al-Qoushaibi camp

with additional arguments this time. They claimed that he opposed their demonstrations and supported what they called "the militias of the Islah Party". The battle was described in the media as a battle between the Islah party and the Houthiss, not between the State and the Houthis rebel militia (Ajazzera Channel, 2015). The international envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar adopted this story and said in his briefing to the Security Council that there was a battle between the Houthiss and armed groups in Amran, Yemen.

4.4.7 The fall of Sana'a

With the support of the tribes and failing of the legitimate government, the Houthiss killed General Al-Qushaibi and controlled the 310th Brigade, making their way towards Sana'a. On September 21, 2014, Sana'a fell into their hands without any resistance by prior arrangements with President Hadi himself and former President Saleh, who enjoyed the loyalty of the leaders of the Republican Guard and Special Forces camp. All this was with a view to attacking and eliminating the Islah party (Al-Nouri, 2016).

The Houthiss would not have been able to carry out the coup or control Sana'a if they had not found support from Zaidi armed tribes and other support from military camps that had loyalty to former President Saleh. Knowing that the leaders of the military brigades belonged to the GPC party headed by Saleh; therefore, the camps allied with the Houthiss in carrying out the coup which was supposed to primarily target the Islah party.

Indeed, immediately after the coup, the Houthiss launched a large-scale campaign in which they stormed Al-Eman University belonging to Al-Islah Party's and headed by Sheikh Abdul Majid Al-Zindani. They also broke into Suhail Channel belonging to tribal Sheikh Hamid Al-Ahmar, a member of the Islah party, and into Belqees Channel belonging to the revolutionaries of Spring Revolution. They followed the revolutionary activist Tawakol Karman, broke into and looted the headquarters of the Islah Party in Sana'a, arrested a large number of party members, destroyed the houses of some members of the Islah party, took over educational institutions, blew up some mosques in Sana'a both in Amran, Sana'a and Hajjah; arguing that they belonged to the "ISIS militants",

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an extremist religious group belonging to the Islamic State, which was referred to as the Islah party (Al-Daghashi, 2017).

The tribes of the so-called "Sana'a Hoop's Tribes" surrounding Sana'a, facilitated the Houthiss' control over the capital, and struck any possible resistance. This coincided with the government's failure to defend Sana'a and other cities as well as the suspicious role played by the then Minister of Defense Mohammed Nasser, which raised a serious question. The head of the Moral Guidance Department in the Yemeni armed forces, Major General Mohsen Khasarof answered part of this fundamental question in a television interview with Yemen's official channel. He said that there was an international will that believed that Islah party, which was affiliated with the Global Muslim Brotherhood Organization, was a danger, and therefore confronting Islah party was more an international desire than a local desire, and the parties to the conflict in Yemen were only a tool for that international trend. Such declaration was the reason behind his subsequent dismissal (Yemen Official Channel, 2019).

The Houthis movement then expanded to 20% of Yemen's territory, from northern Yemen in Sa'da to the southern city of Taiz, but this area was inhabited by about 80% of Yemen's population (Yemeni Minister of Human Rights, 2019). Surprisingly, the road remained open in front of the Houthiss; cities kept on falling one by one into the hands of the Houthis. They found no resistance only until they decided to break into Aden in March 2015. The coalition decided to launch a military operation, called "Decisive Storm", against the Houthiss on March 26, 2015, about six months after the Houthis coup.

4.5 The Military Operation of the Arab Coalition "Decisive Storm"

The military operation "Decisive Storm" launched on March 26, 2015 in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia and nine other countries: the United Arab Emirates Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan and Sudan (Shabana, 2015). This marked the beginning of the internationalization of the Yemeni crisis; it became a regional crisis in which several parties participated after being a local crisis between the local conflicting parties in Yemen (Knights, 2018). Despite the fact that Iran supported the Houthiss before the start of the operation

"Decisive Storm" and used an air bridge by Iran's Mahan Air by two flights a day; however, their support was not announced and it remained a local crisis, not a proxy war.

4.5.1 End the houthis coup

Saudi Arabia declared that the aim of launching the military operation was to eliminate the Houthis coup and to help Yemenis regain legitimate authority (Shabana, 2015), but this was not clear. Saudi Arabia did not start the operation until about six months after the Houthis coup of Sana'a and did not announce military action only after the Houthiss had gone to Aden and controlled it in March 2015, months after the coup. That meant that Aden for both Saudi Arabia and the UAE was a red line.

In any case, Saudi Arabia launched a sudden military operation in the spring of 2015, decommissioning the Yemeni air force and targeting Houthis leaders and Houthis gatherings. It also targeted civilian areas, such as hospitals, schools, health centers and infrastructure. The UN team of experts issued several reports, e.g., a September 2020 report, accusing Saudi and UAE raids of committing war crimes against civilians (United Nations, 2020). The coalition leadership denied some of them and justified some others as mistaken targeting. The military operation is still going on till today but with a different name, "Restoring Hope", and at a slower pace (Asiry, 2015).

Although the military operation launched by the coalition caused a massive material and human losses to the Yemeni people, and at the same time failed to achieve its objectives in defeating the Houthis coup and restoring legitimacy whose principals have resided in the Saudi capital Riyadh to this day, its measures supported by the legitimate authorities had earned a legal force and support keeping the operations going until now.

4.5.2 Eliminating the Islah party

Saudi Arabia's inaction at the coup, and its subsequent move, can be understood in the light of a possible observation that Saudi Arabia wanted the Houthiss to eliminate the Islah Party, a party organization of a religious background. Saudi Arabia accused the Islah Party of being affiliated with the Islamic State

included in its list of terrorist groups, and the most important component of the Arab revolutions opposed by Saudi Arabia. Saudi intelligence officer Anwari Ashki in an interview on Russia Today TV on April 22, 2015, said that the Houthiss promised the United States to strike terrorism in Yemen and that the Houthiss had made a commitment to a Gulf country that they would strike a certain group in Yemen after receiving considerable funds but did nothing. He added that the leader of the Houthis group Abdul Malik al- Houthis, before turning on this agreement, pledged to King Salman of Saudi Arabia to cooperate with him and cut his relations with Iran (RT TV. , 2015).

Saudi Arabia stood by when Houthis eliminated the Islah Party and prosecuted General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, the Islah military leader after the coup' (Al-Daghashi, 2017) and did not respond despite the large-scale campaign launched by the Houthiss on a political party that was an important partner in all the stations sponsored by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia only acted after the Houthiss went to Aden overlooking the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and near the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

4.5.2.1 Political rivalry

The request of legitimate authority from the Arab coalition to carry out the military operation had put Houthiss in a dilemma. The Houthiss considered the components of the legitimacy parties: the GPC (Hadi Wing), Islah and other parties as agents and mercenaries due to their support for the external aggression against Yemen. The Houthiss held a court in Sana'a under their control, where they sentenced President Hadi and leaders of legitimacy to death for treason (DW, 2017).

Subsequent to that political animosity had broken out between the Houthiss and the legitimate government as well as other political and sectarian rivalries between the Houthiss and the Islah Party, the most important component of legitimate government. That means that political and sectarian divergence between the Houthiss and Islah as a Sunni movement and the Houthiss as a Shiite movement was more visible than with any other component.

The political rivalry between the Islah party and the Houthiss had emerged since the beginning of the revolution when Islah controlled the squares of the

revolution and grasped the opportunity from the Houthiss to dominate the scene in the squares as well as when the Houthiss accused Islah of remaining silent in the face of what they considered the crimes of Saleh regime committed against them during the six-round wars (Al-Daghashi, 2013). Rivalry also intensified due to the armed clashes that took place between the Houthiss and members of Islah in October 2013 in Amran and Hajjah and due to Islah's support for the armed Saudi Arabian-led intervention announced by the coalition. All those accumulating reasons pushed the Houthiss to take revenge later on the Islah party making it a prime target after the coup.

The Islah party supported the military operation launched by the Saudi-led Arab coalition, and issued a statement, as one of the components of the eliminated legitimate government (Al-Daghashi, 2013), calling on the coalition to help deter the Houthis aggression and restore legitimacy. That call led the Houthiss to intensify their campaign against the members of the Islah party. They abducted a number of Islah members, such as the leader Amin Al-Rajawi and two journalists affiliated with the Islah party, namely Abdullah and Youssef Al-Azeri, who were killed in raids after they were placed in military targets for coalition aircraft (Almasdar Online, 2013). They also kidnapped the first-raw leaders, most notably the prominent leader of the Islah party, Mohamed Qahtan, who is still detained and unaccounted for (Almasdar Online, 2015).

Actually, the Islah party represented a common enemy of both Houthis and Saleh, so Islah, its headquarters, leaders and members were the first target of the Houthis group after controlling Sana'a. Houthiss arrested members of the party and stormed and looted its headquarters and burned some of them. They destroyed their mosques in all the cities and villages that Houthis was able to control without any resistance from the official institutions (Al-Daghashi, 2013). Furthermore, they placed President Hadi under house arrest, and when Hadi managed to escape and travel to Aden, they decided to go after him, but Hadi was able to flee to Oman and then to Saudi Arabia. At that time, the coalition intervened in a military operation launched at dawn on March 26, 2015 (Baron, 2013). The southern resistance, supported by the coalition, managed to drive the Houthiss out of Aden.

4.5.2.2 Sectarian rivalry

As for the sectarian rivalry, it began since the Houthiss abandoned the principles of the Zaidi sect and adopted the Twelver Shi'a sect, which provides for the theory of the "Alwali Al-Faqih", i.e., the Guardian Jurist, a believe that guardianship or leadership is limited to the "Faqih" of the prophet's descendants (Al-Daghashi, 2013). The conflict between Sunni and Shiite movements in the Arab and Muslim world has pulled back to the scene in Yemen. Islah Party represented the Sunni movement while the Houthiss represented Shiite thought. The sectarian rivalry between the Islah party and the Houthiss is the reason behind the exchanged accusations between them. While the Islah party accused Houthiss of being "Rawafith", i.e., rejecters, and racists, the Houthiss accused Islahis of being terrorists belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) (Al-Daghashi, 2013).

It should be noted that before the Houthiss retaliated against the Islah party, the Houthiss had eliminated the Salafist movement in the Houthis stronghold, Sa'da. In October 2013, they led a war on Dammaj area of Sa'da, which contained the largest Salafist educational center in Yemen founded by the late Salafist sheikh Moqbel bin Hadi Al-Wadadi in the early 1980s and then he was succeeded by Salafist Sheikh Yahya Al-Hajjouri. They eradicated the Salafist movement and blew up its educational mosque, "Dar al-Hadith". Later, a presidential mediation intervened to allow the Salafists to leave Dammaj (Hassan, 2013). This scenario, which led to drive Salafist out of Dammaj, contributed to the expansion of the Houthis's power, and that was considered the group's first victory before the coup.

In addition to the political rivalry between legitimate government and the Houthiss, there was another political rivalry within the legitimate government itself. The Houthiss were able to take advantage of the contradictions, rivalries and arguments between the right-wing and left-wing movements included under the umbrella of legitimacy, specifically the rivalries between the Islah Party (right-wing) and the Nasserist Unionist Organization (left-wing). Such political rivalry made things easy for the Houthis group, particularly in Taiz (Yahya, 2013), where the Houthiss are located on its outskirts. In fact, Taiz is the

Nasserist Unionist's stronghold and Yemeni Islah Party's wider field. That put the Houthiss in a better position than they were.

4.5.2.3 Religious discourse

Like the Islah Party, the Houthiss relied on religious discourse in fighting legitimacy and Islah Party in particular. They see the war as a part of an American-Zionist conspiracy that Saudi Arabia and legitimacy are its instruments. This is reflected in the Houthis slogan: "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory for Islam". They used such a discourse to mobilize and recruit tribes to fight the legitimacy government and Islah on the ground that the operations on Yemen was an aggression and that legitimacy supported it. They have prepared educational courses for the psychological mobilization of their fighters. The Moreover, the Houthiss rely on Zaidi principles in their operations particularly in Amran, Hajjah and Dhamar, which are of a sect to which Houthis claims to belong.

The Houthiss have benefited from coalition raids when targeting civilian targets, such as hospitals, schools and wedding halls, which the coalition has justified as mistaken raids.

Although the Houthiss received heavy damage through coalition raids, they were able to hold out, benefiting from time in their favor. More than five years after the beginning of the military operation, Houthiss became stronger than before. It shifted from a rebel militia to a de facto authority before the international community. On the ground, the Houthiss were able to establish control on 20% of Yemen's areas of 550,000 square kilometers that include 80% of the population of about 25 million Yemenis (Sputnik Russian, 2019). During their period of control, they committed multiple crimes and violations against humanity. According to most recently the September 2020 report of the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen, all parties to the conflict had committed war crimes in Yemen, including the Houthiss (United Nations, 2020).

4.5.3 Tribes recruitment

Following the coup carried out by the Houthiss and before the Decisive Storm, the Houthiss had been able- with their military power as a result of Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah support (Knights, 2018) and as a result of their alliance

with former President Saleh (Al-Nouri, 2016) to recruit many tribes in their favor and benefit from the huge human stock and from the material support provided to them by the tribal sheikhs, especially the so-called "Sana'a Hoop Tribes", the armed tribes that surround Sana'a. Houthiss have benefited from those tribes, making them fight at the forefront to control the Yemeni cities. Besides, they were able, by their alliance with Saleh, to recruit tribes, whether those whose loyalty to them or those that later joined them after taking control over Sana'a, to fight other anti- Houthis tribes, such as the tribes of Hashid, Arhab and Hamedan surrounding Sana'a (AL-Mandab Press, 2016).

After the launch of the Operation Decisive Storm Operation, the Houthis group established what it called the "Council of Elders and Wise Men of Yemen", a group of tribal elders loyal to the Houthis. They issued a convention called the "Tribal Code of Honor", which aimed at establishing a set of tribal rules that allow them to confront the tribes that supported Hadi legitimacy and the Operation Decisive Storm or any other tribes facing the Houthiss for any other reason. This step has enhanced the conflict between the Yemeni tribes (AL-Thawra Newspaper, 2015). In the governorates not controlled by the Houthiss, such as Marib, the national military forces were formed under the Saudi-backed legitimacy to fight the Houthiss. The Islah party was also involved in the military formations of the National Army to fight the Houthiss. They engaged in fierce battles in Marib, Nihm and Al-Jouf east of Sana'a. The members of the Islah Party have been among the fiercest fighters in those battles due to their militant ideology of many motives. One of these motives was that Houthis was their traditional enemy as well as their political enemy that led a fierce campaign against them when they owned power and weapons. The other motive was that Islah as a Sunni movement that considers the Houthiss to be one of the manifestations of the Twelver Shiite ideology. The two sects are contradictory and fight in more than one geographical area in the Arab and Muslim world. Therefore, fighting Houthiss for Islahis is a national and religious duty.

4.5.4 Murder of saleh

The Houthis power increased and intensified taking advantage of Iranian armed support and also of the alliance of former President Saleh, who had developed a network of interests with most of the military commanders. Houthis later saw

that they no longer needed Saleh, who was only a means used for specific time, especially after the increase of their power on the ground in conjunction with the decline of Saleh's power. As a result, Houthis worked to exclude Saleh and members of the GPC party, which eventually led to tensions and accusations between the two parties. Saleh accused the Houthiss of plotting the coup while the Houthiss accused Saleh of being a traitor making secret agreements with the coalition. That eventually led to military confrontations in the surrounding area of Saleh's house in the center of the capital Sana'a. Saleh called his supporters to fight the Houthiss, but no one responded and those confrontations led to his death at the hands of the Houthiss on December 4, 2017 (Jarallah, 2020). That incidence turned the page of Saleh, who ruled Yemen for more than 33 years. After that, the members of the GPC party divided into several wings: a wing worked under Houthis control, a wing left for Cairo and became loyal to UAE and a third wing left for Saudi Arabia to join President Hadi and owed allegiance to Saudi Arabia.

4.5.5 Control of aden

In contrast to the violent events in northern Yemen, events in southern Yemen have been no less violent particularly in Aden. Since the Houthiss were driven out of Aden in March 2015, the UAE, the Saudi coalition partner, has took control of the city in July 2015. The UAE has established armed formations operating outside the Yemeni army. These formations consisted of individuals with criminal records, Salafist, gangs and military officers. It trained and gave them heavy weapons and assigned them to take control over Aden and the neighboring cities (Jarallah, 2020). From the tribal prospective, the UAE benefited from the longstanding tribal conflict between Al-Dhal'a and Yaf'a tribes on the one hand and Abyan and Shabwa tribes on the other. While Abyan and Shabwa tribes were supporters of President Hadi, Al-Dhal'a and Yaf'a tribes were hostile to President Hadi. Therefore, Al-Dhal'a and Yaf'a tribes serve as an important core in the armed formations established by the UAE in Aden. For example, the UAE supported Aydros Zubaidi, the head of the Southern Transitional Council, who is from Al- Dhal'a governorate that bears a historical enmity to Abyan, the city from which President Hadi belongs (Yahya, 2019).

In addition to the formation of armed troops of 90,000 soldiers as stated by an Emirati officer, the UAE supported the establishment of a political body called the "Southern Transitional Council". Receiving full support of the UAE, this council has set itself as an exclusive representative of southern Yemen demanding the secession of the south from the north of Yemen (Alarifi, 2018). Religiously, the UAE used Salafist cleric Hani ben Brik, who was a preacher in Aden, and a number of his clerics, and the group played its part in inciting the legitimate government and praising the UAE and what it was doing in Aden, to the extent that it prevented President Hadi's plane from landing at Aden airport, returning to Riyadh, and preventing the legitimate government from returning to Aden as well (Jarallah, 2020).

Ben Buraik, who currently lives in the UAE and praises its rulers, is another figure that has received the support of the UAE. He has pitted against the members of the Islah party which is an enemy of the UAE and included in its terrorism lists. As a result of that incitement, some members of Islah party were arrested while others were assassinated, and no members of Islah Party remained in Aden which is fully under the control of the UAE and its armed formations (Jarallah, 2020).

According to a report of the American newspaper Buzz Feed News, there was a program of assassinations of Islah's leaders in Aden sponsored by the UAE and under the supervision of the Palestinian leader in Abu Dhabi Mohammed Dahlan, who works as an advisor to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the de facto ruler of the UAE Mohammed bin Zayed. A security company called "Golden Spear" including retired American officers has been contracted to assassinate a number of leaders and members of the Islah Party on the claiming that they were terrorists (Rastoren, 2018).

In Sana'a and northern Yemen, the Houthiss are still in control while their strength is growing day after day. The international community seems to be moving towards accepting them within a certain formula recognized in the future. In Aden and southern Yemen, the UAE is in control through its multiple armed formations, and the Yemeni legitimacy that has been living in Riyadh for more than five years is weakening and undermined day after day as Riyadh-sponsored agreements between Hadi's government and the Southern Transitional

Council are taking place. As a result of all these events, Yemen is suffering the worst humanitarian crisis and Yemeni people are living in famine-like conditions. This is the political scene of the crisis in Yemen to this day.

5. CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the Youth Revolution in 2011 came after political and economic accumulations and crises which lasted for several years. The regime of former President Saleh was able to monopolize wealth and power, and at a time when this revolution was supposed to represent a democratic transformation, the opposite happened. The tribal, religious and geographical factors led to obstructing the path of democratic transformation, and then Yemen has entered into a complex political crisis and a stifling economic crisis, whose repercussions are still continuing up to date.

Yemeni society is a tribal society by its nature, so Saleh relied on the tribal interests network that he formed for 30 years. This network of interests involved most of the tribal sheikhs who made fortunes during that period, so they stood by the Saleh regime, fearing for their interests, and they recruited their tribal members to stand by Saleh before leaving power, and even after leaving power.

After leaving power, Saleh moved to the opposition , but not practicing political work, rather he was forming alliances with the tribal sheikhs and social leaders to undermine the path of democratic transformation, once through alliance with rebel militias and once by trying to obstruct the National Dialogue Conference.

The opposition Islah Party was traditionally the foe of Saleh, so Saleh saw that this party with a religious background was the one that led the calls for his ousting. Therefore, he devoted his efforts to punish the revolutionaries in general and the Islah party in particular. At the same time, many of the youth who participated in the revolution had fears that the Islah Party would steal their revolution, especially the independent youth and left-wing youth who were appalled by the religious discourse that Islah party adopted, so a crisis of confidence arose between the independent youth and the youth of Islah party.

Saleh then allied with the Houthis militia, a religious group that received support from Saleh himself and Iran and led an armed coup against the legitimate government in Yemen on September 21, 2014 and controlled the capital Sana'a and a number of major cities, and it is currently the de facto authority in the northern part of Yemen.

Saleh benefited from the loyalty of tribes in the alliance with the Houthis group, and was able to target Islah party. In fact, the Houthis group's the first task was to chase the Islah party, making use of the support of Saleh's party and Iran and benefiting from the international green light to fight terrorism.

The army institution that Saleh built during the years of his rule was not a neutral institution, and this was one of the most important reasons for the failure of the Spring Revolution in Yemen. Actually, the military institution is no a guarantor that protects the state's institutions, away from the political parties 'conflict. Rather, the military institution was loyal to Saleh. That is why a number of brigades and military camps were led by Saleh's instructions to support the Houthis group when they controlled the state and its legitimate institutions.

With regard to the Houthiss, they relied on fighters from the areas under their control, especially from those areas called "Zaydi geography," that share them the same sect, especially from the families that descend from the same Hashemite dynasty to which the Houthis group belongs. The areas that have loyalty to the Houthis group are those that are close to Sa'ada, the stronghold of the Houthis group in northern Yemen.

The military operation announced by Saudi Arabia and ten countries on its side was launched in March 2015 with a declared goal to eliminate the coup and re-enable legitimacy. The political parties, that opposing Saleh and Houthiss, supported it, and the Houthis and a wing of Saleh's party opposed it. As a result, the crisis increased between the Houthis group and the political parties supporting the military process, especially Islah party, which is a traditional foe of the Houthis group. However, the military operation went far from its goals, and both Saudi Arabia and the Emirates went to implement different agendas in southern Yemen - Aden, Socotra Island, and Al-Mahrah - and in a number of Yemeni governorates. They even devoted their efforts to fighting the parties that

opposed their agenda in those areas, ignoring, to some extent, fighting the Houthis. This gave the Houthiss opportunity to enhance their strength and made the Yemeni legitimacy weaker.

Currently, the crisis is still going on. Yemen is shared by the Houthis group and the Arab coalition, represented by Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, and a small area is under the control of the legitimacy. In fact, it does not seem that the crisis will soon go over because it took a regional dimension, in which Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE are involved and behind them major international parties. All these players are more concerned of expanding their influence near the strait of Bab Al-Mandab, the ports and islands along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.

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